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**Queer Spies in British Cold War Culture: Literature, Film,
Theatre and Television**

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Thesis Abstract

This PhD thesis investigates how male homosexuality has been represented in British spy fiction from the 1950s to the 2010s in multiple media: literature, film, television and theatre. Due mainly to the betrayal of the Cambridge Spy ring around the middle of the century, British culture has associated spies with homosexuality, while the wider Anglophone world was in the grip of a homophobic atmosphere created by McCarthy's Red Scare. My thesis explores how this history is reflected in the spy genre from the Cold War to the present, in which male homosexuality and secret agency intersect as “queer”, in so far as they were both considered to be discreet and criminal, existing outside of the heteronormative order. By following multiple texts across media and time, I discuss how some writers, television and film directors and actors update queer identity in spy fiction, creating a shifting image of queer spies through decades. I refer to the findings of adaptation studies and queer studies, along with numerous studies on spy fiction.

I conclude that the interrelation of different media has contributed to the re-drawing of queer identity in spy fiction. These developments have enabled the spies' queer identity to transcend its pejorative history in British culture, towards its more flexible and pliant sense which is designated by the term's modern usage. I also discuss that spies' homosexuality has been represented as a fleeting ghost in most of the texts examined, hovering on the margins of pages and screen. Although homosexuality is not “the love that dare not speak its name” anymore, clandestine queer spies have been preserved as spectral others in the genre for many years. Spy fiction is a cultural repository retaining the memory of violence inflicted against those who have been called “queer” in twentieth century Britain, and the spectral nature of queer spies narrates this

history reaching back to the Oscar Wilde trial in 1895, from which point British queer identity as we know now developed.

This thesis benefits the study of spy fiction by filling a gap in the investigation of homosexual representation. It also contributes to the field of gender studies of literature, film, television, and theatre by illustrating queer history in a genre which has not received a great deal of focus on its representation of homosexuality. Spy fiction occupies a central position in British popular culture, and by exploring this genre in terms of homosexuality, this research will identify the role which same-sex desire has historically played in the British cultural imagination.

Lay Summary

My PhD thesis investigates how British spy fiction – novel, film, theatre and television – has represented male homosexuality from the 1950s to the 2010s, during and after the Cold War. Male homosexuality has been associated with spies, especially double agents throughout history in Western culture. Especially during the Cold War, homosexuality was considered a threat to national security in the English-speaking world. This association left a significant mark on British culture when Soviet double agents such as Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean fled to Moscow in 1951. I propose that such Cold War sexual politics significantly influenced British spy fiction, and continues to do so.

There are fleeting images of homosexuality throughout the texts of famous authors such as Graham Greene and John le Carré. Many texts present homosexuality as a villainous attribute, or as a clandestine allusion waiting to be deciphered through multiple readings. Since the Cold War, spy fiction has represented male homosexuality in a subtle, repressed way. Due to this, male homosexuality appears ghostly, haunting the genre. I examine the ghostly aspect of spy fiction, and how it intertwines with the way Western culture represented homosexuality as a phantom Other.

Due to Cold War gender politics, both spies and homosexual men had to hide their identity. Their identity intersected with the term “queer” in the sense that they are both located outside of heteronormativity. They are both clandestine criminal beings, especially before 1967 when homosexual intercourse was considered a crime in England and Wales. However, the term “queer” gains a new, empowering meaning in the 1990s. Queer spies in British spy fiction exemplify this transition of the term “queer”, through their fluid identities and the ability to take on different roles. My thesis examines how some texts remain haunted by clandestine queer spies, and how others rewrite and subvert

the sexual politics of the Cold War, updating the spy genre itself. Spy genre is a contested field surrounding queer politics.

For this investigation, I take multiple different media such as novels, film, theatre and television. Across different media, I examine how adaptation affects the shifting sexual representation. My thesis will contribute to the study of spy fiction; although male homosexuality is alluded to in many texts, it has never been the subject of comprehensive research. This thesis will also contribute to British queer history from the perspective of genre fiction. Spy fiction has occupied a central position in British popular culture; by examining the representation of homosexuality in this genre, this thesis will investigate what role homosexuality has played in the British cultural imagination.

Introduction: Spies, the Cold War, and Spectral Homosexuality

[N]arratives of intrigue, especially after 1945, represent gay men as protean, effeminate, deviant, enigmatic, unstable, *leaky*. The Cold War altered conceptions of queerness by aligning it with espionage, most famously in the United States because of the HUAC hearings and in Britain because of the Cambridge spies. As the Cold War progressed, all spies proved to be, in some degree, a bit queer. (Hepburn 2005, 187)

Homosexual identity and spy identity intersected in the culture of the Cold War. In the citation above, Allan Hepburn describes how spy fiction after the Second World War represented gay characters, expressed through their connection with the adjective “queer”. Spies, who “proved to be, in some degree, a bit queer” (Hepburn 2005, 187), are associated with men desiring other men in Cold War spy fiction. In both the US and the UK, homosexuality was associated with being a spy, and this is reflected by the spy genre texts of various media: films, novels, theatre pieces, and television productions.

Indeed, gays and lesbians were harassed in 1950s America where “the fears of Communists and homosexuals overlapped” (Johnson 2004, 2-3). In the political climate of the Cold War, where McCarthy purges took place, gays and lesbians were deemed equal to Communist spies (Corber 1997; Johnson 2004). In the UK, there were the Cambridge spies – Guy Burgess, Kim Philby, Donald Maclean, and Anthony Blunt– who worked for the Soviet Union as double agents. Some of them happened to be gay and bisexual, which was highlighted in the British media and governmental reports (Carlston 2013, 179) describing their crimes as double agents. During the Cold War, the homophobic cultural landscape of the Anglophone world considered homosexuals and spies, and their association, as an intimidating threat to national security.

After World War II, spy narratives represented homosexual secret agents as something “protean, effeminate, deviant, enigmatic, unstable, *leaky*” (Hepburn 2005, 187). Gay and bisexual men in spy fiction – the foremost example of which is Bill Haydon in John le Carré’s *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) – are often double agents hiding their betrayal behind their enigmatic appearance. Hepburn describes such spies as “*leaky*” because they are deemed liable to pass information about national security to other states. However, it is this leakiness that connects homosexual spies to queerness. Being simultaneously “protean” and “*leaky*” leads to the definition of queerness by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (1993, 8). “Queer” signifies the identities which do not “organize into a seamless and univocal whole” (Sedgwick 1993, 8) but remain fluid. By using the term “queer”, Sedgwick refers to the open status of fluid identities that are not to be contained in a set rule of identities established by “heterosexist assumption” (Sedgwick 1993, 8).

After 1945, homosexual spies in fiction were free from the restraint that bound them. They were able to change their shapes, rejecting and resisting the limited set of interpretations imposed on them. Hepburn notes that “[k]nowing that his identity is historically contingent, the spy plays up the theatricality of his role and the pliancy of his affiliations” (2005, xiii-xiv). Spies toy with their identity; they can pretend to be anything they are not, flexibly switching allegiances. Within this playful identity, queer spies have changed their form over the decades from the Cold War period to the present, occasionally nullifying the cultural assumptions forced upon them. This thesis follows the

identity trajectory of queer spies from the second half of the twentieth century to the 2010s.

Within the politics of the Cold War, homosexuality and espionage are tightly intertwined. They are both “queer”, meaning out-of-the-ordinary. In this nexus of identities, both of which are located outside of Cold War heteronormativity and political probity. Spies became queer during the Cold War (Hepburn 2005, 187); spy fiction texts capture this process of becoming by depicting the overlapping of homosexual and spy identities and whether they accept or resist this process. This thesis explores such moments in the British spy genre, and describes how each artist across media and time has portrayed them. The main purpose of this thesis is to follow how queer spies, constructed in the Cold War period, lingered in British culture for decades and how spy fiction continued to present them in multiple and different forms of media, such as novels, film, theatre, and television through adaptation.

Ghostly Queer Spies

Homosexuality continually presents itself to spy fiction in such a repressed way that queer spies appear to haunt the genre. Indeed, the appearance of queer spies is often accompanied by uncanny imagery, where homosexual spies in spy fiction texts tend to be represented as phantoms haunting the texts. Queer spies in fiction thus continuously appear and disappear in the narratives, haunting the edge of pages, screen, and stage through the generations. Nicholas Royle asserts that the notion “queer” accompanies three words: “taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny” (2003, 49). As if demonstrating

how these complex layers of meaning define queerness, queer spies hover on the margins of texts as the uncanny in the espionage genre.

On top of the tradition in which homosexuality is treated as a spectre, the spy identity itself has been associated with ghosts. The word spook, meaning “a spectre, apparition, ghost” (OED), also stands for “an undercover agent; a spy” (OED). As the duality of this word suggests, spies have always contained a ghostly element within them. Hepburn explains the close connection between spies and ghosts, by calling spies’ bodies “typically apparitional”. They “move from place to place freely, heedless of walls”, and are “[h]aunters of shadows” (Hepburn 2005, 84). Thus, the basic characteristic of spying as a profession already involves ghostliness. Total secrecy is required when working as a spy, and this is held within their apparitional bodies without substance. With their invisible bodies, they freely move around places and passing through walls, just as the numerous faceless men in the television mini-series *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979) do. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, they move in and out of the frame without revealing their identity. They are there but do not exist in a way that enables others to recognise their presence. In this sense, queer secret agents are doubly apparitional. They tend to be portrayed as ghosts due to their sexuality, while their job transforms them into a ghost.

Queer spies return incessantly to the spy genre, embodying the uncanny repetition explained by Royle, who states that the uncanny “would appear to be indissociably bound up with a sense of repetition or ‘coming back’ - the return of the repressed, the constant or eternal recurrence of the same thing, a compulsion to repeat” (2003, 2). This thesis explores the uncanny return of queer spies in the spy genre, and thereby considers to what

degree the genre is related to a representational history in which homosexuality has been presented as a ghostly other.

Homosexuality has a history in which it has been treated as the spectral other standing outside the mainstream culture. As Diana Fuss notes, there has long been “the cultural representation of ‘the homosexual’ as phantom Other” (1991, 4) in Western culture. I will explore how queer spies fit this representational tradition and, at the same time, how they resist the negative construction of gays and lesbians as the uncanny other. The pliancy of queer spies offers resistance against the strict set of meaning; being “*leaky*” (Hepburn 2005, 187), they defy the fixed identity – homosexuals as double agents and a “phantom Other” (Fuss 1991, 4) – imposed upon them.

Spy Fiction as Seen Through Adaptation Studies

Adaptation studies are useful for analysing spy fiction as the genre allows us to explore the interaction between visual and written texts. The cultural longevity of the spy genre enables numerous stories to be updated over and over again in multiple ways in the form of rewrites, remakes, and serialisations of various spy stories. Viewing this genre from the perspective of adaptation offers ways to study the dynamics of such retellings as they take place throughout different periods. Thus, by focusing on the multiple forms of adaptation, such as adaptation of media (from novel to film and television), adaptation through time (remakes) and adaptation of history into fiction, this thesis examines how the representation of male homosexuality in the British spy genre has changed over time through the recurrent rewriting of stories.

This thesis considers what happens when a spy story is retold after a period of time or in a different form of media; what kind of change is brought to the representation of queer spies? Linda Hutcheon argues that “[n]either the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, xviii). It is significant to explore “what can happen when stories ‘travel’—when an adapted text migrates from its context of creation to the adaptation’s context of reception” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, xviii). The spy genre allows us to see the migration of texts across different contexts and their subsequent transformation through time and space. Through the various transformations of queer spies in adaptation, “the political valence and even the meaning of stories” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, xviii) have been modified over time.

This thesis, especially the second half, focuses on the intertextuality of spy narratives woven by the continuous fictionalisation of Cambridge spies. According to Hutcheon, adaptation is “a form of intertextuality” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, 8). From this, it follows that this thesis should include intertextuality when it talks about adaptation. Chapters 3 to 5 discuss several different plays, films, and television programmes that were produced individually, without any apparent connection, as adaptations. This contrasts with the first half of the thesis (Chapters 1 and 2) which discusses novels and their screen adaptation in terms of the literal adaptation of the same titles. Hutcheon highlights the intertextual aspect of adaptation as follows: “we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, 8). When practising adaptation, the works do not necessarily have to relate to each other

through a direct connection. As Hutcheon suggests, when adaptation includes intertextuality in its definition, reading individual works of fiction can be an experience of adaptation for both readers and audience members. As Chapter 3 will show, the experience of watching (or reading the script of) John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965) colours the interpretation of Alan Bennett's spy trilogy (1978-1991). In turn, Bennett's plays affect the viewing experience of the BBC mini-series *Cambridge Spies*, as Chapter 4 demonstrates. Chapter 5 interprets *London Spy* as a cultural memory repository of the past queer spies' representation. All of these texts concerning queer spies are part of a network of interconnected, and mutually dependent meanings. Readers and audiences are themselves a part of this network of meaning as they draw on their memories of preceding texts.

The Homosexual Undercurrent in Spy Fiction

Male homosexuality has existed in the margins of spy fiction since the beginning of the twentieth century. It could either be glimpsed in the depiction of antagonists or presented as a homoerotic bond between middle-class secret agents, but it was rarely foregrounded as the central issue of the stories. Steve Neale wrote that male homosexuality in mainstream Hollywood cinema is "constantly present as an undercurrent" although it is repressed and disavowed (Neale 1993, 15). Male homosexuality in British spy fiction has also been presented in a similar fashion.

In spy fiction, male homosexuality has been represented in a subtle, secretive manner. British spy fiction has traditionally dealt with middle-and upper-class men working in secret intelligence. Their homoerotic desire occasionally seeps through

between the lines, as this thesis will demonstrate in multiple texts by authors such as Greene and le Carré. Just as gay men on the streets in London, before and after 1967, had to hide their sexuality due to the illicit nature of same-sex intercourse, so the homoerotic desire among these agents is hidden in the margins of each text.

As this thesis later explains, spy fiction is full of fleeting allusions to male homosexuality from the early period onwards, ranging from John Buchan's early spy thrillers to the Cold War espionage novels of Ian Fleming and John le Carré, as well as their screen adaptations which gained mass popularity among a global audience. However, the clandestine nature of homoerotic representation in spy fiction has been changing in recent years. The James Bond series after 2006, with Daniel Craig as Bond, offers several scenes in which same-sex desire is explicitly portrayed ¹ while the television mini-series *Cambridge Spies* (BBC 2, 2003) and *The Hour* (BBC 2, 2011) foreground the relationships between spies and homosexuals in their narratives. The homoerotic undercurrent of spy fiction thus seems to be more visible in the 21st century. The foremost example is the television mini-series *London Spy*, which aired on BBC 2 at the end of 2015. An undercurrent of male homosexuality that has been so far left unexplored by spy fiction scholars is foregrounded in this well-reviewed TV series² which explores spy fiction's long-standing yet marginalised obsession with homosexuality, and for this reason will be discussed in Chapter 5. By starting from a

¹ When *Skyfall* (2012) was released, the scene in which Bond was tortured by the villain Silva (Javier Bardem) caused a sensation as it was shown with a highly homoerotic implication. *Casino Royale* (2005) also depicts a homoerotic sadomasochistic torture scene between Bond and Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen). See Rosen 2012; Cox 2014; Adams 2017; Spungen 2017.

² *London Spy* was nominated for a BAFTA in 2016 for best mini-series and leading actor (BAFTA, n.d.) and most reviews highly acclaimed this mini-series (Lawson 2015; Goodman 2016; Newall 2015; Doyle 2016).

1950s novel and film in Chapter 1 and concluding with *London Spy* in Chapter 5, the thesis investigates how the previously hidden homoerotic undercurrent gradually comes to the surface of the spy genre.

Although homosexuality in spy fiction has not been the subject of a fully dedicated study thus far, it merits further investigation. The spy genre has occupied a central place in the popular imagination of British culture for a long time, and the analysis of homosexuality in this genre will explain how mass culture has perceived same-sex relationships between men. This thesis will pursue the question as to how changing views surrounding same-sex desire in Britain from the mid-twentieth century to the present have influenced sexual representations in spy fiction. By exploring the genre in terms of homosexuality, this thesis will identify the role that same-sex desire has historically played in the British cultural imagination.

The association of homosexuality with secret agency attained prominence in the English-speaking world, especially in the Cold War period. There has been a substantial body of research on homosexuality and fiction in the Cold War in the North American context.³ This thesis follows the example of American studies and aims to fill the gap in research on homosexuality and the Cold War with respect to British fiction and history.

Spy Fiction Research and the Representation of Male Homosexuality

Numerous US and UK scholars have conducted research on spy fiction across literary, film, and television studies, especially since the 1980s. They have examined the genre in

³ See Corber, 1993; 1997; 2011.

terms of gender and sexuality, usually from the perspective of feminism.⁴ However, little attention has been paid to the depiction of male homosexuality, even though homosexual secret agents are a significant presence in many espionage texts. Although their presentation is fleeting, it makes an unmistakable impression in the texts, as this thesis aims to demonstrate.

Allan Hepburn dedicates a chapter to the representation of homosexual spies in his book on spy narratives, where he analyses homoerotic representation in spy stories written by Fleming, Buchan, and John Banville, highlighting the ever-present same-sex desire in Cold War spy novels. Oliver Buckton also notes the presence of male homosexuality in his chronicle of the history of spy fiction, drawing a timeline of homosexual spies from those found in the late Victorian era in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) to queer double agents during the Cold War in le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974). These works by Hepburn and Buckton are key texts, and Hepburn's work especially is significant for the structure of this thesis, as his work elucidates how Cold War politics coupled male homosexuality with spy identity under the category of "queer".

Several scholars have discussed the James Bond series, some of whom occasionally note the presence of male homosexuality. For instance, Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott examined the existence of homoerotic relationships among male

⁴ Brenda R Silver argues that the female figures in le Carré's novels function only as intermediaries between the male spies (Silver 1987, 14). Spy fiction criticism from the perspective of gender studies was uncommon up to 1987, but this approach has demonstrated its efficacy as it sheds new light on a previously ignored part of this mass cultural phenomenon. Also, in *Violent Femme* (2007), Rosie White discusses the representation of women in the espionage genre, demonstrating that the construction of the femininity seen in the spy genre is a shifting discourse reflecting changing societal notions of femininity and the cultural anxiety accompanying these (White 2007, 1).

characters in the series, which was inherited from previous spy fiction such as that written by Buchan (Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 114). Catherine Cox notes that homoeroticism and “queer connection” (2013, 191) are strongly suggested in *Casino Royale* (2006), especially in the relationship between Bond and his enemies. Christine Bold argues that Bond’s repressed homoerotic desire is revealed in the physical description of female characters such as Tatiana Romanova and Honeychile Rider (2009, 212), and suggests a homoerotic relationship between Bond and M in the “homosociality of the British establishment” (Bold 2009, 211). Elisabeth Ladenson also focuses on the homoerotic implication hidden in the depiction of female characters with boyish features (2009, 227). Alex Adams argues that the James Bond series, through the depiction of torture scenes and Bond’s subsequent survival, represents a rejection of the joint threat of homosexuality and Communism (Adams 2017, 138).

Although there are multiple occasions when scholars note homosexuality in spy fiction, especially in the criticism of the James Bond series, most do so briefly to support an argument whose main point lies elsewhere. Hepburn dedicates a chapter to the representation of male homosexuality in spy fiction. However, to date no research has focused exclusively on this topic. Buckton’s mention of male homosexuality in spy fiction, albeit brief, draws a framework within which the queer history of the genre can be traced. He highlights the presence of queerness in Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), which is later inherited and transformed in le Carré’s Cold War novels. This thesis aims to expand on Hepburn and Buckton’s exploration of homosexuality in spy fiction, paying serious attention to a theme that has been mentioned repeatedly without having been subject to comprehensive research.

Female Homosexuality and Spy Fiction

My concern lies with male homosexuality, and thus female homosexuality is outside the scope of this work. The representation of female homosexuality in spy fiction is a research topic that deserves separate attention as the history of female spies differs from that of male spies. Eva Horn asserts that female spy figures are “a product of the First World War” (Horn 2013, 171) represented by real individuals, such as Mata Hari, while most notable early male spy figures, such as Buchan’s Richard Hannay, Kipling’s Kim, and William Somerset Maugham’s Ashenden in *Ashenden* (1928), are fictional characters (Horn 2013, 171). It would be challenging to discuss both male and female homosexuality in a single thesis, as female spies also have their own distinctive history and assigned cultural roles. Female homosexual desire has also been inscribed in spy fiction, for instance in the James Bond series through the depiction of villainy (Ladenson 2009, 227). However, to discuss this topic, a thorough investigation is needed into the history of female spies and this would be too difficult to achieve in a single study. Thus, this thesis is limited to the analysis of male homosexuality in British spy fiction.

Early Spy Fiction and Homosexuality

Spy fiction has a long history, although it is hard to designate its temporal origin. As Cawelti and Rosenberg explain, stories featuring clandestine operations can be traced back to the dawn of history in Greek myth and epics (1987, 11). However, it was the turn of the twentieth century that witnessed the birth of the British spy fiction narratives commonly embraced today. David A.T. Stafford notes that “it is in the Edwardian age

that the British spy novel was born and the basic formula which determined its development established” (1981, 490). The texts discussed in this thesis are included in this tradition and reach back to the beginning of the last century.

Secret agents with same-sex desire began to appear along with the emergence of the genre. For instance, Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) depicts a romanticised homoerotic bond between the spymaster Colonel Creighton and the boy secret agent Kim (Buckton 2015, 7). In Buchan’s spy adventure series featuring the hero Richard Hannay, “erotic interest centres on the relations between” the protagonist and his companion Sandy Arbuthnot, albeit “in a repressed way” (Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 114). Simultaneously, Buchan’s Hannay series depicts homosexuality as an attribute of the enemy characters. Bennett and Woollacott write that “[t]his repressed homosexuality is particularly clear” in *Three Hostages* (1923) – the fourth volume of Buchan’s Hannay series – in which the hero is seduced by a villain with irresistible charm (Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 114). The second novel in the series, *Greenmantle* (1916), also features the foreign villain character Stumm, who is depicted as “a decadent, athletic, German queer” (Hepburn 2005, 199).⁵

Early spy figures with homoerotic characteristics can be found in the texts of Kipling and Buchan, and Fleming’s novels adapt the way Buchan associated villainy with male homosexuality. In *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956), the villains Wint and Kidd are

⁵ The Hannay series is interesting when read in light of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory on the male bond and the homosocial continuum. While Hannay demonstrates “homosocial admiration” (Hepburn 2005, 199) for Sandy, he shows a homophobic response to Stumm. By showing how homosocial bonding and homophobia co-exist within Hannay’s psyche, the series betrays “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual” (Sedgwick 2016, 1). Chapter 4’s discussion on the TV mini-series *Cambridge Spies* (2003) will delve deeper into Sedgwick’s theory as it relates to spy fiction.

implied to be homosexuals. Sam Goodman contends that the James Bond series utilises secret enemy agents to suggest an association between male homosexuality and criminality, which was probably influenced by the defection of the Cambridge spies. Goodman notes that “Fleming may have been referencing the revelations of Guy Burgess’ private life after his defection to the Soviet Union, further suggesting a link between homosexuality and criminality” (2015, 131). In this example, a stark contrast between the “good” and “bad” spy is drawn. The “good” spy – a hypermasculine heterosexual man – protects the nation, whereas the “bad” spy – visibly homosexual, and thus queer – betrays it.

Thus, in spy thrillers such as those written by Buchan and Fleming, villains are depicted as men with homoerotic desire. This association of homosexuality with villainy is indicated in several spy fiction studies (Buckton 2015, 234; Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 73). Oliver Buckton notes that “the villain is a fascinating index of prevailing racial, sexual and national phobias” (Buckton 2015, 234). Villains in spy fiction are charged with sexual tendencies deemed deviant in a heteronormative order. They represent deviancy in multiple senses that extend beyond sexuality, as they are also occasionally described as having a foreign background, which is depicted with a xenophobic tone.

Same-sex desire found in Cold War spy novels is a product of an early strand in the genre. As shown above, some early spy fiction texts depict homosexuality as an attribute of the main characters. Although homoeroticism has often been attributed to enemy characters in the spy thriller genre, the attribution of same-sex desire is rather ambiguous, as in the case of Buchan and Kipling, because it is equally attributed to both

protagonist and enemy. Entangled ambiguous homoeroticism connects protagonist and villain in a queer manner, and this ambiguity culminates in the fictional representation of the Cambridge spy ring – Guy Burgess, Kim Philby, Donald Maclean and Anthony Blunt – whose presence left a significant mark on Cold War spy fiction, as this thesis will illustrate in the coming chapters.

Homosexuality and Espionage in the twentieth Century: Britain before the 1950s

When analysing the representation of male homosexuality in spy fiction, it is essential to consider the cultural relation between two identities: male homosexuality and secret agency. Although these have no intrinsic link to each other, it is crucial to acknowledge how they were connected and how this connection has been shared in British culture. The first linkage of these identities can be found in the way they were required to behave: in the first half of the twentieth century in Britain, most gay men kept their sexuality a secret and passed as heterosexual, due to the criminality and social stigma imposed on homosexuals. Andrew Sinclair notes: “To be an open homosexual was to ruin one’s career and risk legal prosecution and prison” (1986, 40). Thus, most had to pretend to be heterosexual. Erin G. Carlston defines a “spy” as those who “pass as something other than what they are” (2013, 4). The identities of spies and British homosexuals coincided in the first half of twentieth century and earlier, because both had to pass for something they were not. They were required to engage in “a double-talk, a double-think”, and “double-life” (Sinclair 1986, 40). The difference is that men with same-sex desire were obliged to lead this “enforced ‘double life’” (Weeks 2016, 191), because of the unfair legal situation, while spies chose to do so out of professional necessity.

The clandestine nature of gay men and spies created a special association between these identities in the Cold War period. Gregory Woods indicates that throughout the twentieth century there slowly developed the “image of the ‘good’ homosexual”, who is discreet about their own sexuality, unlike the “bad” homosexuals or “perverts” who exhibit their sexuality through effeminate performance (Woods 2017, 307). According to this dichotomy, spies share the same qualities as those deemed to be “good” homosexuals. However, living as a “good” homosexual in Cold War Britain meant they had the potential to be transformed into a traitor. Woods explains: “The more silent and invisible you were, the more you could be trusted to fit in, and yet, ultimately, the less you could be trusted. If you were silent and invisible in the paranoid 1950s, you might be a Soviet spy” (2017, 309). Being homosexual and being a double agent drew a complex pattern that interconnected in the context of the Cold War. During this period, men desiring other men were placed in an ambivalent position; the more they tried to adjust to a heteronormative society by hiding their sexuality, the more they were suspected of being a Soviet spy.

The nature of the link between homosexuality and double agency changes over time. According to Carlston, homosexuality was a fitting cover for espionage before the Cold War, as it “could work to sow confusion about the causes of deception and illicit behavior” (Carlston 2013, 178). However, with the defection and arrest of the Cambridge spies, who were considered homosexual, homosexuality began to be thought of as the cause of betrayal; “as the spies were discovered, over the years, their sexuality became a focal point for explanations of their treachery” (Carlston 2013, 178). Being a homosexual was “no longer a smokescreen for espionage but, rather, now, assumed to be its

proximate cause” (Carlston 2013, 178-179). The defection of Burgess and Maclean in 1951 drastically changed the way homosexuality and the spy identity were connected.

Before the Cold War and the defection of the Cambridge spies, the double status afforded by a secret homosexual life facilitated actual clandestine activity committed by individual agents. Shortly before he died in 1973, Noël Coward confessed that he had worked as a spy for Britain in the Second World War (Koch 2008). This renowned playwright used his sexual identity to disguise his espionage activity: “The idea was to use his public personality — the merry playboy, the ‘don’t ask/don’t tell’ gay celebrity — as a mask for his passionate antifascism” and “a lifetime of concealing his own private life gave him a knack for the clandestine” (Koch 2008). Being gay was, indeed, a convenient cover for secret agents. Guy Burgess also utilised his sexual identity to hide his activity as a double agent. Sinclair notes that his “flaunted indiscretions were, indeed, part of his cover” and it was “Burgess’s shocking style of life and reckless statements that prevented anyone from believing that he was a Soviet agent” (1986, 88). The way Coward and Burgess utilised their own sexuality as a smokescreen to cover their espionage activity is reminiscent of the pre-Cold War period; most of the queer spies discussed in this thesis are separate from this tradition. They are a product of the culture which emerged after homosexuality and double agency became more strongly linked during the Cold War. In this regard, Burgess and Coward are significant figures for this thesis. They stand on a historical junction from where the relationship between homosexuality and secret agency changes, demarcating the shift in the way these identities are intertwined in British culture.

Although homosexuality was utilised as a convenient cover by some secret agents, the intersection of homosexuality and secret agency was by no means free from homophobic implications before the Cold War. For instance, in Britain during the First World War, Noel Pemberton-Billing – a Member of Parliament in the 1910s – published an article claiming the existence of “the Berlin Black Book, a supposed catalogue of 47,000 names, German agents and fifth columnists, homosexuals, lesbians, literary figures, artists, politicians, lawyers” (Childs 2018). The article asserts that “agents of Kaiser were stationed at such places as Marble and Hyde Park Corner” and “[t]he sexual peculiarities of members were used as a leverage to open fruitful fields for espionage” (Hoare 1997, 1). According to Pemberton-Billing’s article, Germans, male and female homosexuals, and upper-class citizens secretly conspired to subvert the British nation. Kevin Childs comments that “Billing played on fears of invasion, knowing that the general detestation of homosexuality and the British appetite for gay scandals would work in his favour” (Childs 2018). Thus, even before the Cold War – when homosexuality was sometimes used as a smokescreen for espionage – homophobic associations between spies and same-sex desires existed.

Indeed, this association was already widely entrenched in the imagination of the British public at the beginning of the twentieth century. Philip Hoare notes that “to many minds, homosexuality was subversion, so associated with Germany that the two had almost become synonymous” (Hoare 1997, 26). Furthermore, Jodie Medd notes that Pemberton-Billing and his entourage did not invent the association between homosexuality and being a traitor: “This association of homosexuality, high society, national betrayal, and social decay had a long-standing history, but it was Billing’s trial

that brought such sentiments into public debate at a particularly vulnerable cultural moment and condensed them into the single cryptic phrase” (2002, 31). The association between homosexuality and spying has had a rather long-standing presence in Western cultural history;⁶ however, it was in First World War Britain where “the paranoid fantasy of ‘the enemy within’ conflated spy fever with homophobia” (Medd 2002, 31). The Cold War paranoia in which homosexuals were regarded as potential Soviet spies is certainly located in this homophobic cultural tradition.

Homosexuality and Espionage in the Twentieth Century: the Cold War Period

The association between the homosexual and the spy underwent a crucial change in the Cold War period and became even more entrenched in the culture by the 1950s. Carlston notes: “When Burgess and Maclean disappeared a year later [1951] they did not create the nexus of homosexuality, Communism, and treachery in the minds of the British and American publics but merely confirmed its existence” (2013, 190). The cultural connection between homosexuality and secret agency was already established in the Anglophone culture, as seen in the incident caused by Billing, but it is the mid-twentieth century where this long-standing connection saw a definitive confirmation in the broader culture of both the UK and the US. Furthermore, in the British context, traitors were no longer foreign enemies as they were assumed be in the “Black Book”; rather, in the Cold War period, they were inseparable from the nation as the Cambridge spies came from the heart of the British Establishment, with a prestigious education and successful careers in government.

⁶ Carlston discusses the association between homosexuality and spying arising from the Dreyfus Affair in 1894 as an early example of this association (Carlston 2013, 1).

According to Carlston, the British media in the mid-twentieth century focused on the connection between male homosexuality and double agents with regard to the defection of Cambridge spies, and even assumed homosexuality was the cause of their treason. Governmental reports – written by the FBI and British intelligence – persistently underlined their homosexuality (Carlston 2013, 178-179). It seems that this homophobic link in the Cold War period had an even more significant impact on culture than that proposed by Pemberton-Billing during the First World War, primarily because the 1950s saw unprecedented attention by the popular press towards male homosexuality itself. Justin Bengry notes that “male homosexual acts entered public discourse in the early 1950s as never before” (Bengry 2012, 168). As the media highlighted the criminality of homosexual acts, the sexuality of the defected spies – Burgess was homosexual, and Maclean was bisexual – also came to be highlighted, and the fabricated image of the criminal homosexual traitor quickly spread among the British public.⁷

Indeed, the image of a criminal homosexual was rampant in the 1950s British media. For instance, in 1953, the renowned actor John Gielgud was arrested in a public lavatory in London for a homosexual offence (Sharp 2011), while in 1954 Lord Montague was arrested because he performed “gross offences” and “conspiracy to incite certain male persons to commit serious offences with male persons” (Bourne 2017). He was put on trial along with journalist Peter Wildeblood and landowner Michael Pitt-Rivers (Bourne 2017). These scandals surrounding upper-class British men attracted substantial attention on a national scale. Christine Geraghty explains the harsh treatment

⁷ Although male homosexuality was attributed to double agents primarily because of the defection of the Cambridge spies, this association between double agents and homosexuality was also reinforced by the arrest of the Soviet double agent John Vassall in 1962, a gay British civil servant who was blackmailed into spying for the Soviet Union (Carlston 2013, 180).

against gay men by the British authority in the 1950s, noting that the Home Office decided to “tighten up on the enforcement of the laws criminalising homosexual behaviour” in the early 1950s, which “led to a series of high-profile prosecutions in the early 1950s, accompanied by lurid press coverage” (2000, 177), such as the aforesaid instances of Gielgud and Lord Montague. The focus on homosexuality in media and public discourse of the 1950s was therefore on an unprecedented scale.

Homosexuality in British History: Interrelation between History and Fiction

The mid-twentieth century was a tumultuous time in which the place of homosexuals in British society underwent drastic changes. In 1957, the Wolfenden report was published; this was a governmental report which “recommended that homosexual sex between consenting males over the age of 21 in private be decriminalized” (Lewis 2016, 9). Ten years later, same-sex intercourse between consenting adults was decriminalised in England and Wales, with the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act 1967. Along with these legal changes, court cases on male homosexuality received considerable attention. The decade after the Wolfenden report leading up to the decriminalisation of male homosexuality has often been cited as a period in which suppressed homosexuals finally became liberated. However, queer historians state that these events substantially increased the “visibility of homosexuality as a viable sexual identity” (Smith 2015, 190). Such an identity came to exist around this time because of the growing discourse prompted by the scandals and legal developments discussed previously. Matt Houlbrook argues that the binary distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality had been solidified by the mid-twentieth century “only in the two decades after the Second World

War” (2006, 7). The 1950s and 1960s, the Cold War period when spies become “queer”, were also the time when homosexuality first became a viable identity within British social discourse.

Thus, when homosexuality came to be associated with secret agency, criminality and invisibility were attached in a literal sense to men desiring other men in British society. The Cambridge spy scandal was perceived in this context. The association between homosexuality and secret agency was established through the attention paid by the British media to the sexuality and criminality of the Cambridge spies. This identity nexus was created alongside the establishment of a modern homosexual identity in British culture.

This cultural assumption would linger for decades, and by the 1980s, it had become so solidly entrenched in British culture that an “author [Douglas Sutherland] of a well-known book about the case [*The Great Betrayal: the Definitive Story of Blunt, Philby, Burgess, and Maclean* (1980)] felt the need to point out dryly that ‘contrary to the current public view, homosexuality is not an essential qualification of being a spy’” (Carlston 2013, 181). Carlston refers to historical sources in discussing the establishment of the association between homosexuality and secret agency. This thesis adds that popular British culture played a significant role in disseminating this association in public.

The nexus between homosexuality and secret agency became further entrenched along with the recursive narratives of the Cambridge spy ring. Burgess, Philby, Maclean, and Blunt reappear frequently on the page and screen from the Cold War period to the present; as le Carré once wrote, “the story of Kim Philby lives on in us” like a “great

novel” (le Carré 1979, 9). Although the defection of Philby is a historical event, it has been treated as a fictional story and is deeply related to national identity, as demonstrated in le Carré’s choice of the word “us”. British culture has never relinquished its obsession with these secret agents.

Thus, the defection of the Cambridge spies is not merely a political incident in the past, but a significant narrative shared in British culture. Willmetts and Moran assert that “the lasting cultural influence of the Cambridge Five resides in its status as a narrative”. They assert that “the Cambridge Five cannot be understood merely as an historical event but should instead be regarded as a story that resonated with core themes of British identity in the context of the Cold War and Britain’s imperial decline” (2013, 55). Their recurrent narratives often feature their sexuality, and in each version of the story, the audience and reader see how differently this nexus of identities – the secret agency and homosexuality – is formed. In this way, the association between homosexuality and secret agency is continuously re-shaped. Different forms of adaptation– including the intertextual relation that viewers perceive – facilitate the transformation of this association in different contexts.

Cold War America and its Influence over Britain

Although it is constantly referred to in British spy fiction, the association between homosexuality and secret agency was also in large part consolidated in American culture. Alan Sinfield notes that “[u]ntil the Cold War, homosexuality was a submerged discourse”; however, “[o]nce it [homosexuality] could be linked, in a paranoid way, with communism, it could be invoked to reinforce the Cold War and stigmatised as treachery

against the Western Alliance” (1989, 76). As Sinfield’s choice of the word – “the Western Alliance” – indicates, the cultural link between homosexuality and secret agency is a co-product of American and British politics. As discussed in the next section, American politics took the initiative in creating such an identity nexus, which had a subsequent influence on Britain.

It is crucial to reflect on Cold War America to see how the association of homosexuality and secret agency was originally shaped. Robert J. Corber writes that homosexual men were often suspected of being Communists in Cold War America as “gay men could escape detection by passing as straight”, just as Communists could pass as non-Communist. It was impossible to recognise homosexuals or Communists by sight, and both were allegedly conspiring to overthrow the government in “the Cold War political imaginary” (1997, 11). After the Second World War and throughout the 1950s, Cold War America witnessed this cultural interconnection of homosexuality and double agency, due to the invisibility of men with same-sex desires.

This invisibility led to the American government harassing homosexual men on a national scale. For instance, George Chauncey notes: “The fact that homosexuals no longer seemed so easy to identify made them seem even more dangerous, since it meant that even the next-door neighbor could be one. The specter of the invisible homosexual, like that of the invisible communist, haunted Cold War America” (1994, 360). Cold War America, haunted by invisible homosexuals and communists, embarked on the regulation of people outside of the heteronormative order, as if the nation considered their presence to be a threat to its political order. John D’Emilio states that the 1950s was “the decade when Cold War tensions were at their height”; this was “a moment when the American

political system seized upon one particular aspect of sexual life”, that of “homosexuals and lesbians”. As he explained, “[t]he image of the homosexual as a menace to society sharpened in the 1950s and the sanctions faced by gay men and women intensified”. As the Cold War tension heightened, gays and lesbians were exposed to “the anti-homosexual campaigns of the Cold War era” (D’Emilio 1992, 58) led by the authorities. It is important to note that they were the victim of a large-scale government lay-off in this period, as a result of systematic hysteria influenced by this political climate. This incident is known as the “Lavender Scare”.⁸

It was under such circumstances that homosexual and spy identity decisively intersected within American culture. Hepburn summarises the political atmosphere as follows: “homosexuality enters the American consciousness as a species of treason” (2005, 193). Under this American political agenda during the late 1940s-1950s, homosexuals and communists were brutally categorised as “Communists and queers” (Savran 1992, 5). This crude categorisation is the basis upon which queer spies are formed. They are invisible others threatening a heteronormative order that the authorities were eager to maintain.⁹

Such rigid norms relating to sexuality were imported to the UK through the post-war coalition of Anglophone nations. Simon Shepherd points out the similarities between the attitudes of the Cold War UK and US, describing the former “loyal as a goldfish” (Shepherd 1989, 214) to the latter. The close political affiliation between the US and the

⁸ See Johnson 2004.

⁹ Rigid gender and familial norms characterise 1950s America; Elaine Tyler May notes that in Cold War America, “McCarthyism targeted perceived internal dangers” (May 2008, 12); in such a political atmosphere, it was believed that “[d]eviations from the norms of appropriate sexual and familial behavior might lead to social disorder and national vulnerability”. (May 2008, 12)

UK after the war enabled British culture to adopt American attitudes during the Cold War.¹⁰ US-UK collaboration in treating homosexuals as a security risk was promoted through the initiative taken by the American government, a time when post-war international politics was characterised by the deterioration of British power and the ascendance of the United States as the superpower. David A.J. Richards adds that “American concerns were also aroused by the 1951 escape to Moscow of two spies for the Soviet Union, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean (another such spy, Kim Philby, would escape to Moscow much later, after earlier being exonerated on espionage charges, in 1963)” (Richards 2013, 157). The defection of two Soviet-British spies in 1951 fuelled the homophobic fears of American policymakers, which explains why FBI documents highlighted the shared homosexual tendencies of Burgess and Maclean (Carlston 2013, 179). Overall, American Cold War policy excluding homosexuals as a security risk is highly relevant to Britain. Thus, the association of spies with homosexuals goes beyond the Atlantic and became entrenched as a widely shared belief in the broader Anglophone culture.¹¹

¹⁰ Nicholas de Jongh also supports this view; he notes that “[t]he reactive witch-hunts in the American public service, the FBI and the military to seek out and expel homosexuals were thus responses to the political anxieties of the Cold War” (De Jongh 1992b, 49) and “[t]he American fears that Britain was similarly affected led to ‘strong US advice to weed out homosexuals as hopeless security risks, from important jobs’” (De Jongh 1992b, 49). He adds that “[t]he British Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, and the Director of Public Prosecutions, all men of rampant homophobic persuasion, shaped and executed the policy” (De Jongh 1992b, 49) under such American influence. David A.J. Richards also notes: “More aggressive prosecutions of gay sex in Britain during this period reflected American pressure, to which an economically distressed Britain was at this time especially vulnerable. Some of this pressure was undoubtedly American homophobia, fomented by the McCarthy witchhunts” (Richards 2013, 157).

¹¹ So far, I have discussed how homosexuality was treated in the West. Societal attitudes towards male homosexuality on the other side of the Iron Curtain were no better. Laura Engelstein notes that, in the Soviet Union, Stalin’s regime introduced “a statute penalizing consenting homosexual relations between men”, thereby criminalising homosexual relations that had been tolerated in

Definitions of Queer and Queerness

In naming the thesis “queer spies”, it is crucial to explain in what way I use the term “queer”. Although this is a heavily contested word, it is used most frequently as “a synonym for ‘lesbian and gay’ or as shorthand for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community more generally” (Giffney 2009, 2) in the English-speaking world. Queer was originally a pejorative term,¹² but LGBTQ communities have appropriated this as a positive term to describe their sexual identity. As Jeffrey Weeks notes, from the 1990s “the term queer was resurrected as a more radical, challenging way to describe the transgressive possibilities of same-sex desires and practices” (Weeks 2012, 147). Although the term queer is “fraught with so many social and personal histories of exclusion” and “violence” (Sedgwick 1993, 9) over the course of its history, it has since shifted towards a more positive usage.

However, several scholars have questioned this contemporary usage. Robin Griffiths argues that the term was “purportedly ‘reclaimed’ by North American cultural theorists in the early 1990s” (2006, 4) and that “its reception within British academic circles has, in comparison, elicited much more suspicion of embracing this apparently

Soviet before 1934 (Engelstein 1995, 169). Mid-twentieth century Soviet Union was a no less sympathetic place to homosexuals than the Anglophone world that retained a hostile attitude towards homosexuals. The difference was that Soviets attempted to include homosexuality as one of their strategies in information warfare by utilising blackmail as a method to recruit double agents, as in the case of John Vassall, while the US and the UK tried to exclude them.

¹² Basil Dearden’s film *Victim* (1961) depicts a cinematic moment in which the word “queer” is presented in a grossly pejorative light. The film shows gay men across different classes tormented by blackmail due to the criminal status of homosexuality. The protagonist, renowned barrister Melville Farr (Dirk Bogarde), is one of them. One day his wife (Sylvia Syms) finds that their garage door has been painted with a white brush saying: “FARR IS QUEER”. The impact of the social stigma imposed on gay men is captured in the shot featuring the painted word “queer”, followed by the shocked expression of the wife.

unproblematic resignification” (Griffiths 2006, 4). He goes on to remind his readers that “Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s was hardly the ‘gay-friendly’ place to warrant such apolitical disregard for the implications of the word” (Griffiths 2006, 4). He asserts that the “socio-historical resonance” (Griffiths 2006, 4) of the term “queer” for lesbians and gay men should not be ignored.

As Griffiths explains, “queer” in the British context inevitably includes its adverse history; however, within this, British queerness draws a complex pattern in culture. For instance, Alan Sinfield highlights the significance of Oscar Wilde’s trial (1895) in establishing the queer stereotype in twentieth century Britain. He explains that at this trial, with respect to accusations of gross indecency against Wilde, “the entire, vaguely disconcerting nexus of effeminacy, leisure, idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence, and aestheticism, which Wilde was perceived, variously, as instantiating, was transformed into a brilliantly precise image” (Sinfield 2004, 138). This “precise image” Sinfield explains, is “queer” – unlike “the homosexual, as the lawyers and medics would have it” (2004, 138). Queer is thus a distinctive identity deriving from the history of Wilde and his trial in 1895. Ed Cohen also highlights the importance of the Wilde trial in establishing a distinct sexual identity, asserting that, after the trial, Wilde became “the paradigmatic example for an emerging public definition of a new ‘type’ of male sexual actor” (1993, 2), namely “the homosexual”.¹³

¹³ The issue of identity regarding homosexuality has its origin in the works of Michel Foucault. Foucault laid the groundwork for thinking the construction of homosexual identity in 19th century Europe. As he argues: “The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (Foucault 1990, 43). Sexual intercourse between men existed throughout history, and “sodomy was a category of forbidden acts” (Foucault 1990, 43). However, as Foucault articulates, “[t]he sodomite had been a

In British culture, queer conveys an image of homosexuality mixed with other attributes, such as immorality and a high-class status, as explained by Sinfield, Wilde being an archetype of this characterisation. To be “queer” in British culture, same-sex desire is a prerequisite, but several different qualities and a specific cultural history are also involved. The crystallisation of queer identity at the turn of the century reflects its pejorative status within British culture at the time, yet at the same time, the term “queer” has a distinctive cultural role in Britain. Richard Dyer contends that queerness in British culture encompasses “non-sexual qualities and that it was humanly (morally, medically, socially) problematic” (2002a, 1). He also notes that “notions and feelings of immorality, deviance, weakness, illness, inadequacy, shame, degeneracy, sordidness, disgust and pathos were all part of the notion of queerdom” (Dyer 2002a, 6). However, queerness has, in fact, broader implications than this. Dyer also refers to the term’s creative aspect; queerness is not only an insult thrown at gays, but a rather autonomous notion that generates its own queer culture. He identifies queer culture as “produced in a rough hundred year period [1869–1969] under the sign of queerness” (Dyer 2002a, 2). Wilde, “the queer par excellence” (Dyer 2002a, 6), is a critical figure in this queer culture tradition.

Although queerness is a pejorative sign attached to men desiring other men, it also possesses specific aesthetics leading from Wilde to various artists in subsequent years.

temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (Foucault 1990, 43) in modern Europe. Men engaging in sexual intercourse are now categorised as “homosexual”, although, before the 19th century, such acts were considered to be just temporary abnormalities in behaviour that did not constitute a particular sexual category for the individual. Thus, Foucault argues, homosexual identity is a modern construction. The associated image of homosexuality and queerness which emerged around the time of the Wilde trial – according to Sinfield and Cohen – is part of a continuum of modern homosexual identity which Foucault first fully articulated.

For instance, Dyer notes that Noël Coward has “moulded queer personalities through refinement of accent and condescension of attitude” (2002a, 6). Although queer is not the only pejorative label attached to gays and lesbians, it has been a firm aesthetic utilised by several artists in their often covert expressions. Incidentally, Coward leaves a significant mark at the beginning of the queer spy history, as Chapter 1 discusses: he brought the queer tradition from Wilde into the context of spy fiction. Thus, queerness as covert aesthetics in nineteen to twentieth century Britain is highly relevant to the representation of queer spies in fiction.

British queer identity and the fictional queer spies intersect in that they are both effeminate and criminal. Hepburn illustrates the image of queer spies “as protean, effeminate, deviant, enigmatic, unstable, *leaky*” (Hepburn 2005, 187). These adjectives listed by Hepburn overlap with the characteristics of British queer identity defined by Sinfield; “effeminacy, leisure, idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence, and aestheticism” (Sinfield 2004, 138). Homosexual spies in fiction are thus portrayed with this complex pattern of queerness in British culture, clandestinely shaping their images on the edge of the spy narratives.

The Cambridge spy ring forms an archetypal image of queer spies. Burgess, Philby, Maclean and Blunt are the materialisation of British queer spies, all of them encapsulating “[t]he image of queers as upper class and white” (Dyer 2002a, 6). Spies became queer in the British Cold War period because the Cambridge spies were portrayed as immoral, upper class, and clandestine through abundant press coverage. Later, their lived history was transferred to fiction, and their image has lingered on pages

and screen for decades. The association between homosexuality and secret agency thus became inherited and transferred through time via fiction, even after the Cold War.

The Cold War: When Fictional Spies Become Queer

The Cold War period is when spies became queer, both in and out of spy stories, in the sense that the identities of homosexuals and spies coincided to construct an image of homosexual spies as clandestine double agents. This queer becoming of homosexual spies is demonstrated in Oliver Buckton's discussion on how the notion "queer" shifts in spy fiction history. He refers back to Kipling's *Kim* (1901), noting that the word "queer" was used to describe the homoerotic attraction Kim held for Colonel Creighton: "It was absurd that a man of his position should take an interest in a little country-bred vagabond; but the Colonel remembered the conversation in the train, and often in the past few months had caught himself thinking of the queer, silent, self-possessed boy" (Kipling 2016, 215). According to Buckton, it is this queerness that attracts Colonel Creighton to Kim, but it is also this queerness that "threaten[s] the very imperial future" that Kim represents. Buckton then notes that "[b]y the time of le Carré and his contemporaries, such queerness had come to seem more than suspicious: it threatened to undermine the fabric of the British state" (Buckton 2015, 7). Although he does not specify as such, it seems that the author is referring to homosexual spy characters such as Bill Haydon in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974). As Buckton suggests, the presence of a "homoerotic bond" in *Kim* would later transform into "something more ominous and duplicitous in later spy fiction" (Buckton 2015, 7). The innocent homoerotic relationship between Kim and Colonel Creighton is thus superseded by the criminality, clandestine nature, and

double agency attributed to male homosexuality after the defection of the Cambridge spies, which is considered to have led to the decline of Britain as a superpower.

In le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1963), the disillusioned MI6 spy Alec Leamas rants bitterly: "What do you think spies are: priests, saints, martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors, too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives" (le Carré 2010, 246). Although Leamas does not use the word "queer", the choice of the word "pansies" has a similarly insulting effect, as the term "queer" was heavily charged in twentieth century Britain. This also confirms the homophobic association of homosexual identity with spies in Cold War fiction. Leamas' definition of "spy" includes being a double agent and homosexual, thus confirming the image of criminal queer spies.

Over the course of the twentieth century, male homosexuality in spy fiction gradually became something sinister, and queer became a charged term in spy fiction, coinciding with the appearance of actual homosexual spies during the Cold War. The pre-Cold War homoerotic bond in *Kim* transformed into the menacing homosexuality of Bill Haydon, and this signalled the emergence of the Cold War queer spies. Unlike Kim, who is portrayed as a dutiful agent, queer spies appear as treacherous double agents during the Cold War period. Criminal Cold War queer spies also incorporate a queer history specifically developed in Britain; Haydon's characteristic as a decadent artistic aristocrat reflects a queer culture deriving from Wilde's tradition.

The transformation of male homosexuality into something sinister touches upon the uncanny aspect of the queer spies. Nicholas Royle defines uncanny as "a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar" which "can take the form of something

familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context” (Royle 2003, 1). Homosexuality, which appeared familiar in pre-Cold War spy fiction, returns as something eerie in later texts. Royle also notes that “[t]he uncanny is queer. And the queer is uncanny” (2003, 43), describing the conjunction of these two notions. He indicates that they are closely connected in a linguistic sense; “resonance and substitution between the ‘queer’ and the ‘uncanny’ appear across a wide range of texts” (Royle 2003, 43). Spy fiction is another instance where these notions intersect, in that it produces a moment when its queer spies appear uncanny, in the form of ghosts, which this thesis will explore. The Cold War era is when spies became uncanny, rather than merely queer, haunting the spy fiction texts from that moment onwards.

The most critical usage of the word “queer” in modern contexts – queer as something ever-changing – should be noted before concluding this section. Queer designates not a static identity but rather an on-going process that is always in flux. David M. Halperin argues that “queer” is “a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalized because of her or his sexual practice” (1995, 62). He defines “queer” as “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” and as “an identity without an essence” (1995, 62). Halperin continues by further defining queer as “a horizon of possibility, an opportunity for self-transformation” and “the very site of gay becoming” (Halperin 1995, 79). The word “identity” brings to mind a unified, stable ground upon which a subject stands. However, queer identity is freed from this kind of fixation and thereby becomes “spaces to be navigated, revisited, revised and elided on a moment-to-moment basis” (Giffney 2009, 7). This modern definition of queer is relevant to the fictional queer spies. From the

turn of the century onward, the queerness of spies begins to transcend its initially clandestine or criminal connotations, in line with the development of queer studies in the English-speaking world.

As this thesis contends, several artists have consciously attempted to update the queerness attributed to secret agency, and this identity shift points to the pliancy of identities that being queer in a modern sense designates. Television series such as *Cambridge Spies* (2003) and *London Spy* (2015) reframe the clandestine homosexual spies of the past in a more contemporary definition of “queer,” connecting the Cold War queer spies to contemporary culture after the 2000s. Indeed, spy fiction often presented queer spies in a negative light, intertwining homosexual men with the clandestine nature of the double agents, although there are also several instances in which the queerness of these spies seems to be open to the modern usage of “queer”. When discussing contemporary spy fiction such as *Cambridge Spies* and *London Spy*, this modern usage of “queer” becomes an issue. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on how creators of contemporary television reconcile this modern queerness with the pejorative sense of “queer” that emerged in British culture.

Spying, Homosexuality, and Class

In Britain, a further twist was added to the association between homosexuality and spies, namely the issue of class. Being a spy, especially a queer one, was often associated with the leisure-class. Summing up the closeness of queer spies with ruling class men, Carlston suggests that “[t]he spy can look like, indeed can *be*, a gentleman” (2013, 159) and “the inside/outside status of the spy is analogous to that of the ruling-class

homosexual, who is thoroughly embedded in the very social regime that makes him a criminal” (Carlston 2013, 159-160). Although the basic idea of their identity – homosexual and spy – is defined through the Anglophone homophobic imagination, British queer spies have their own characteristics that are relevant to their own class.

In Britain, homosexuality is associated not only with communist spies but also with the establishment, due to the impact of the defection of the Cambridge spies. As Alan Sinfield argues, there exists a “link between communist treachery and homosexuality, and between them and the high-cultural establishment” (1989, 77). Indeed, Burgess, Maclean, Philby, and Blunt were all working at the heart of the British establishment class after receiving a prestigious education at Cambridge. According to Adam Mars-Jones, media coverage of the 1950s trial on homosexual offences shows that the betrayals of Soviet spies such as Burgess and Maclean “made social privilege, homosexuality and treason seem a mutually reinforcing trinity” (2017). The association between homosexuality, political betrayal, and privileged upper-class men thus became critical in this scandal. Shepherd notes that in British culture there exists an “image of homosexuality as the ‘sickness’ of a leisured and unproductive social class”. This image “re-appears in the British scandals”, such as the defection of Burgess and Maclean and the scandal of Lord Montague, who was arrested for a homosexual offence in 1954 (Shepherd 1989, 216). Thus, the Cambridge spy scandal was presented on the continuum of a leisure-class queer culture. In the British Cold War cultural imagination, the Cambridge spies present an image of the leisure class and queer spies,

The identity nexus of middle-and upper-class men and spies is also related to the British queer identity discussed earlier. As Sinfield notes, the notion of queerness was

consolidated through the image of Wilde and his trial (1994, 3), where aspects of queer identity were closely associated with aspects of upper-class identity. Queer spies in Britain are mixed products of this long-standing tradition of homosexuality in the privileged class. In their image, the bohemian characteristics of Wildean culture, the degrading queerness prevalent in twentieth century Britain, and their own criminality as betrayers of their nation merge with each other.

By extension, queer spies also reflect the clandestine status of male homosexuality in the British ruling class. Although homosexuality has existed in the heart of British culture for a long time, it has been treated as “the love that dare not speak its name” as described by Lord Alfred Douglas when referring to Wilde in his poem “Two Loves” (1894). In E.M Forster’s novel *Maurice* (1971), the protagonist expresses his sexuality by crying out “I’m an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (Forster 2005, 137). The novel also demonstrates that male homosexuality is regarded as “the unspeakable vice of the Greeks” (Forster 2005, 77) among university intellectuals in the early twentieth century. Educational institutions for the establishment class have always contained same-sex desires among their students and pupils. As Sedgwick notes, “[s]chool itself was, of course, a crucial link in ruling-class male homosocial formation” (2016, 176). Nicholas de Jongh summarises the presence of homosexuality in British public schools as follows: “The British traditionally regard the homosexual activities of middle-class and upper-middle-class adolescents, at sexually segregated private schools for the affluent, as a passing phase and not an authentic sign of sexual orientation” (1992b, 61). Although homosexuality is only treated as a “passing phase” and “not an authentic sign of sexual orientation” (de Jongh 1992b, 61), this sexuality leaves a crucial

mark in British culture. Cyril Connolly indicates that these same-sex relationships at school have had a considerable consequence for British politics. Reminiscing on his own education at Eton, he notes that “the greater part of the ruling class remains adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly, sentimental, and in the last analysis homosexual” (2008, 253). Due to the years they spent at the elite institution, the British ruling class is defined as “homosexual” by Connolly. In discussing the history of same-sex desire in Britain, Jeffrey Weeks clarifies that homosexuality has always been present in the British government (2016, 159). Thus, male homosexuality in the British higher class has been an unspeakable, yet always familiar experience among its members.

The treatment of male homosexuality in the British middle-and upper-class evokes the way the uncanny (unheimlich) is constructed by Sigmund Freud in his essay “The Uncanny” (1919). Freud defines the uncanny as “something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it” (2001, 245). For the ruling class, male homosexuality is the undercurrent everyone secretly knows and is therefore familiar, yet it is not spoken out loud and is carefully hidden from the surface of official speech. This parallels the way homosexuality is presented in British spy fiction. Spies’ same-sex desire is always coded as a secret message waiting to be deciphered, just as same-sex relationships are tolerated in public school while, as Florence Tamagne argues, headmasters deny the presence of such relationships in school (Tamagne 2006, 106). Chapter 2 will further explore the relationship between queer spies and the British ruling class by analysing le Carré’s *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Spy fiction thus traces the way the British ruling class treats

male homosexual desire where male homosexuality is “something familiar that has been repressed” (Freud 2001, 247).

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 discusses two novels and their film adaptations; namely, Graham Greene’s *Our Man in Havana* (1958), le Carré’s *The Tailor of Panama* (1996), Carol Reed’s film *Our Man in Havana* (1959), and John Boorman’s film *The Tailor of Panama* (2001). Le Carré’s novel is a modern rewriting of Greene’s. Therefore, this chapter focuses on two levels of “adaptation”: adaptation through media – from novel to film – and adaptation through time, from the 1950s to the 1990s-2000s. *Our Man in Havana*, both novel and film, describes the moment in which spy identity and homosexual identity became entangled in the late 1950s. However, this is carefully concealed in the text, and the embedded queerness of its spies becomes apparent only when the text is read alongside its later adaptations. The chapter analyses how the representation of the sexuality of secret agents becomes queered through adaptations and how this queering retrospectively makes visible the same-sex desire concealed in the 1950s texts. Although this process seems to reflect a liberating aspect of adaptation – retelling a story may make hidden queer aspects visible –, queer spies do not necessarily follow this trajectory in the case of *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*. The chapter discusses this intricate pattern of adaptation and sexual representation, investigating the problematic reincarnation of queer spies in le Carré’s text and its subsequent adaptation.

Chapter 2 focuses on le Carré’s 1974 novel *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. This novel was adapted for the screen twice: once on television as a BBC mini-series in 1979 and

then on the film screen in 2011. The story features a bisexual secret agent who is, in fact, a mole planted in MI6, following an investigation to reveal his identity. The sexual representation of this agent in each version of the story demonstrates a gradual change in representations of homosexuality in Britain. At the same time, the narrative portrays hidden queer spies. They are covertly depicted in all three versions of the text where they are always pushed onto the periphery of the pages and frames as if they were ghosts haunting the texts after their disappearance. Although almost four decades passed between the original novel and the latest film version, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* continues to present queer spies in this ghostly fashion, despite the legal and societal changes that occurred in British society in the intervening period. This chapter closely follows the three different versions of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and analyses how these texts secretly transmit ghostly queerness intact through the generations.

Chapter 3 examines theatrical pieces about spies, such as Alan Bennett's plays featuring double agents modelled on the Cambridge spies: *The Old Country* (1977), *An Englishman Abroad* (broadcast as a television film in 1983, later adapted into a stage play in 1988), and *A Question of Attribution* (first released as a play in 1988, later adapted into a television film in 1991). In addition to these plays, the chapter also discusses John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965) and Julian Mitchell's *Another Country* (1981, later adapted into a film in 1984). The playwright Alan Bennett, in his diary entries from the 1980s to the 2000s, often expresses his discomfort towards the Cold War political tendency to posit an inherent link between homosexuality and double agency. Bennett does not openly express his criticism in his plays; however, through his spy trilogy, he manages to dislocate this association through his craft as a playwright and the

performance of the actors. Bennett confronts this representational tradition and thus creates a new type of queer spy in his plays and television films. Mitchell's secret agent also portrays a new form of queer spy on the 1980s stage, offering a unique interpretation of the Cambridge spy Guy Burgess. This chapter investigates how these plays question the validity of the association of homosexuality and spying after the 1950s, problematising the moment in the Cold War when spies become queer within the interrelation between the theatre, television, and film. At the same time, the chapter explores how ghostly images accompany queer spies in the works of Bennett and Mitchell.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to two television films in the 1980s, *Blade on the Feather* (1980) and *Blunt* (1987), and the 2001 television mini-series *Cambridge Spies*, and refers to the 1990-1992 television sitcom *The Piglet Files*. The association between secret agents and male homosexuality reached its height in the 1980s following the revelation of Anthony Blunt's status as a double agent in 1979. The media in the 1980s exposed its homophobic attitude by yoking double agents with homosexuals as others to mainstream culture. The two television films in the 1980s, both featuring protagonists modelled on the Cambridge spies, are the products of such times. These television films are significant in their articulate portrayal of the late Cold War moment in which spies became queer. Furthermore, they exhibit a certain tendency to transcend their own time by depicting homosexual secret agents as complex characters, neither as stereotypical villains nor as cryptic ghosts. The chapter continues to follow the trajectory of queer spies on television by considering *Cambridge Spies*, released in 2001 after a representational void of secret agents on popular British television in the 1990s. *Cambridge Spies*, released a decade

after the Cold War, when everyone seems to have forgotten this cultural association, re-draws the new form of queer spies on the popular screen.

Chapter 5 analyses the BBC 2 mini-series *London Spy* (2015). The series enacts the queer becoming of secret agents in the Cold War while at the same time attempting to deconstruct the association between homosexuality and secret agency from a 21st-century perspective. The series narrates the history of the queer spy in Britain from the 1950s, depicting a retired old gay agent who survived several tumultuous decades.

Simultaneously, it portrays the young gay protagonist who is becoming a spy while investigating his dead lover's identity, who was, in fact, an MI6 agent. In this way, the series depicts the trajectory of queer spies in the past and for the future. It thus seeks a new queer spy identity, free from the pejorative connotations of the Cold War past.

The works discussed in each chapter all ruminate on the moment when spies become queer at different points in history, thereby dealing with the Cold War cultural assumption connecting homosexuality and secret agency. Some works adapt the homophobic association between spies and secret agents, inheriting and transmitting this formula for decades. Several works attempt to subvert this cultural connection by playing with the queerness imposed on spies and homosexuals. These five different chapters are written with reference to different media: novels, films, theatre and television, with each paying attention to the way in which specific media deal with the representation of sexuality.

Discussing Two Identities: Homosexual and Spy

Although the cultural relationship between spies and homosexuality was created by mass media and governmental reports in the mid-twentieth century, it had nothing to do with individual men who were attracted to other men. Woods notes that “[i]t may well be that because they were gay they were especially good at *keeping* secrets, rather than at betraying them” (2017, 11) and “when one actually lays out the evidence it becomes clear that all the sound and fury about homosexual spies have been ridiculously disproportionate to the small number of actual cases” (Woods 2017, 12). Compared with the uproar created by media and government regarding homosexuality as a threat to national security, the number of actual cases caused by gay or bisexual spies is small. Moreover, homosexual identity itself has absolutely nothing to do with double agency.

By exploring the association of two different identities – spy and homosexual – intensely underlined in the Cold War context, this thesis follows Sinfield’s argument that the link between homosexuality and theatre is “culturally contingent” (1991, 44). Although “an essential link between homosexuality and theatre is sometimes proposed”, there is no intrinsic connection between them as both are “contingent, cultural phenomena-subject to the pressures and limits of a specific historical moment and figuring differently in different parts of the social order” (Sinfield 1991, 44). Although this thesis explores the relationship between male homosexuality and espionage, it does not propose any essential link between them. The connection between homosexuality and secret agency is thus culturally contingent, never essential.

However, when such an identity nexus exists, it is important to closely follow how and why this connection is made. As this thesis proposes, mid-twentieth century British culture maintained an intense interconnection between homosexuality and

espionage. Later spy fiction texts adapt this connection in their portrayal of homosexuality, preserving the image of the Cold War queer spies across generations, while occasionally adding a critical commentary. The form of this interconnection varies through time, in the same way that adaptation creates diverse interpretations by rewriting texts across time. Each chapter investigates the different ways that writers and theatre and television artists react to the cultural association between homosexuality and secret agency, figuring different forms of queer spies “in different parts of the social order” (Sinfield 1991, 44).

Chapter 1. Greene, le Carré, Adaptation: Spy Stories across Media and Time

Adaptation from Greene to le Carré

This chapter explores the adaptation of Graham Greene's novel *Our Man in Havana* (1958) to John le Carré's *The Tailor of Panama* (1996), and their subsequent film adaptations. In the acknowledgements of his book *The Tailor of Panama*, le Carré states that the novel would not have been written without the influence of Graham Greene: "without Graham Greene this book would never have come about. After Greene's *Our Man in Havana*, the notion of an intelligence fabricator would not leave me alone" (le Carré 1996, 410). Right at the end of this volume, le Carré confesses that his story was modelled after Greene's *Our Man in Havana* (1958). This chapter investigates how the queer subtexts of Greene's *Our Man in Havana* and le Carré's *The Tailor of Panama* interrelate in their adaptation through media and time.

The characters of le Carré's novel are mostly based on those found in Greene's text. Both novels establish "an intelligence fabricator" (le Carré 1996, 410) as the protagonist: James Wormold in *Our Man in Havana* and Harry Pendel in *The Tailor of Panama*. These British expatriates living in Latin America act as spies by fabricating and spreading fictional information concerning national security. As Geoffrey Winthrop-Young notes, "Greene's Wormold reappears in the shape of Harry Pendel, John le Carré's eponymous tailor of Panama" (2013, 22). In le Carré's novel, which "pays homage to a literary precursor's satire of the Great Game" (Snyder 2017, 51), each character correlates with those in *Our Man in Havana*. The MI6 spy recruiter Hawthorn in *Our Man in Havana* is reincarnated as opportunistic agent Andy Osnard in *The Tailor*

of *Panama*, while Wormold's best friend – Dr. Hasselbacher – is re-written as Mickie Abraxas, a disillusioned ex-revolutionary fighter, both of whom lose their lives as the protagonists' lie expands and attracts the attention of clandestine organisations. The queer subtexts of these texts are mostly based on the depiction of their characters, and this chapter examines how the representation of carefully embedded homosexuality in these spy stories changes through a multi-layered adaptation process.

Complex Patterns of Adaptation: Trans-Media Adaptation and Intertextual Adaptation

The adaptational relationship between these texts is not straightforward, as it involves different media and time. The novel *The Tailor of Panama* is an adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* in a direct sense without the transition of media, in accordance with Linda Hutcheon's basic statement on adaptation: "stories are born of other stories" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 2). However, both novels were adapted into a film, the former in 1959 directed by Carol Reed and the latter in 2001 by John Boorman. These adaptations draw a complex pattern. Firstly, it is a rewriting of the novel; secondly, it is a transcoding of the text from novel to film. Finally, it is the intertextual relation that these four texts collectively interweave. Therefore, when discussing them in terms of adaptation, "[a] doubled definition of adaptation" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 22) is involved: adaptation "as a product (as extensive, particular transcoding)", and adaptation "as a process (as creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality)" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 22). This chapter examines the four texts highlighting the changes

effected by adaptation both as a product and process while paying close attention to the media specificity of novel and film.

The Queer Becoming of Spies in *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*

As clarified in the Introduction, spies became queer in the Cold War era in both media coverage and spy fiction, and this is also found in the texts discussed in this chapter. The moment when the clandestine status of secret agents and homosexuals intersect is undoubtedly engraved in *Our Man in Havana*, and subsequently passed on to both the novel and film of *The Tailor of Panama*. *Our Man in Havana*, written and filmed amid the Cold War, marks the early stage of the spy's queer becoming in fiction. As this thesis will clarify, this moment will be inherited and re-enacted in other spy fiction texts throughout the rest of the twentieth century and the early 21st century, and *Our Man in Havana* is located at the beginning of the genealogy of Cold War queer spies. *The Tailor of Panama* re-enacts the queer becoming of spies by tracing *Our Man in Havana*. The former highlights the covert queer representation concealed in the latter, further magnifying it through the process of adaptation. This chapter discusses how the queerness created in the intersection of identities – spy and homosexual – in the Cold War context is transformed in the late 1990s-early 2000s.

The Adaptation of *Our Man in Havana*

Neither the novel nor film adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* seems to concern male homosexuality on the surface; however, a homoerotic subtext is carefully and skilfully concealed in these texts. *Our Man in Havana* was published and made into a film in the

late 1950s, the middle of the Cold War era, which was characterised by rigid norms pertaining to gender roles (Kackman 2005, xxv). Moreover, as discussed in the Introduction, the decriminalisation of male homosexual intercourse did not take place until 1967 in England and Wales. Furthermore, the film industry at the time was especially careful about the representation of homosexuality due to the Production Code, which prohibited the explicit depiction of homosexuality (Corber 1997, 55-56).¹⁴ Considering this historical background, the discreet nature of homosexual representation in *Our Man in Havana* comes as no surprise. The point this chapter investigates is how and what kind of subtle queer subtext was brought into *Our Man in Havana*, how this was later picked up after decades by le Carré and Boorman, and where *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama* are located in the representational history of male homosexuality in spy fiction.

Although both the novel and film of *Our Man in Havana* conceal a queer subtext, a twist in sexual representation is significantly more visible in the screen adaptation which exhibits “unconventional attitudes to sex and gender” (Evans 2005, 110). This is highlighted in the newly added scene to the film and the performance of Noël Coward, who starred as MI6 agent Hawthorne, as well as the skilful construction of lines that evokes Coward’s plays, which “offer some flirtation with unorthodox sexuality” (Sinfield 1991, 47). Peter Williams Evans asserts that the presence of Coward on screen adds a homosexual subtext to the film version of *Our Man in Havana*. He notes that “Hawthorne’s otherness” is “relayed through the play on Noel Coward’s homosexuality,

¹⁴ Although the director Reed and the main actor Guinness are British, the film *Our Man in Havana* was produced and distributed by Columbia Pictures, and the casts consist of British and American actors along with those of other several nationalities. For this reason, it seems likely that the Production Code in the US also had a significant effect on this film.

and the *double entendres* that seldom fail to characterise his speech” (Evans 2005, 112). He lists “the scene where he attempts to recruit Wormold in a public lavatory” (2005, 112) as a conspicuous example showing the influence of the playwright on the film. The homoerotic nuance of Coward’s performance affects the interpretation of the character, and thus the film. Evans’s mentioning of “the *double entendres*” is worth reiterating, as they are understood to be characteristic of Coward,¹⁵ and this also has a significant effect on the homosexual representation in the film, as this chapter will demonstrate. Coward, who “rejected normative sexual values” (Summers 2004, 63), left a significantly queer trace in the film beyond London’s West End theatre through his presence in *Our Man in Havana*.¹⁶

The scene Evans mentions, Hawthorne’s recruitment in the toilet, is the first scene charged with queer innuendo that audience members are greeted with in this film. Their encounter takes place in a deserted bar in downtown Havana. Spotting Wormold (Alec Guinness) sitting at the end of a long counter at the far end of the frame, Hawthorne (Noël Coward) walks towards him, chatting cheerfully. The atmosphere surrounding this casual interaction abruptly changes when Hawthorne asks Wormold where the male bathroom is, and then whispers behind his ear: “you go in there, and I’ll follow.” Wormold’s expression freezes for a brief moment, creating a certain tension on the screen. Guinness’s expression here conveys a complex nuance, impossible to be reduced to a single meaning. His briefly frozen expression seems to reflect suspicion and

¹⁵ Claude J. Summers also notes that Coward “intimated, through double entendre and allusion, his own unconventional sexual preference” (Summers 2004, 63).

¹⁶ As stated in the Introduction, Coward himself was working as an actual spy during the Second World War, and lived through this moment of queer spy becoming, where his clandestine sexuality and, albeit temporarily, his profession as a spy intertwined.

confusion towards this stranger asking to go to the bathroom with him, yet at the same time it looks like as if a slight sexual expectation is descending on his face with an ever so slight smile on his mouth (Fig. 1). He declines this invitation to the gentlemen's room, and then Hawthorne tells him, "you're an Englishman, aren't you?", as if every true English gentleman ought to walk into the toilet together with their fellow countryman. Evans highlights the "links between Englishness, doing one's duty, and homosocial as well as potentially homosexual tendencies" (2005, 111) visible in this scene. Indeed, this sequence is loaded with ambiguous homoerotic tension between two men. Ultimately, it transpires that Hawthorne was simply trying to lure Wormold into the bathroom to secretly recruit him. In the toilet, Hawthorne runs the tap water so that their conversation will not be heard by hidden microphones, and then hides Wormold in a cubicle when a Havana police officer enters. In this way, Wormold learns from Hawthorne that recruiting a secret agent has to be accomplished discreetly to ensure privacy.



Figure 1: Hawthorne inviting Wormold into the men's room.

The surface story narrates the recruitment of a spy in this sequence; however, the actor's performance conveys something else. Robert Stam notes that "[f]ilm has special capacities for presenting the extraverbal aspects of discursive exchange", as in the sound film we "witness the facial or corporeal expression", as well as hear the words (2005, 19). The intensified queer nuance on-screen in *Our Man in Havana* is a product of film as a specific medium (its media specificity) as highlighted by Stam. Moreover, Stam writes that "film is ideally suited for conveying the social and personal dynamics operating between interlocutors' since film contextualizes the words through mise-en-scène, performance and sound such as music and noise" (2005, 19). In this way, the written words in the novel are contextualised through the techniques of film through adaptation, and the subtle sexual undercurrent in this scene between Wormold and Hawthorne, two "interlocutors", is amplified in the film adaptation.

By returning to the corresponding scene in the original novel, a different interpretation becomes possible. The scene where Hawthorne recruits Wormold in a bar in downtown Havana takes place as follows in the original novel:

[H]e [Hawthorne] had reached the limit of eccentricity when he added in a low voice, 'You go to the Gents and I'll follow you.'

'The Gents? Why should I? '

'Because I don't know the way.'

In a mad world it always seems simpler to obey. Wormold led the stranger through a door at the back, down a short passage, and indicated the toilet. 'It's in there.' (Greene 2007, 23)

This corresponding part in the original novel does not seem to have a queer subtext.

However, by revisiting this scene after watching the film, the "eccentricity" of Hawthorne is given further queer connotations. Greene does not designate what kind of atmosphere surrounds these two men when Hawthorne invites Wormold into the bathroom, other than to suggest that the situation is highly uncommon. The novel does

not specify what lies beyond “the limit of eccentricity” (Greene 2007, 23). By contrast, the film suggests what lies beyond: it is the same-sex desire between the spy and the spy-to-be. Greene discreetly withholds homoeroticism in his novel, treating same-sex desire as “the love that dare not speak its name”, existing beyond that which the author can describe with his or her pen. Stam notes that adaptation may “retroactively liberate the oppressed” of the original text (2005, 42). Carefully suppressed homosexual representation in the original novel is thus freed with the screen adaptation of *Our Man in Havana*.

In this sequence in the film, “[T]he camp and covert gayness of Coward’s performance” (Evans 2005, 111) and Guinness’s expression convey meaning that transcends the narrative. The intense moment in which Hawthorne seduces Wormold into the toilet addresses the mid-twentieth century intersection of homosexuality and being a spy: the homoerotic relationship between two men and the clandestine activity of secret agents. In this way, the sequence captures the Cold War political landscape in which spies and homosexuals are conveyed equally as queer and as clandestine others outside of mainstream society, congregating in the toilet. The film version makes this intersection more visible.

Furthermore, the film version, for which Greene himself wrote the screenplay,¹⁷ adds a scene related to the sequence above, and it is this that confirms the queer undercurrent of the film version. A subsequent sequence shows Wormold utilising Hawthorne’s method to recruit his own agent. However, his attempt results in a

¹⁷ The writer’s involvement in the production of the film adaptation reminds us of le Carré’s role in the production of the film *The Tailor of Panama*, working both as executive producer and writer alongside director John Boorman.

misunderstanding. Cifuentes (Grégoire Aslan), a Cuban engineer, presumes that Wormold is trying to sexually assault him in the lavatory and vehemently rejects him, shouting “if you touch me again, I shall complain to the committee”. This newly invented scene on screen alludes to the criminality associated with male homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century. In this scene, Wormold is mistaken for a predatory homosexual trying to sexually assault Cifuentes, and this misunderstanding is used for comic effect. By adding this scene, the film adaptation underlines the fact that the male lavatory not only functions as a private place to recruit secret agents but also as a space for gay men to meet and have sexual intercourse. In Britain, public toilets have a history as a meeting place for gay men, and this was often referred to as “cottaging”, meaning “the act of seeking out sexual encounters in public conveniences by men with other men” (Ashford 2007, 507). Brian Lewis records how police targeted urinals to persecute gay men in the 1950s (2016, 30). They had to meet secretly, as illegal homosexual intercourse was carefully monitored.

The public lavatory is thus where sexuality and politics ambiguously intertwine in spy fiction. In his analysis of the spy fiction genre, Allan Hepburn notes that the gentlemen’s bathroom “functions as a place for casual sex” for homosexuals while at the same time “spies congregate around the toilets” (2005, 191). As this thesis discusses later, this dual status of the public toilet is often demonstrated in spy fiction texts depicting double agents under the Cold War.¹⁸ The public bathroom in spy fiction functions as a space that signals the intersection of homosexuality and secret agency, and *Our Man in Havana* provides an early example of this trope. The sequence in which

¹⁸ See the discussion on the television film *Blunt* (1987) and the mini-series *Cambridge Spies* (2003) in Chapter 4, “Queer Spies on Television: During and After the Cold War”.

Hawthorne recruits Wormold `deploys this trope and the subsequent sequence in which Wormold tries to recruit Cifuentes in vain even uses this convention to create a comedy of misunderstanding. The latter sequence even adds criminality to the intersection of spies and homosexuals in the toilet because Wormold is mistaken for a predatory homosexual by Cifuentes. With the latter in mind, Hawthorne adopts the position of a clandestine seducer to homoerotic pleasure which was deemed criminal in 1959. Thus, recurrent scenes depicting the recruitment of spies in the toilet definitively confirm the queer undertone of the film, intertwined with the criminality of being a spy and homosexual.

Although Evans acknowledges the queer subtext of this recruitment scene, it is not the only scene charged with same-sex desire in *Our Man in Havana*. In both the novel and the film, the ambiguous dual status surrounding the term “gay” is demonstrated through the conversation of Wormold and Carter, an enemy agent sent to Havana to assassinate Wormold. Evans describes Carter as “another Englishman of seemingly nonconformist sexual tastes” (2005, 111-112) due to “his unstated ‘shyness’ of women” (Evans 2005, 111). Along with Hawthorne, Carter represents the queer subtext of *Our Man in Havana*.

In the film version, Wormold and Carter (Paul Rogers) find each other in the aeroplane from Kingston to Havana. Wormold has a secret meeting with Hawthorne in Kingston and then flies back to his house in Havana while Carter is visiting there under the pretext of a business trip as a fellow vacuum cleaner salesman, although he was in fact sent to kill the protagonist. Sitting next to each other across the aisle, Wormold notices that Carter is holding some documents about vacuum cleaners, and, presuming

that Carter is his fellow salesman, nonchalantly talks to him about their business. This looks like a natural conversation between two English men in the same industry who found each other abroad. However, a slightly disturbed tempo in their speech gives this conversation a queer subtext, which otherwise would appear devoid of any kind of desire. As soon as they begin to chat, Carter stares at Wormold and asks: “This is my first trip. Gay spot, Havana, they tell me.” Wormold smiles at him and replies: “if you care for roulette and brothels.” Carter answers: “I didn’t exactly mean... not that I’m a puritan, mind.” When he replies, there is a distinct pause between these two sentences. Carter abruptly stops his first sentence after proclaiming “I didn’t exactly mean...”, implying what he means by “gay spot” does not signify “roulette and brothels”, and a momentary silence descends upon the two men. This brief pause is replete with tension: Wormold stares back at him in this fraction of silence, with a frozen smile on his face and the restless movement of his eyes betraying his subtle confusion, as if he has realised something unusual was hidden behind Carter’s words. Wormold’s expression seems to be asking: if Carter did not mean “roulette and brothel” by “gay spot”, then what is “gay” about Havana? After this exchange, Carter gives Wormold his business card: “here’s my card, perhaps you have a night free”, as he extends the invitation to spend a night together. They conclude their conversation by confirming that they will meet again the next day at the “European traders luncheon”, promising to “keep an eye” out for each other there. This scene also exists in the original novel and takes place as follows:

‘This is only my second trip to Cuba. Gay spot, they tell me,’ he said, blowing down his pipe and laying it aside for lunch.

‘It can be,’ Wormold said, ‘if you like roulette or brothels.’

Carter patted his tobacco-pouch as it were a dog’s head — ‘my faithful hound shall bear me company’. ‘I didn’t exactly mean... though I’m not a Puritan, mind. I

suppose it would be interesting. Do as the Romans do.’ He changed the subject. ‘Sell many of your machines?’ (Greene 2007, 170)

The corresponding scene in the original novel depicts the same conversation by deploying the word “[g]ay spot” (Greene 2007, 170). However, the moment’s silence replete with subtly heightened tension between these men is not visible on the page. It only mentions Carter’s abrupt change in the subject of their conversation, as if implying that something is slightly out of joint. In the film version, the actual physicality of the actors is added, and it is through their performance that the queer subtext becomes further intensified.

Furthermore, the film version adds several crucial lines in a subsequent sequence, and this addition on screen confirms what they could mean by “gay spot” in *Our Man in Havana*. Knowing that Carter was sent to kill him, Wormold decides to confront him face to face. He pretends that he does not know about the conspiracy regarding his assassination and feigns innocence when asking Carter out at night to go downtown, when in fact he is luring him somewhere quiet so that he can eliminate him. In the film version, Wormold walks in a casino where Carter plays roulette, smiles, and asks him out: “how about your middling hotspot, eh?” Carter glances at his watch and tells him that he thinks it is “a bit late”. Wormold insists: “all the better”, and there follows another silence between the two men that fills the frame with subtly augmented tension, where only a cheerful cabaret Cuban tune is audible to the audience. The camera captures Carter’s expression slowly changing colour during this silence, with the back of Wormold’s head facing the audience. Carter at first seems perplexed, but his expression slowly changes into a subtle smile as these men stare closely at each other in silence. Eventually, he asks Wormold “where could we go?” as if he had changed his mind during

their close exchange of gazes. Wormold suggests they should go to a club called Ophelia, which is not far from the casino, and Carter asks him: “quiet?”

WORMOLD: Oh, it’s very quiet.

CARTER: No danger of...police?

WORMOLD: Everything is legal in Havana.

Carter stutters before he says “police” as if it was a challenging word to pronounce and his mention of “police” gives crucial confirmation to the queer subtext of the film. 1950s Britain is recorded as a space in which intense policing of homosexuals took place, although “the policing of homosexual offences varied wildly across the country” (Lewis 2016, 4). In the 1950s especially, “[t]he Conservative government craved an ordered society of gendered conformity, enhanced fecundity and contented domesticity” (Lewis 2016, 4), and homosexual intercourse was an extremely likely target for police forces. Lewis reports the presence of “increasing alarm in official circles” on “an apparent increase in homosexual behaviour” (2016, 4). Carter’s concern about “police” reflects this intense policing of men with same-sex desire in the 1950s. Wormold stares at Carter in a straightforward fashion and tells him “everything is legal in Havana”. Upon hearing this, Carter abruptly looks up as if he has heard something shocking and then his tense expression turns into an awkward smile, finally accepting Wormold’s invitation. Everything, even homosexual intercourse, is legal in Havana, according to Carter’s interpretation.

The visual presentation of the film fortifies the queer subtext by means of the performance of the actors as well as cinematic technique. During this silence, these two men gaze at each other, contained in a frame filmed over the shoulder of Wormold, leaving Carter at the back defencelessly revealing his expression to the audience (Fig. 2). This frame conveys a psychological tension between the two men, which slowly develops

through the uneasy transition of Carter's expression. This shot clarifies that Wormold is the seducer in this dangerous adventure. Wormold, whose expression is unknown to the viewers, is trying to kill Carter but Carter betrays his desire on screen, interpreting this invitation not as a trip leading to his death but as an illegal same-sex intercourse that would be condemned by law in their home country. This power balance shown in the frame is further fortified in the next reverse shot, which now depicts Wormold's face, and he continues: "and afterwards we are going to... you know what I mean", with a broad sensual grin all over his face, as if he was seductively inviting Carter to a secret sexual adventure. Indeed, Wormold does imply something sexual here, even without a queer subtext, because he would later take Carter to a shady bar with a female striptease and a brothel. However, in this scene, he never clarifies where he is taking Carter, leaving the direction as something sexually ambiguous. At the same time, Wormold is fully conscious of the effect he is having on Carter with his invitation. The camera, in sync with Wormold's over the shoulder perspective, closely follows Carter's expression, which alternates between suspicion, hesitation, and homoerotic desire. Wormold closely watches this fluctuation, gradually approaching his final aim to take Carter out and eventually eliminate him. As soon as Wormold sees that Carter is inclined to take up his invitation, he makes the final push for the seduction with his sensual smile, suggesting the fulfilment of Carter's desire in the "gay spot".



Figure 2: Carter revealing his expression as Wormold invites him to go out.

Again, the corresponding scene in the novel acquires a homoerotic nuance after watching the film. Wormold's invitation to Carter also occurs in the original novel. The same conversation takes place on the page as follows:

Wormold said, 'I feel in the mood for going round the spots.'
 'What spots?'
 'The spots you wanted to see in Havana.'
 'It's getting late.'
 'It's the right time.' Carter's hesitation came at him down the wire. He said, 'Bring a gun.' He felt a strange reluctance to kill an unarmed killer—if Carter should ever chance to be unarmed. (Greene 2007, 204)

It is the film that intensifies the queer subtext by adding the extra lines concerning the police, as well as the filming technique employed and the actors' performance. However, the original novel conceals the grain that is later expanded into full queerness on screen. The novel reiterates this "spot" (Greene 2007, 204) by repeating the word in Carter's question "[w]hat spots?" (Greene 2007, 204), reminding its readers of the initial encounter between Wormold and Carter in the aeroplane, in which they talked about Havana as a "[g]ay spot" (Greene 2007, 170). The film confirms the meaning of the

“[g]ay spot” (Greene 2007, 170) which was left uncertain when first used. The “[g]ay spot” (Greene 2007, 170) referred to in the first instance, in both novel and film, reveals its real sense by being combined with the subsequent sequence in the film. The novel, however, has an already ample queer subtext, and the visual adaptation retroactively makes it more visible. This interaction between the original text and adaptation, in which the latter may release what was concealed in the original text (Stam 2005, 42), is very much active in the novel and the film of *Our Man in Havana*, although they are only a year apart.¹⁹

The Ambiguous Use of “Gay” in *Our Man in Havana*

To address the question as to why ambiguity surrounding the word “gay spot” occurs in the first encounter between Wormold and Carter, the history underlying the use of the word “gay” needs to be considered. The sequence in the aeroplane demonstrates that what the two men mean by the term “gay” is entirely different. Wormold interprets Carter to mean “roulette and brothels” by his usage of “gay”, but Carter denies this, albeit passively. Wormold understands “gay” as an adjective “dedicated to social pleasures; dissolute, promiscuous; frivolous, hedonistic” (OED) while Carter does not. As discussed previously, the film version, albeit indirectly but more strongly than in the original novel, suggests that Carter’s usage refers to “gay” as homosexuals. This discrepancy happens

¹⁹ The temporal proximity of the novel and the film *Our Man in Havana* is worth noting. Christopher Hull notes that Greene only “finished revision for the typescript of *Our Man in Havana* on June 2, 1958” and “negotiations about a film version” were already starting before this, in May (Hull 2019, 141). The film was planned before the novel’s publication and, as already stated, Greene is responsible for the screenplay. Thus, *Our Man in Havana* is a joint project of film and novel and the queer interaction of the original text and the screen adaptation occurred as part of a collaborative production process by the film crews and the author.

because the meaning of the word “gay” as homosexual was not self-evident to most people before the mid-twentieth century.

The history of the term as a signifier of sexual identity dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. *The Oxford English Dictionary* locates the first usage of the word “gay” as homosexual in 1922 and clarifies that it originates from American slang (OED). The *OED* also lists Coward’s usage of “gay” in 1929 in his play *Green Carnation* as one of the earliest examples; however, this seems to be a case in which the word may “have been interpreted anachronistically in the light either of the context, or of knowledge about an author’s sexuality” (OED). As Sinfield suggests, “[t]he complex hesitation around the word gay in Coward’s work enabled him to promote homosexuality into public discourse under the cover of a more general context” (1991, 57).

The usage of the term “gay” as homosexual was not universally accepted in the first half of the twentieth century. Sinfield states that the word “gay” as homosexual was common among “leisured and artistic circles” in 1930s America, less so for the rest of the population. He notes that “[s]uch half knowledge was one condition for the value of gay; because most people did not know it, it could be used as a discreet code word” (Sinfield 1991, 55), adding that “[b]y the early 1950s gay had this role in Britain also” (1991, 55). At least by the early 1950s, the interpretation of the word “gay” varied in Britain; some people knew about the meaning of “gay” as referring to homosexuals, some did not. The discrepancy in the understanding of the word “gay” between Wormold and Carter stems from this historical background. Both the novel and film of *Our Man in Havana* are productions of the late 1950s, the former produced in 1958 and the latter in 1959. Sinfield explains that the word “gay” was placed in a “half knowledge” status by the early 1950s

in Britain and *Our Man in Havana* is a text produced immediately after this period. Thus, the discrepancy in the characters' understanding of "gay spot" is considerably linked to the "half knowledge" status of this word.

The usage of the term as a signifier of sexual identity first occurred in the US and was then imported to the UK. Sinfield notes that "[i]n 1960 Gordon Westwood reported gay as American but known in Britain" (1991, 55) and the *OED* lists the following sentence from Peter Wildeblood's *Against the Law* (1955): "Most of the officers at the station had been 'gay' ...an American euphemism for homosexual" (*OED*). From these instances, it is possible that the understanding of this term was still very much in flux in Britain when *Our Man in Havana* was produced in 1958-59. Certainly, "gay" as homosexual was known to a great many people back then, but it was not as self-evident as today and the ambiguity surrounding this term was much higher.²⁰

It therefore stands to reason that the word "gay", in late 1950s Britain, was in a transitional period. "Gay" as "homosexual" would enter into general usage in the coming decades. This usage was undoubtedly known to a great many people, but not by everyone, and contemporary audiences can see this ambiguous status on-screen in *Our Man in Havana*, in which the euphemistic usage of "gay" managed to slip into the

²⁰ When considering the development of the word "gay", the issue of class is also relevant. Sinfield explains that the word "connotes the bohemian lifestyle of the bright young people; it might plausibly include homosexuality-but at the price, here, of not quite specifying" (Sinfield 1991, 52). Jeffrey Weeks also notes this considerably broader sense of the word "gay" with an intense nuance of the leisure class, including but not specifying homosexuals: "the word [gay] had been used by homosexuals in the United States at least since the 1950s, but in Britain, though it was known, it tended to have an upper-class connotation. It was associated with the classier clubs, all mirrors and pillars, rather than with the typical 'queer' pub or 'cottage'" (Weeks 2016, 190).

mainstream cinema in the 1950s, evading censorship imposed by the Production Code, which prohibited any expression of homosexuality (Corber 1997, 55-56).

The exchange between Wormold and Carter might have operated as a light joke exploiting the ambiguity of the word, which would be understood to those who are in the know among its audiences. Sinfield notes that the ambiguous usage of the word “gay” in Coward’s 1930s plays was “a knowing wink across the footlights” (1991, 54). Due to the media specificity of theatre and cinema, the queer interaction in *Our Man in Havana* is addressed to a larger audience than those who attended Coward’s plays in the 1930s-1940s, and who were more likely to be aware of the word’s meaning. While a film distributed worldwide is open to audience members regardless of their nationality, class and economic status, the number of those who can afford a frequent theatre visit is limited, compared with the film. Moreover, the principal theatres are concentrated in large Western cities such as London and New York. For both economic and geographical reasons, film therefore has a greater impact on the public.

Thus, the ambiguous usage of the word “gay” found in Coward’s plays went beyond the stage and reached mass audiences through *Our Man in Havana*. The queer interaction functioned as a joke for the general film audience, not only for city theatre-goers, because the term was already entrenched in the culture to a certain extent, yet still managed to escape the censorship of the Production Code. This demonstrates that the late 1950s was a critical moment for understanding the word “gay” in which the meaning of this term was not limited to a circle of urban playgoers but a vast number of film viewers through a global film market, albeit discreet enough to escape official censorship.

It is essential once again to note that Coward played a crucial role in the construction of the queer subtext in the film *Our Man in Havana* and, at the same time, was a pivotal figure in the development of the term “gay” in the British context, as is clear from *OED*, which lists his usage of “gay” to mean homosexual as one of the early examples. Sinfield confirms Coward’s achievement in this respect: “the specialized usage of gay gained currency in Britain specifically through Coward and his plays and the milieu that they helped to constitute” (1991, 56).²¹ Thus, Coward was an originator of the queer spy tradition in the spy fiction genre. The presence of Coward in the late 1950s *Our Man in Havana* functions as an archetype of the queer spy, who would keep appearing in subsequent texts. One of the earliest moments in which spies became queer in Cold War fiction can be traced back to *Our Man in Havana*.

Noël Coward and Queer Subtext in Mainstream Cinema

Although Coward was not directly responsible for the screenwriting, his presence as a supplier of a queer subtext in the film should be underlined; through his presence, queerness seeps through the popular narratives. Coward was involved in mainstream cinema both as an actor and a writer. One of his most representative works on the silver screen is his screenwriting for *Brief Encounter* (1945) directed by David Lean. Although directed by someone as prominent as Lean, Coward’s involvement is emphasized in the

²¹ Sinfield speculates that Coward’s sojourn in the US encouraged him to import this usage – “gay” as homosexual – in the British context: “Coward was at home in leisure-class/theatrical circles in New York, so he could well have adopted the U.S. code word before other British people. He found it marvellously suited to his purposes, for it already connoted leisure-class bohemianism. By tilting it just slightly more sexuality, Coward was able to foreground the trace of irregular sexuality that was already within” (Sinfield 1991, 55)

title of the film: “Noel Coward’s *Brief Encounter*”. This film narrates the extramarital affair between a middle-class housewife, Laura (Celia Johnson), and Alec (Trevor Howard), a married doctor. They keep meeting secretly, but eventually decide to end their discreet relationship and return to their own households; Laura to a loving but boring husband, Alec to South Africa to start a new career. Although this film captures the secret relationship of a heterosexual couple, Richard Dyer explains that “the film took on a new life for me as an item of gay sensibility” (2018, 13). Dyer notes that the subject matter of the film (“forbidden love in ordinary lives”) “makes an obvious appeal to gay readers”, describing that Laura’s home is “her closet” (Dyer 2018, 14). Although the film only narrates the passionate but unrequited love of a heterosexual couple, many gay audiences read a “gay sensibility” (2018, 13) from *Brief Encounter*. Andy Medhurst explains the closeted representation of same-sex love hidden within the heterosexual couple in *Brief Encounter*. However heterosexual *Brief Encounter* seems to be, it is, in fact, “specifically related to the homosexuality of its author” (Medhurst 1991, 198). Medhurst writes that the film shows “Noel Coward displacing his own fears, anxieties and pessimism about the possibility of a fulfilled sexual relationship within an oppressively homophobic culture by transposing them into a heterosexual context” (Medhurst 1991, 198). Medhurst’s essay is an early academic example that explored the queer subtext of *Brief Encounter*, passing as a heterosexual narrative.

The queer reading of *Brief Encounter* itself has been widely shared among gays, and this is evident in the words of Dyer: “if *Brief Encounter* feels gay to me and many

other gay people I know, it is because it was made with gay feeling” (2018, 14).²² Dyer notes that *Brief Encounter* is “an instance of gay cultural production” and this is “through the input of producer and scenarist Noël Coward” (2018, 14). When Coward is involved, even mainstream cinema that looks entirely heterosexual on the surface is turned into such an instance. Stephen Bourne also points to Coward’s presence in creating the gay subtext in *Brief Encounter*: “Throughout the film, *Brief Encounter* has a gay subtext which comes from Coward’s own gay sexuality” (Bourne 1996, 77).

Coward’s contribution to queer cinema history is not limited to *Brief Encounter*. Peter Collinson’s classic gangster film *The Italian Job* (1969) also depicts an instance of gay culture through the performance of Coward. In the film, Coward stars as “quietly queer” (Mowlabocus 2007, 143) Mr Bridger, who reigns over the ruffians as the head of the prison but is himself also a crime-lord. Sharif Mowlabocus notes that, in this film, “the audience is given a string of clues that signify both Bridger’s queerness and his status” and his queerness is “operating outside the matrix of gay consciousness” (2007, 143). The visual and verbal clues apparently demonstrate the queerness of Coward’s Mr Bridger, but his homosexuality is never apparent in the narrative, and it is only discreetly but constantly suggested. For instance, there is a scene in which Mr Bridger declares: “Camp Freddie, everybody in the world is bent.” Just like in *Our Man in Havana*, this is another queer instance that deploys the double meaning of a word. Here Mr Bridger is talking about recruiting someone for his criminal plan, using the double entendre of the

²² This queer grain in *Brief Encounter* was later picked up by the film director Richard Kwietniowski and adapted as a new narrative of two gay men who coincidentally meet and fall in love, just like Laura and Alec. This short film *Flames of Passion* (1989) is a rewriting of “*Brief Encounter* as a short gay romantic drama” (Bourne 1996, 77), taking its title from the film Laura and Alec watched in the movie theatre in the original film.

word “bent” as “dishonest, ‘crooked’, criminal” (OED) and as “homosexual” (OED), just as the term “gay” was used in *Our Man in Havana*.

In the productions in which Coward was involved, there are highly discernible camp aesthetics. Susan Sontag notes that “[c]amp is esoteric—something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques” (2009, 275). When Coward appears in *Our Man in Havana* and *The Italian Job*, or his authorship is inscribed in *Brief Encounter*, discreet sign of same-sex desire is casually inserted in a distinct yet discreet way on the national screen. The esoteric “badge of identity” of Coward’s sexuality is displayed through either his presence or screenwriting. Incidentally, Sontag mentions the plays of Coward in her numerous lists of things that are considered camp (2009, 282).

Thus, Coward has been a key figure in representing campness in British mainstream cinema. His presence stands on the early stage of the representational history of the Cold War queer spies this thesis follows. As discussed in the Introduction, spy fiction began representing gay men as fluid and cryptic after 1945, thereby signalling the appearance of queer spies (Hepburn 2005, 187). What Coward brought to spy fiction through *Our Man in Havana* fits this new grain of queer spies after 1945.

Although Coward has had a significant influence on queer representation in mainstream cinema, his camp aesthetics have a predecessor: Oscar Wilde. In defining what “camp” is in her essay, Sontag refers to the Wilde-Coward genealogy in terms of camp aesthetic, stating: “It was Wilde who formulated an important element of the Camp sensibility” (2009, 289). Dyer highlighted the queer continuity from Wilde to Coward: Coward is the very cultural figure who “[has] moulded queer personalities through refinement of accent and condescension of attitude” while carrying “the Wildean flame”

(2002a, 6). The “Wilde-Coward tradition” (Sinfield 1991, 59) that definitively characterises what is queer and camp in British culture is thus discreetly inserted at the beginning of the Cold War queer spy history through *Our Man in Havana*.

***Our Man in Havana* and Homosexual Identity in the Mid-1950s**

The late 1950s, when *Our Man in Havana* was produced, was also a crucial time for queer history in Britain. It was a time when homosexual identity became visible to the public, albeit in a negative light. This section will investigate how homosexuality is represented in terms of its status as an emergent sexual identity in *Our Man in Havana*. Sinfield notes that homosexuality “was reorganized into a ‘problem’ that, far from being secret, demanded explicit discussion” (1991, 44) and “this was the prelude to the decriminalizing of male homosexuality in Britain, in many circumstances” (1991, 44). In the decade before the decriminalisation, men desiring other men first came to be seen as a “problem” in British culture. It was in this time that the press started to pay attention to men desiring other men in a demonised fashion. Justin Bengry explains that “[p]ress commodification of queer scandal grew so lucrative” in the 1950s, which led to “the creation of homosexuality as a public issue attracting government concern and ultimately requiring state intervention” (Bengry 2012, 168).

The mid-twentieth century was a time in which male homosexuality began to occupy people’s mind as never before. To most people at the time, homosexuality was rather discovered before its decriminalisation. The way sexuality is understood today, with a sexual dichotomy, came into clear focus around this time. Matt Houlbrook explains that the two decades following the Second World War was a point at which “the

organization of male sexual practice and identities around the binary opposition between ‘homo-’ and ‘heterosexual’” (Houlbrook 2006, 7) solidified. He adds: “In the 1950s, in particular, newspapers began to frame their exposés of queer urban life within the binary opposition between ‘homo’ and ‘heterosexual’” (2006, 164). Thus, from 1945 to around the 1960s, Britain was a space where modern sexual identities consisting of homo/hetero binaries were gradually cultivated. Sinfield writes that “we should not imagine homosexuality as *there*, fully formed but obscured by the closet” in this time. He continues that the closet, contrary to common wisdom, “did not obscure homosexuality” but rather “*created it*” (Sinfield 1991, 48). As Sinfield and the other queer historians argue, homosexuality is not an essential identity existing independent of time. It was constructed in a certain period and space, and post-war Britain was where this process was made highly visible.

Our Man in Havana reflects the rapidly shifting status of male homosexuality in British culture. The transition from the release of the Wolfenden report (1957) to the decriminalisation of homosexual intercourse seems to be a linear history leading towards the liberation of homosexual identity; but this is not the case according to the queer historians cited above. On the contrary, this was a decade when homosexuality became highly conspicuous as a “problem” and *Our Man in Havana* is a product of this brief moment before the 1960s when modern sexual identities were formed visibly, along with further consolidation of the meaning of the word “gay” as homosexual. The sequence discussed below records a trace of this time.

The scene where Wormold recruits his own agent in a country club in Havana is a very timely one as it responds to the moment in which emergent homosexual identity

appears in culture. This scene, already discussed above, is also a new addition in the film version. Wormold tries to recruit the Cuban engineer Cifuentes, but the engineer mistakes Wormold for a homosexual man attempting to sexually assault him and rejects him by shouting “if you touch me again, I shall complain to the committee”. This film sequence portrays Wormold as a predatory homosexual, just as imagined by the 1950s public in Britain, to whom homosexual identity became visible as a “problem” (Sinfield 1991, 44). Wormold wanders into the country club, talking to several different men, eventually sitting with the engineer and a pilot. From the first shot of Cifuentes, it is clear that he feels uneasy around Wormold, who tries to recruit him as his agent by saying: “there is a proposition I wish to make to you...In private.” The way Wormold pronounces the word “in private” is seductive, whispered in a low voice with a slight smile on his face. Seeing this, the uneasiness on Cifuentes’s face deepens further. What Cifuentes mistakes as a touch of debauchery from Wormold is simply his drunkenness, a result of multiple glasses Wormold emptied in his vain quest for agents. Apparently not wanting to be alone with Wormold, Cifuentes does not hide his uneasiness; he feels that he is sexually pursued. Sighing, he tells Wormold to come to his office if he has any business with him, desperately wanting Wormold to leave as soon as possible. Fed up with Wormold’s company, Cifuentes stands up and walks away to the bathroom. Wormold follows the engineer, which is followed by a scene in which Cifuentes rejects Wormold as a seductive, demonised homosexual.

Cifuentes’s reaction depicts a timely attitude in 1950s London, where the image of homosexuals as monstrous others was gradually constructed: “Queer urban culture thus entered the public gaze through the operations of the sexual offences laws because it

was ‘discovered’ as a source of moral danger and because it had become increasingly visible” (Houlbrook 2006, 238). What Cifuentes imagines of Wormold can also be considered in this light. In this sequence, Wormold is projected as a “queer, a predatory and lustful danger” (Houlbrook 2006, 239) by Cifuentes. He thus constructs Wormold as a monstrous other representing a moral danger to the heteronormative world, re-enacting the media’s attitude towards homosexuals as a “problem”, although Wormold himself has no idea what Cifuentes mistakes him to be. Only the audience sees the misunderstanding between these two men. This sequence also functions as a source of humour, responding to the timely issue of being queer as an imminent danger. Like the sequence of Wormold and Carter in the aeroplane from Kingston to Havana, those who are aware of the emergent homosexual identity find this misunderstanding amusing.

Queer Continuity in Spy Fiction: From *Havana* to *Panama*

The continuity of queer identity in Britain – from the Wilde trial in 1895 to the demonisation of homosexuals as a social “problem” in the 1950s, via the discreet sexual expression of the stage and the cinema of Coward from the 1930s onward – is notably engraved at the beginning of Cold War spy fiction history through *Our Man in Havana*. Both the novel and the film, especially the latter, signal the arrival of Cold War queer spy fiction. As this thesis will now discuss, queer spies would keep appearing from here on, up to and including the 2010s. *Our Man in Havana* presents an archetype for these spies, which would be continuously adapted and updated. Their recurrent image would create the patterns of “repetition with variation” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, 116) of queer spies. With its presentation of queer spies, *Our Man in Havana* re-enacts the moment in

which “homosexuality might approach public visibility before the mid-1950s” (Sinfield 1991, 45) through its dialogues and the performance of the actors. Later spy fiction will continue to portray queer spies standing on the brink of public visibility, occasionally appearing in the form of a ghost as discussed in the next chapter. This chapter now moves on to consider le Carré’s *The Tailor of Panama* as a rewriting of *Our Man in Havana*. The appearance of queer spies in *The Tailor of Panama* forms a palimpsest of queer spies, just like the other spy fiction texts discussed in the remainder of this thesis.

The Tailor of Panama: From Novel to Film

The narratives of *The Tailor of Panama* and *Our Man in Havana* are similar: The MI6 agent Andy Osnard recruits Harry Pendel, a British tailor living in Panama, as his foreign agent. Pendel gives Osnard false pieces of information by fabricating stories on an international conspiracy surrounding the Panama Canal. Their relationship traces that of Hawthorne, an MI6 agent, and Wormold, the local expatriate and storyteller, in *Our Man in Havana*. As in the latter, the protagonist’s lies cease to be an innocent fiction at some point and cause immense trouble by attracting the attention of secret organisations and the authorities. In *The Tailor of Panama*, the storyteller faces even harsher consequences by seeing his beloved country devastated by the American military force who use his fiction as an excuse to invade Panama. The difference between the original novel and the film of *The Tailor of Panama* is the ultimate fate awaiting the protagonist. While the film ends with Pendel happily returning to his family after a night of military invasion, the novel ends with the grim prospect that he is probably heading for his own demise,

walking towards a poor local area bombarded by the US forces, where everything he loves about Panama remains to be destroyed.

In *The Tailor of Panama*, homosexuality is present as a highly tangible undercurrent. As this chapter discusses later through a close reading of both the novel and the film, the queer subtext primarily emanates from the MI6 agent, Osnard. Moreover, the queerness of le Carré's text and its film adaptation has its direct source in Greene's original text and Reed's film. Just as the film adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* intensifies the queer subtext of the novel, already concealed between the lines, so *The Tailor of Panama* augments the queerness with which *Our Man in Havana* was already charged. Furthermore, the film version of *The Tailor of Panama* amplifies the queerness in its portrayal of the secret agents compared to the original novel. In these adaptation relationships, the later text functions as a new reading of the original text, and retroactively affects the interpretation of the original text. Subsequent adaptations affect the reader/audience's perception of the original, and the original is thereby incorporated into these intertextual relationships. Thus, the process in which adaptation "retroactively liberate[s] the oppressed" of the original text (Stam 2005, 42) is applicable to all cases mentioned here.

In discussing this retroactive adaptation, the chapter focuses on the media specificity of the film which functions to magnify the queerness of the characters, who are even queerer on screen than on the pages. In a close reading of *The Tailor of Panama*, the chapter will focus on the film as a medium which liberates that which is suppressed in the original text, as it does in the case of *Our Man in Havana*.

In so doing, this section will discuss how the representation of queer spies has changed from the late 1950s to the post-Cold War period through the direct adaptation relationship between these two works. It will thus investigate how queerness in the British context – crystallised in the time of the Wilde trial, further cultivated through Coward's works and performance, and constructed through the social discourse of homosexuality as a crime – is projected onto the figure of Osnard in *The Tailor of Panama*, created as a post-Cold War copy of Hawthorne in *Our Man in Havana*.

As in *Our Man in Havana*, the queerness of the spies in *The Tailor of Panama* is magnified through the adaptation process from page to screen. This is highly conspicuous in the sequences involving the secret meetings of Osnard and Pendel, found throughout *The Tailor of Panama*. The queer subtext of *The Tailor of Panama*, engraved in the novel and further developed in the film, mostly lies in scenes of their clandestine rendezvous, in which Pendel passes the information he pretends to have collected from Panamanian society onto Osnard.

Their closed-door sessions take place both in the film and in the novel, but their exchange in the film makes their encounters appear queerer than they do in the novel. In the first secret meeting in the novel, Osnard's body is described in palpable sensual detail, so that readers may picture his body in terms of its weight with a highly sexualised yet repulsive touch attributed to his flesh. Osnard's body and physical movements are shown up-close; urging Pendel for more information, Osnard licks his thumb with "a small slurp" (le Carré 1996, 142); he sits astride a chair "with his podgy thighs spread and backrest rising from his crotch" (le Carré 1996, 144), a phallic image; his mouth is depicted as a "little rosebud" when sucking on "the plastic helmet of his ballpoint" (le

Carré 1996, 145); he rocks the chair back and forth while sitting with “his ample buttocks” (le Carré 1996, 146), and at the end of the meeting he gets off from the chair, “[d]ismounting thigh by thigh from his rocking horse” (le Carré 1996, 147)



Figure 3: The secret meeting between Osnard and Pendel in a shady brothel in Panama.

The same scene realised on the screen expands this queerness beyond Osnard’s body. The meeting is turned into a scene with even more explicit queer implications using cinematic techniques, the delivery of the dialogue, and the body language of the two actors, just as in *Our Man in Havana*. The setting is visualised accurately according to how it was depicted in the novel; a dark room lit by neon light from outside, in a shady hotel filled with Panamanian prostitutes (Fig. 3). The sequence begins with a close shot of a porn video playing on the television in the room, which Osnard (Pierce Brosnan) gazes at absent-mindedly, biting his fingernails, while Pendel (Geoffrey Rush) stands beside him awkwardly. Asking Pendel what the Panamanian president thinks about the Panama Canal, Osnard walks to the bathroom to urinate, and, on his way back from the toilet, inserts a coin in a machine that rocks the bed up and down. When the conversation

turns to secret information concerning Panamanian politics and the future of the canal, Pendel and Osnard, sitting together on the rocking bed, look at each other firmly and call each other by their first name while being shaken up and down. Moreover, Osnard shows clear signs of excitement when learning politically sensitive information from Pendel. His facial expression becomes excited, demonstrated in the shortness of his breath and slight “uh” sound he makes in response to Pendel’s speech. All through the exciting exchange of information, the bed is shaking the two men, a television screen in the room shows an explicit pornographic image, and a man and a prostitute are having sex in the other room visible from the opened window of the terrace. Due to the characters’ “facial and corporeal expression” (Stam 2005, 19) and the obscene mise-en-scène, their exchange of secret information appears to be erotically charged. As well as secret information, they also seem to be exchanging homoerotic pleasures. Although they never in fact touch each other physically, the editing depicts them as if they were doing so in an intimate exchange. Reading the same scene in the novel with the film in mind, Osnard’s actions cited above appear even more explicit. In light of the metaphorical sexual intercourse in which he was engaged in the film version, his physicality as depicted in the novel is charged with more overt homoeroticism. As Stam explains, just like the film version of *Our Man in Havana*, the queer subtext of *The Tailor of Panama* becomes intensified through the media specificity of the film. Indeed, the film “is ideally suited for conveying the social and personal dynamics operating between interlocutors’ since film contextualizes the words through mise-en-scène, performance and sound such as music and noise” (Stam 2005, 19). In *The Tailor of Panama*, “the social and personal dynamics” at work are the queer dynamics of two interlocutors, Osnard and Pendel.

In the secret meeting of Osnard and Pendel described above, what seems to be homoerotic tension in their interaction heightens as the exchanged information touches on the sensitive area of Panamanian politics. The film captures the way the exchange of their desire overlaps with that of the secret intelligence. What seems to be their queer desire in *The Tailor of Panama* in fact functions as a smokescreen hiding their espionage activity, unlike in *Our Man in Havana* where homoerotic desire is hidden under cover of espionage activity.

This point is also clear from a sequence in the film, where Osnard and Pendel meet up in a gay club in Panama. To feign the naturalness of their secret gathering, they use the gay bar for their rendezvous, pretending to be a gay couple frequenting the premises. The club is filled with dancing men and drag queens, whom Pendel gazes at with apparent discomfort. Osnard and Pendel pretend to be one of the gay couples there, dancing and holding hands while exchanging a highly sensitive piece of intelligence based on Pendel's fabrication but eventually leading to the upheaval that shakes all of Panama (Fig. 4). To do this, the gay club is a perfect hiding spot because the music is played loud and their physical proximity – their faces almost touching each other during their dance – makes it easier to convey sensitive information without being overheard. Osnard invites Pendel into the club by calling out “come on, let's dance. Camp it up a bit”, although the latter does not hide his hesitance in entering. This phrase by Osnard implies that he is consciously utilising same-sex desire as a cover for his espionage activity. Pendel's wife, Louise (Jamie Lee Curtis), suspects there is something unusual going on between these two men, albeit without knowing the exact detail of their espionage work; she tells Osnard: “If I didn't know him [Pendel] better, I'd say you two

were gay.” The film suggests that Osnard and Pendel look “gay” to the people around them, and they succeed in creating a queer cover that obfuscates their spy work.



Figure 4: Osnard and Pendel exchanging a piece of information while dancing amid other gay couples.

The queer cover created by the spies in *The Tailor of Panama* is somewhat retrogressive. As the Introduction discussed, the Cold War era was when male homosexuality began to be thought of as the cause of double agency, according to Carlston. Before then, homosexuality had been a “smokescreen” for covering espionage activity (Carlston 2013, 178-179). *Our Man in Havana* addresses the historic moment in which spies and homosexuals began to be equated to each other under the category of queer by hiding same-sex desire under the cover of espionage activity. Conversely, in *The Tailor of Panama*, homosexuality is utilised as an effective cover to hide their roles as secret agents. Although this text comes after *Our Man in Havana*, the same-sex desire in *The Tailor of Panama* functions as “a smokescreen for espionage” (Carlston 2013,

178-179), just like in pre-Cold War times when homosexuality was not yet “assumed to be its proximate cause” (Carlston 2013, 179).

However, there are moments when the queer desire of Osnard and Pendel seems to be real. Although the film clarifies that queer desire is a smokescreen for their espionage activity, the obvious homoeroticism emanating from Osnard’s physicality and Pendel’s intense gaze is ineffaceable. In both novel and film, they find each other for the first time in Pendel’s shop. Osnard first visits him under the pretext of making suits for himself. Their interaction in the closed narrow fitting room is where the queer undercurrent first becomes conspicuous in these texts, through Osnard’s tangible physical description and the way they gaze intently at each other. In the novel, Osnard appears in front of the shop, getting out of his car in heavy rain. The detail of his body is thoroughly described with an emphasis on his lower body.

His [Osnard’s] strategy was to start opening the umbrella inside the car and reverse buttocks-first in an ungainly crouch, at the same time whisking the brolly after and over him while opening it the rest of the way in a single triumphant flourish. But either Osnard or the brolly jammed in the doorway so that for a moment all Pendel saw of him was a broad English bum covered by brown gabardine trouser cut too deep in the crotch and a twin-vented matching jacket shot to rags by rainfire (le Carré 1996, 35-36).

This scene is narrated from the perspective of Pendel, observing Osnard from a distance. Osnard comes to Pendel’s shop so that he can recruit him as his local agent, partly blackmailing him to work by threatening to expose his criminal past. With the recurrent mention of Osnard’s “buttocks” and “bum”, this paragraph suggests that Pendel intensely gazes at his body.

Nevertheless, Osnard looks back at Pendel; Pendel is not the sole object of the gaze in this relationship. During the measurement of his body for a suit, Osnard gazes

intensely at Pendel: “They were face to face and very close. But whereas Osnard's tight brown eyes seemed to pursue Pendel from every angle, Pendel's were fixed on the sweat-puckered waistband of the gabardine trousers” (le Carré 1996, 53). While working on the measurement Pendel feels “Osnard's gaze burning the nape of his neck” (le Carré 1996, 54). Both men are gazing intently at each other, confirming their homoerotic relationship in the original novel. The film version also captures this exchange of gazes in the fitting-room. They whisper to each other in close proximity, and their on-screen exchange, like the same scene in the novel, is replete with a homoerotic gaze. Although it seems that *The Tailor of Panama* shows that homoerotic desire is a smokescreen for espionage, the unmistakable queer tension between the two men is portrayed both on the pages and on the screen.

In the novel, their close physical contact involving Osnard's lower body is also recorded, and this further fortifies the homoerotic undercurrent in the fitting-room.

From the collar again, he took the full length of the back, careful as ever to avoid contact with the rump. Still neither man spoke. He took the centre back seam, then centre back to elbow, then centre back to cuff. He placed himself at Osnard's side, touched his elbows to raise them and passed the tape beneath his arms and across his nipples. Sometimes with his bachelor gentlemen he navigated a less sensitive route but with Osnard he felt no misgivings. From the shop downstairs they heard the bell ring out and the front door slam accusingly. (le Carré 1996, 51)

The scene describes Pendel paying utmost care in dealing with Osnard's body, trying hard not to touch Osnard's “rump”, which he intently gazed at in his first encounter with him. Throughout the novel, Osnard's body is highlighted with outright obscene physicality, being gazed at by Pendel: “The heat rose from Osnard's heavy body like heat from a wet spaniel. His nipples, shaded by chaste curls, showed clearly through his sweat-soaked shirt” (le Carré 1996, 51).

The physical description of Osnard observed by Pendel, however, also accompanies a certain repulsive touch. While witnessing the obscene quality of Osnard's body, Pendel avoids actual contact with him in any way. The repulsion Pendel feels towards Osnard is also depicted in his refusal to share the bottle Osnard had touched with his mouth:

Osnard drank, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and the neck of the bottle with his podgy forefinger. Then he handed the bottle back to Pendel. But Pendel decided he wasn't thirsty. He was feeling sick, but it wasn't the kind of nausea that water cures. It had more to do with his close collegial friendship with his fellow prisoner Abraxas and Osnard's suggestion that he defile it. And the last thing in the world Pendel wanted to do at that moment was drink from a bottle that was wet with Osnard's spit. (le Carré 1996, 233)

Various parts of Osnard's body are assigned a gross graphic detail by the narrator: his forefinger holding the bottle is described as "podgy", and both Pendel and the readers are made to feel his saliva unpleasant. Nevertheless, Pendel never ceases to gaze at him, imagining Osnard's physicality with tangible details throughout the novel.

As a text produced within a decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, *The Tailor of Panama* retrospectively flirts with the queer equation of homosexuality and secret agency that persisted in British culture during the Cold War era. As this thesis explains in Chapter 4, this queer equation – the tendency to presume that homosexuals are somehow treacherous like spies – became gradually prevalent in the broadcasting and publishing industry throughout the late-twentieth century. It reached its height in the late Cold War period in the 1980s when spies and homosexuals were even treated as if they were synonymous. *The Tailor of Panama* toys with this equation, utilising it as a smokescreen for espionage while portraying the men in question wavering between homoerotic desire and their supposed heterosexuality.

The Mutation of Queer Spies from *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama*

In the queer interaction taking place in *The Tailor of Panama*, Osnard is the key figure. It is his presence from which queerness spreads throughout the narrative, further driven through the adaptation process from the novel to the film, as is the case in *Our Man in Havana*. Simultaneously, Osnard represents the complicated relationship between the original text and the adaptation, *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*, through his complex reincarnation from late 1950s secret agents.

Osnard is a character that emerged through the process of adaptation from *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*: his portrayal makes him look like an amalgam of the two secret agents in *Our Man in Havana*, Hawthorne and Carter, both of whom were discussed earlier in this chapter. Both agents appear as a significant figure in the covert expression of male homosexuality in *Our Man in Havana*. This chapter will now trace the transition of the image of queer spies from Hawthorne and Carter to Osnard, examining how the queer spies in these texts changed from the late 1950s to the turn of the 21st century. By considering Osnard in relation to the original text *Our Man in Havana*, this chapter examines what has become of the image of a queer spy after decades.

According to the narrative, Osnard seems to be the direct reincarnation of Hawthorne. Like Hawthorne, Osnard is an MI6 agent who travels to Latin America to recruit a foreign agent, luring the protagonist into a covert homoerotic relationship. However, he is in fact an amalgam of the two characters: Carter and Hawthorne. This becomes clear when considering several points in common in the portrayals of Osnard and Carter. Carter is a villainous secret agent; it is not clear who sent him, but it is

suggested that he came from somewhere abroad. He tries to kill Wormold, who is considered dangerous by the organization to which Carter belongs. Carter's portrayal is quite similar to that of Osnard in terms of the depiction of his physical body. Like Osnard sucking the tip of his ball-point pen, Carter repeatedly sucks his empty pipe "like a child at a comforter, till it whistled between his teeth" (Greene 2007, 171). The way he enjoys his meal is portrayed using persistent close-ups of his mouth, where he crunches "the grape stones between his teeth" (Greene 2007, 170) and keeps talking while "spitting out the grapeskin" (Greene 2007, 170). The presence of Osnard's mouth is also underlined when his lips are depicted as a "little rosebud mouth" (le Carré 1996, 145), and when he offers Pendel a bottle of the water he was drinking, making Pendel feel "the last thing in the world Pendel wanted to do at that moment was drink from a bottle that was wet with Osnard's spit" (le Carré 1996, 233). Both Carter and Osnard are portrayed with an emphasis on their body, using slightly grotesque and erotic details.

This is not their only similarity; they also play the role of a tormenter of the protagonist. Carter haunts Wormold with the intent to kill him. Peter Hulme reads Wormold as Greene's self-portrait and notes that the name Carter comes from a bully who "tortured" Greene in his childhood (2008, 201-202). Osnard, although he is not supposed to be an enemy of Pendel, causes him mental distress by threatening to expose his past imprisonment. The traumatic memory torments Pendel so much that insanity slowly sneaks up on him, making him invent more lies until the point where he cannot go back, causing devastation to his dearest country Panama. Both are supposed to be British gentlemen, but there are moments when they exhibit a slight foreignness. For instance, in the novel, Osnard suddenly swears in Spanish while Carter is suspected of being German

due to the suspicious connection with other German spies and his lack of basic knowledge about British geography. The text also hints at Carter's homoerotic desire, albeit concealed as a subtext. Both in the novel and in the film, Carter is explicitly portrayed as non-heterosexual, as both texts show him expressing his distaste for the female body. Also, as this chapter demonstrated earlier, he uses the term "gay" in a way that hints at his covert homoerotic desire.

Like Hawthorne, Osnard takes on the role of a seducer who initiates the hesitant protagonist into the queer world of espionage. Like Carter, he is a queer torturer with a foreign touch whose bodily presence is heavily underlined. The connection between Osnard and Carter and Hawthorne shows that the identity of British gentleman spy figures in *The Tailor of Panama* is strongly connected to the enemy agent in spy thrillers. Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott point out that, in the James Bond series, the villain "is sexually perverse (i.e., is impotent, neuter or homosexual)" (1987, 73) and that in traditional British espionage stories "the villain is invariably foreign" (Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 97). Osnard's features are those traditionally reserved for the villains in spy fiction.

The Tailor of Panama thus presents the complicated identity of a modern queer spy, constructed from the Cold War text *Our Man in Havana* and then transmitted to a later period. This modern queer spy is situated within the persona of the British gentleman class yet portrayed as a template villain. Appearing in 1996 and 2001 – almost four decades on from *Our Man in Havana* – Osnard appears to directly inherit the pejorative aspect of being "queer", which was attached to the term when the original texts were released. Although *The Tailor of Panama* is a modern update of *Our Man in*

Havana, the queerness of the updated “queer” spy remains derogative just as it is in the original text.

The Problematic Reincarnation of a Queer Spy in the Post-Cold War Era

As discussed in the Introduction, queer spies are products of the mid-twentieth century. They emerge from where sexual and political identities intersect, where homosexuals and spies are confused under the umbrella of “queer”. In the case of Osnard, he is a queer spy reconstructed in the late 1990s by the hand of le Carré and adapted from Greene’s Hawthorne and Carter: the prototype of queer spies created in the middle of the Cold War era. He is not only the source of homoeroticism in *The Tailor of Panama* but also portrayed in a way that evokes a homophobic repulsion from readers and audiences. Osnard being a “queer spy” strongly reflects the ambivalent meaning attached to “queer”, comprising same-sex desire and the pejorative implication with which the word has been charged throughout modern history. Osnard is simultaneously presented as queer, as the source of homoeroticism, and as something “humanly (morally, medically, socially) problematic” (Dyer 2002a, 1). According to Dyer, this was one of the main features characterising same-sex desire in Western society for decades from the mid-nineteenth century to the twentieth century, although this has nothing to do with their sexuality and is therefore a “non-sexual” quality (Dyer 2002a, 1).

Osnard is a queer spy who epitomises this “non-sexual quality” attributed to men desiring other men for the past century. *The Tailor of Panama* occasionally highlights his status with a vivid visual description in the novel and explicit homoerotic presentation in the film. In these texts, Pendel’s gaze towards Osnard fluctuates between desire and

revulsion, as newspaper readers in the 1950s were simultaneously fascinated by, and abhorred the sensationalised coverage on the demonised homosexuals.²³

The Tailor of Panama describes Osnard as a problematic queer throughout the text. Upon looking at Osnard's picture, those working in the British embassy in Panama describe Osnard as "an overweight Mata Hari in drag" (le Carré 1996, 132). This description of Osnard portrays his being "queer" in a negative sense, by demonstrating his physical deviancy in multiple layers. First of all, he is likened to a woman. Dyer lists "being in some way or other 'like' a woman, fey, effeminate, sensitive, camp" as "the commonest form of obvious queerness" (2002a, 5). Secondly, he is likened to "Mata Hari", a female spy whose "mythology feeds into the stereotype of the villainess", according to Rosie White (2007, 34). Mata Hari – an exotic dancer and courtesan born as a daughter of a Dutch family in 1876 – was involved in international politics surrounding the First World War between France and Germany. Ultimately, she was executed as a double agent in 1917. White explains that "her myth is dependent on derogated accounts of gender, race and class" (2007, 34). Mata Hari has been "mythologised and demonised" (White 2007, 9) and since her emergence, "the female spy has most often been understood as a femme fatale" (White 2007, 34). The characteristics of Mata Hari fit the description of Osnard in the way he is also "eroticised and demonised as exotic" (White 2007, 35). As discussed earlier, the foreign character of Osnard is occasionally highlighted in the original novel and his portrayal fits the traditional villain in spy fiction. His likeliness to Mata Hari addresses the complex intersection of the identities

²³ See Weeks 2016, 161.

surrounding queer spies, in the way they are eroticised, demonised, sensationalised, and excluded as others.

The description of Osnard as “an overweight Mata Hari in drag” (le Carré 1996, 132) also implies that he is deviant for being “overweight”. It is mentioned repeatedly that Osnard’s body is plump: Pendel, for instance, describes his body as the “slumped fat-boy’s body” (le Carré 1996, 89) during the fitting of his order-made suit. Furthermore, “podgy” parts of his body are often highlighted. Deborah Mcphail and Andrea E. Bombak highlight the existence of “a long history of pathologization concerning both fatness and queerness” (2015, 540). They argue that medical discourse has relied on “conflations between the ‘sexual deviancy’ of queerness and the embodied ‘deviancy’ of fat” (McPhail and Bombak 2015, 540) in its pathologisation of homosexuality. Osnard as “an overweight Mata Hari in drag” rests on this cultural conflation. He is deviant, effeminate, fat, and therefore queer in a highly derogative sense.

The deviancy of Osnard is also illustrated by the narrative. At the end of *The Tailor of Panama*, Osnard escapes Panama after causing devastation by giving the US military an excuse to invade, taking a vast amount of cash he gained from the American and British authorities in the process of fabricating secret intelligence. He utilises this devastating incident, of which he himself is the cause, solely for personal benefit and never shows remorse. This confirms that Osnard is “humanly (morally, medically, socially) problematic” (Dyer 2002a, 1), especially in comparison to Pendel at the end of the novel: while Osnard simply enjoys gaining profit from their co-enterprise in the fabrication of secret intelligence leading to the US invasion of Panama, Pendel walks towards his own death, tormented by guilt, deciding to share his predicament with the

poor in Panama whose residential area is bombarded. Brian Hoyle notes that Osnard “is Pendel’s wholly corrupt alter ego” (2012, 213), and this becomes conspicuous when their eventual fate is compared. Osnard is an “amoral figure” (Hoyle 2012, 213) throughout the text.

In *The Tailor of Panama*, Osnard’s presence is depicted as “something monstrous” (Dyer 2002a, 2) as “sex between men” has been considered in Western tradition; this is where this text appears to be highly problematic. Osnard’s deviancy is highlighted in the way in which his physicality is intertwined with obscenity and immorality. Osnard is “queer” in the derogatory sense in the mid-twentieth century British context, as it was in the time of *Our Man in Havana*, which is problematic because such queerness is reproduced in the late-1990s and the early 2000s, casually inserted in the narrative with minimal criticism. *Our Man in Havana* covertly presents queerness as a hidden vice intersecting with criminality and secret agency, through agents such as Hawthorne and Carter. Osnard inherits their criminal queerness. The problem with *The Tailor of Panama* is that this text persists with the obsolete “non-sexual” quality (Dyer 2002a, 1) in its reconstruction of a queer spy. As this thesis will show in other chapters, different creators in the diverse era reconstruct the Cold War queer spies in multiple ways. Some writers, like Alan Bennett discussed in Chapter 3, regenerate queer spy figures, separating queerness as problematic from homosexual spy figures. To see the representational history of queer spies is to observe how “[t]he negativity of queer was always resisted, contested, evaded or flouted” (Dyer 2002a, 8) through the effort of writers such as Bennett.

However, in *The Tailor of Panama*, it seems that “the negativity of queer” (Dyer

2002a, 7) is preserved without a great deal of contention. It is as if the negative queerness was somehow preserved intact in the figure of Osnard, although as many as four decades had passed from the original to the adaptation. By way of the adaptation process “the love that dare not speak its name” is transmitted between texts and time, anachronistically maintaining its unspeakable status unscathed. As in the case of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, discussed in the next chapter, the negative queerness attached to the spies is inherited through texts across generations.

Indeed, *The Tailor of Panama* follows the pattern of adaptation theorised by Stam in the way it updates the text in queerer way, liberating the concealed sexuality in *Our Man in Havana*. In discussing the film adaptation of classic novels, Stam notes that “the adapter enjoys more freedom to update and reinterpret the novel” (2005, 42). He describes the adapter’s “update” as “actualizing the adaptation, making it more ‘in sync’ with contemporary discourses” (Stam 2005, 42). As is the case in the film adaptation of the novels, adaptation liberates suppressed sexuality in the original text, updating sexual representation to match more modern sensibilities. The film versions of both *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor Panama* are more homoerotic than the original novel, as if their aim is to unearth the covert homoeroticism embedded between the text on the page.

However, in the adaptation process between *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*, the trajectory is not so linear and straightforward. It is certainly the case *The Tailor of Panama* is more conspicuous in presenting male homosexuality, as shown in the secret meeting scenes involving Osnard and Pendel. However, the queerness shown there is not the result of the liberation of covert homosexuality in *Our Man in Havana*. On the contrary, *The Tailor of Panama* inherits and magnifies the grotesque aspect of male

homosexuality hidden in *Our Man in Havana*. Although Stam contends that the effect of adaptation is to update the representation in line with contemporary values, the opposite in fact takes place in *The Tailor of Panama*.

However, this does not mean that Stam's theory does not apply to the adaptation from *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama*. The latter seems to be the fortification of homophobia concealed in the former but this is not the conclusion drawn from the adaptation of these texts. There is also an instance of subversion in *The Tailor of Panama*, especially when the intertextuality through actors is taken into consideration.

When *The Tailor of Panama* was filmed and released, Brosnan was already taking on another role as a spy, playing James Bond from 1994 to 2005. For the audience of *The Tailor of Panama* at the time of its release, Osnard was Bond. Hoyle calls such casting "the film's greatest coup". Citing Keith Reader's comments on intertextual relations between films and actors, Hoyle analyses how the actor's performance affects the representation in the film. Brosnan's presence "immediately causes the viewer to make associations between the character he plays and James Bond, which the film uses to make the character of Osnard seem all the more amoral and shocking". He summarises Osnard as "the anti-Bond: unheroic, corrupt, and unpatriotic" (Hoyle 2012, 217), and these aspects are highlighted due to the intertextual relation of these films, manifesting in the actor's performance. I want to add that, because of Brosnan's performance, even the image of Bond as a chauvinistic heterosexual man is thereby affected. What changes is not only the presentation of Brosnan as Osnard in *The Tailor of Panama*, but the impression of Bond when these films are seen intertextually through the actor's body.

In *The Tailor of Panama*, the performance of Brosnan could open up the text and the spy genre itself to a more subversive direction by throwing the body of Bond into intertextuality. In a 2015 interview, Brosnan himself talked about the possibility of a homosexual James Bond. While he admits that a gay Bond could be difficult due to the opinions of the producer, making the next Bond gay, he thinks, “would certainly make for interesting viewing” (Mandle 2015). This interview suggests that the actor and the crew were perhaps fully conscious of the effect of the intertextuality of the actor’s body, through which Bond’s public image could be altered. Anna Blackwell notes that the body of the actor functions “as a site of adaptation and intertextuality” (Blackwell 2014, 345). The film adaptation of *The Tailor of Panama* offers such a site of intertextuality by casting Brosnan, which may add a queer layer to the image of Bond, subverting the epitome of the male chauvinist spy.

The act of adaptation brings individual texts into a web of intertextual relationships. In the case of the novel and the film of *The Tailor of Panama*, queerness was further fortified through the adaptation across different media. The act of adaptation unites each text in the palimpsests, and the reading of a text then affects our reading of other texts, even retroactively. Although *The Tailor of Panama* seems to be a reactionary text portraying homosexuals as queer – in its negative sense –, there is a grain of subversion in the final adaptation.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the representation of queer spies in Greene’s *Our Man in Havana* and le Carré’s *The Tailor of Panama*. According to Stam, adaptation liberates suppressed

sexuality in the original text; this is true in the film adaptations of *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*. In both texts, homoerotic undertones concealed in the novel are magnified on-screen due to the filming techniques and the performance of actors. The liberation of covert sexual expression also occurs in the adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama*. Homoerotic representation is more conspicuous in the latter, which, in the process of adaptation inherits the discreet homoeroticism from the former. This process, however, is somehow problematic. When queer spies in *Our Man in Havana* are transplanted into *The Tailor of Panama*, queerness in its negative, mid-twentieth century sense is transmitted intact through texts, although they are almost four decades apart and the media representation of homosexuality has significantly changed during this time. The adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama* also demonstrates how the usual homophobia connecting homosexuality and secret agency survived and thrived in British popular culture. Thus, the effect of adaptation proposed by Stam – the liberation of suppressed sexuality – is not applicable in the adaptation of *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama*, because the transition of homoerotic desire in this process is far too problematic to be liberating. Still, the film adaptation process of *The Tailor of Panama* offers a grain of subversion due to its casting, which may lead to the queering of James Bond.

The second point to reiterate here is Coward's presence at the source of the representation of queer spies. Thereby, the British queer tradition from Wilde is brought into Cold War spy fiction. Through Coward's presence, *Our Man in Havana* becomes a text signalling the arrival of an early queer spy, demonstrating the intersection of identities – homosexual and spy – in the Cold War context. Although there might be texts

before *Our Man in Havana* that signal the earlier appearance of queer spies, this thesis, for now, posits *Our Man in Havana* as the starting point. The discussion on *The Tailor of Panama* followed *Our Man in Havana* because the queer spy in the former comes directly from the latter; he is the amalgam of the queer spies in *Our Man in Havana*, resurrected at the turn of the 21st century. The following chapters will explore how different artists reacted in various ways to queer spies borne out of such an intersection of identities. These texts fluctuate between homophobia attached to the spy and the homosexual equation, either adopting or contesting it. The exploration of the texts written by Greene and le Carré in this chapter served a purpose in starting to observe such a trajectory from the mid-twentieth century to the 2010s, the timeline this thesis will cover from this point onwards.

Chapter 2. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and Ghostly Queerness: Queer Spies in Novel, Television, and Film

This chapter focuses on John le Carré's novel *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) and its two adaptations: John Irvin's 1979 TV mini-series (BBC 2) and Tomas Alfredson's 2011 film. This chapter, along with the next, addresses the fictional spies whose portrayal is based on the secret agents among the Cambridge spies. Like all the other chapters in this thesis, this chapter will draw on adaptation theory. However, what is distinctive about this chapter is that the same title is discussed across different media and time. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was first written as a novel and then adapted into visual media (film and television). Although the original novel and the television series were released in the 1970s, the film was released 37 years after the novel's first publication. As the previous chapter demonstrated, an analysis based in adaptation theory reveals new possible interpretations of older texts. By diachronically charting the changes made through adaptations, covert sexuality in the text becomes more visible. This same method will be applied to the reading of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in this chapter. Same-sex desire embedded in Cold War spy fiction emerges through adaptation, despite the surface of text covering homosexuality, which was deemed deviant in twentieth century British society and the anglophone Cold War political climate. Michael Denning notes that "spy thrillers have been 'cover stories' for our culture, collective fantasies in the imagination of the English-speaking world, paralleling reality, expressing what they wish to conceal" (2014, 1). In the case of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*, discussed in the previous chapter, homosexuality is encrypted as something which spy narratives "wish to conceal" (Denning 2014, 1) at the time when they were written.

Male homosexuality had been deemed criminal and its expression in the media had therefore been carefully censored. Homosexuality has been treated as a form of deviance by both British society and the Anglophone Cold War culture. *Our Man in Havana* was written and adapted into a film in the late 1950s; the discreet homoerotic expression of which was encrypted as a response to the time in which they were produced. However, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was produced after the 1970s, when conservative gender norms were gradually beginning to loosen. Nevertheless, in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the expression of homoerotic desire is inscribed in a way not dissimilar to *Our Man in Havana*. This chapter will examine how this restrained homoerotic desire is encoded in each text of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and how it changed through time from the original 1974 novel to the 2011 film. By following the adaptations from the late Cold War period up until the 2010s, the chapter investigates why male homosexuality in these texts had to be presented in a discreet manner. During this textual examination, the chapter will investigate how the moment in which spies become queer is engraved in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, first in the novel and then in television and film.

Unlike *Our Man in Havana*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was released at a time when male homosexuality was no longer taboo in the media. When the original novel and the television series were released in the 1970s, some years had already passed since the Sexual Offences Act 1967. Furthermore, when the film version was released in 2011, homosexuality had already long been part of the diverse sexual identities in the Western world. Nevertheless, through these three texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, gay and bisexual spies are represented as something enigmatic and mysterious, just as cultural products before the 1970s did in their discreet presentation of homosexuality. Harry M.

Benshoff asserts that “[l]ike the gothic tropes of ‘The Unspeakable’ or ‘The Un-namable,’ ‘the love that dare not speak its name’ has often been figured within mainstream culture in spectral, half-seen ways” (1997, 165). Although the degree of homosexual visibility varies among the original text and its two different adaptations, male homosexuality appears in a spectral manner in all the texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, secret agency accompanies ghostly images. Homosexual spies appear in the narrative in ghostly fashion, appearing briefly and then slipping out of the page or frame, then returning and haunting the text. In all three texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, to a greater or lesser degree, queer spies manifest uncannily as an elusive phantom. As the Introduction mentioned, Diana Fuss highlights “the cultural representation of ‘the homosexual’ as phantom Other” (1991, 4) in the West. The “figure of the homosexual as specter and phantom” (Fuss 1991, 3) can be found in various cultural products, and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is no exception. This chapter will examine each moment in which the “ghosting of homosexuality” (Fuss 1991, 4) takes place in the original novel and two subsequent adaptations of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the enigmatic still image of spectral queer agents is passed onto the television series from the original novel, and from these on to the 2011 film. It is as if their presence is a secret that the texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* “wish to conceal” (Denning 2014, 1) yet simultaneously wish to transfer to further adaptations, just as an unspeakable secret is psychically transmitted intact through generations (Abraham 1987; Rashkin 2008).

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy seems to have a lingering influence in terms of the media appearance of double agents. Although the Cambridge spies appeared in several

television films before *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, a multitude of films and television works featuring these double agents were released in the decades following the release of the original novel. Simon Willmetts and Christopher Moran write that the narrative on the Cambridge spies “has been told and retold with such recurring frequency on British cinema and television” with “frenzied intensity and lengthy duration” (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 51). It is as if the image of spectral queer secret agents in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was further transmitted to other works that would be released in the 1980s and beyond. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is the master narrative underpinning subsequent numerous television shows and films concerning the Cambridge spies, in a sense that it maintains queer desire in a phantasmic way and then transfers it as part of the “transgenerational transmission of unspeakable secrets” (Rashkin 2008, 22). *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is a source of the ghost that would continue to haunt the British screen for several decades in the form of the Cambridge spies.

***Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and the Representation of Male Homosexuality**

As already stated, legal attitudes towards homosexuality in British society decisively changed in the 1960s; however, this drastic change not only took place in a legal context. At the time of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the degree of both cultural and legal repression had lessened, in contrast to the time when *Our Man in Havana* (1958) was written, just a year after the release of the Wolfenden report in 1957.

In 1961, male homosexuality was shown on the British mainstream screen for the first time. Jeffrey Richards notes: “It was Basil Dearden’s *Victim* (1961) which finally showed homosexuals existing at every level of contemporary society and illustrated the

prejudice against them” (1997, 155). Dearden’s *Victim* was “the first film in which the quintessential cinematic line ‘I love you’ found itself being addressed to one man by another” (Dammann 2008). Tony Richardson’s *A Taste of Honey* (1961) was also one of the first films that featured a gay man as one of the main characters. Richard Dyer recalls this as follows: “When I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, I assented that the lot of queers like myself was a melancholy one. I don’t remember now exactly where I first picked up this idea, but I do remember (...) seeing myself in the characters of Geoff in *A Taste of Honey*” (Dyer 2002a, 116). Richards describes the character, Geoff (Murray Melvin) as a “sympathetic and unthreatening gay” (Richards 1997, 154). However, Geoff as a gay man is not given full attention: as Richards notes, his presence is only “peripheral” (Richards 1997, 154). In the theatrical world, where *A Taste of Honey* was originally released in 1958,²⁴ Lord Chamberlain’s censorship banning the expression of homosexuality impacted the scripts; it was abolished on 26 September in 1968, 231 years since it was created (Nathan 2010). Homosexuality was “an unmentionable secret even in the mid-20th century” (Hall 2002); both the novel and the television series of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* were made some years after this period, when male homosexuality gradually began to be portrayed in media.

However, although homosexual men finally made their public appearance on screen in the films mentioned above, they were neither represented in a particularly

²⁴ Greg Buzwell explains that the gay character in *A Taste of Honey* “was a cause for concern” in an initial report by the Lord Chamberlain in 1958 (Buzwell 2019). Although the quality of the play was appreciated, it “walked a knife-edge between being granted a licence and being banned” (Buzwell 2019). Buzwell clarifies that the opening of *A Taste of Honey* would have been impossible “prior to the publication of the Wolfenden Report and the subsequent campaigns for a reform of the laws relating to homosexuality”, suggesting that changing attitudes towards homosexuality contributed to the play being released.

favourable way, nor was their desire shown as something normal. *Victim* is one of the “social-problem films of the 1960s” (Street 2009, 233-234) in which homosexuality was depicted as an idiosyncrasy that should be pitied rather than legally punished, as British law still did at the time. *A Taste of Honey* treats Geoff’s sexuality in a highly covert manner. Stephen Hicks notes that: “Indeed, the word ‘homosexual’ is not mentioned in *A Taste of Honey* at all” and instead Geoff is called “people like you” by Jo, the female protagonist (2011, 1). As Dyer further recollects, Geoff was portrayed along with a “stereotype of gay men as sad young men” (2002a, 116). Although male homosexuality began to be shown on the national screen from the 1960s, it was still considered alien by the mainstream audience.

A new type of homosexual representation on the British screen emerged in the 1970s. John Schlesinger’s ground-breaking *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1971) depicted a same-sex relationship between two men as part of ordinary life rather than sensational gossip. Richards notes that “[i]t was not until *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* in 1971 that homosexuality could be presented as a valid alternative lifestyle” (Richards 1997, 155). Glenda Jackson, an actress who played one member of the bisexual love triangle in the film, recalls this as follows: “He [Schlesinger] treated the homosexual relationship in a way that was neither prurient nor supercilious. It is actually said in the film that it is entirely possible for men to love men in the way that other men love women” (Vallance 2003). Scott McKinnon describes the reaction the film elicited in the early 1970s: “critics in the gay media [...] expressed a sense of excitement and relief that, finally, a film was available that treated audiences as adults and that, more to the point, treated a same-sex relationship in a non-sensational style” (McKinnon 2016, 102). In *Sunday Bloody*

Sunday, homosexual men are neither pathologised, as in *Victim*, nor portrayed as sad lonely beings in the closet, as in *A Taste of Honey*. In this film, homosexuality is portrayed as one of several sexual preferences that exist in the world.

The 1970s British screen saw a further drastic transformation in terms of the representation of homosexuality when *The Naked Civil Servant* (directed by Jack Gold) was released by ITV in 1975. This film was based on the autobiography of the openly gay author Quentin Crisp, published in 1968, a year after the decriminalisation of homosexual intercourse. The film, featuring John Hurt as Crisp, enjoyed critical success, turning Crisp into a celebrity and Hurt into a star (Hattenstone, 2009). Crisp, as the protagonist, narrates the difficult life of a flamboyantly effeminate gay man in the conservative society before 1968. The film signals the moment when a gay man finally presents and narrates his life and sexuality with his own voice. In this respect, *The Naked Civil Servant* greatly differs from previous representations that made him an object of pathologisation and pity. The television film represented a new phase in the representation of male homosexuality in film in the 1970s. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was written and produced in this changing environment, almost contemporary to *Sunday Bloody Sunday* and Crisp's acclaimed auto-biographical drama.

Although *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* was written and produced in the 1970s and adapted again in 2011, the novel and the visual adaptations nevertheless present homosexuality, in the guise of Bill Haydon, as something criminal and shady. In this regard, it is not dissimilar to *Victim* from a decade earlier. Homosexuality is also represented in a highly covert manner in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Both the novel and the film maintain the ambiguity surrounding the characters' sexuality, merely hinting at

homosexuality without openly representing or stating it. This covert representation is similar to that in *A Taste of Honey*.

In contrast to the tendency towards greater openness about same-sex relationship at the time, the representation of homosexuality in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is more discreet. The work appears to censor itself when it comes to homosexual representation as homosexuality is only obliquely apparent. Nevertheless, although not overt, its presence is hinted throughout the text. Homosexuality looms as something queer and uncanny; it is haunted by that which it tries to contain, and the evasive nature of homosexual representation in the text reflects this conflict.

Cold War Culture and Homosexual Haunting

As discussed in the Introduction, the Cold War era was a time when homosexuality tended to be treated as an aberration to mainstream culture, and this ideological trend relied heavily on the image of homosexuals and spies as invisible deviants. As George Chauncey notes, ghosts of invisible homosexual men “haunted Cold War America” (1994, 360); similarly, communists could be difficult to identify. The Cold War political imagination was indeed haunted by the fantasy that anyone could be homosexual and/or communist, only they are almost indiscernible. Paranoid vigilance for invisible deviants characterised Cold War politics. Gender normativity in the Cold War was indeed haunted by invisible queer spies, and the apparitional queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* reflect this cultural attitude surrounding male homosexuality and its invisibility.

Haunting also characterises the power politics between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Diana Fuss explains that “[h]eterosexuality can never fully ignore the

close psychical proximity of its terrifying (homo) sexual other, any more than homosexuality can entirely escape the equally insistent social pressures of (hetero) sexual conformity". Both heterosexuality and homosexuality are "haunted by each other" (1994, 3). However, it is only homosexuality that is forced to appear in a "haunting and ghostly" (Fuss 1994, 3) manner. She continues: "Each is haunted by the other, but here again it is the other [homosexuality] who comes to stand in metonymically for the very occurrence of haunting and ghostly visitations" (Fuss 1994, 3). Cold War spy fiction, such as *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, is a realm in which such power politics become particularly manifest. The text is characterised by evanescent, intangible appearances of homosexuality, by its "haunting and ghostly visitations". Queer spies haunt the text in the same way the invisible homosexuals and communists haunt the paranoid psyche of the Cold Warriors. Simultaneously, homosexuality is made to appear ghostly analogous to the way in which homosexuality stands in contrast to heterosexuality, while the text itself takes care to cover up sexuality, in the same way that homosexuals at the time had to hide to protect their careers and lives. The text therefore reflects tensions in the gender politics in multiple layers.

Homosexual representation in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is fleeting yet persistent. Although it might disappear from the views of audiences and readers, spectral queer spies pervade the narrative. The spectral queer spies are haunting the text of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, just like the invisible homosexuals and communists haunting the Anglophone world in the Cold War. Pauline Palmer points to works of fiction that use "concepts and motifs relating to the uncanny to represent facets of queer sexuality and experience and society's response to them" (2012, 3). *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is exactly

such a work.

Spectral Queerness in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*

Although homosexuality does not appear as such in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, several scholars have noted that the narrative is permeated by allusions to male homosexuality. Toby Manning writes that there is “repressed homosexuality seething through grey strip-lit corridors” (2011); Mark Fisher states that “[h]omosexual desire is widespread in *Tinker Tailor* — most notably in Prideaux’s betrayed love for the flamboyantly polysexual Haydon” (2011, 39); and Randal Rogers notes that “queer characters and references pepper le Carré’s oeuvre in surprising quantity. (...) the story is infused with queer characters and terminology at any level” (2017, 188). Although homosexuality is not highlighted as the visible central theme of the novel, its presence is tangible to astute readers.

However, the homoerotic undercurrent in the novel is accompanied by a homophobic tone. Manning highlights “a recurring unsavoury strand of homophobia” (2018, 184) in le Carré’s texts, listing Roddy Martindale, who appears at the beginning of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* as an example. Smiley is now retired from the Circus, or rather is kicked out after the secret service was reorganised. His old boss Control, for whom Smiley was an indispensable right hand, is no longer in charge. Smiley comes across Martindale on the street of London and reluctantly has dinner with him as he could not decline his pushy invitation. After being bombarded with questions and gossip about the Circus by Martindale, a sickened Smiley bitterly rants at him in his mind: “You featherhead, Martindale. You pompous, bogus, effeminate, nonproductive...” (le Carré

2018, 27). The vocabulary Smiley uses here is characterised by outright homophobia. “Effeminate” is a traditional insult for homosexual men and those who are viewed as such were constantly threatened with the risk of harassment at all levels. Sinfield uses Quentin Crisp as an ultimate example of an “effeminate” homosexual man and notes that “continually he [Crisp] is propositioned, harassed, and beaten, on sight and by total strangers; employers and the army reject him out of hand” (Sinfield 2004, 95). The word “unproductive” is also used to insult homosexuals for their biological infertility.²⁵ Although Martindale's sexuality is not mentioned specifically in the text, the readers know he is probably homosexual from Smiley's inner homophobic monologue. Following this scene, Martindale simply disappears from the novel, although he occasionally comes back in Smiley's flashbacks, repeatedly echoing his words within Smiley's inner psyche. Although he himself does not have any impact on the narrative, he emerges in Smiley's thoughts more than once, especially when implying a sexual relationship between Smiley's wife Ann and double agent Bill Haydon: “I'm told that you and Bill shared *everything* once upon a time” (le Carré 2018, 25 and 84).

Martindale is portrayed as a privileged queer, fitting in the British queer tradition reaching back to Oscar Wilde in which upper-class status, effeminacy, and same-sex desire are intertwined (Sinfield 2004, 138). He “spoke in a confiding upper-class bellow of the sort” (le Carré 2018, 21) and “worked on the fleshy side of the Foreign Office and his job consisted of lunching visiting dignitaries whom no one else would have entertained in his woodshed” (le Carré 2018, 20-21). This description of Martindale overlaps with the image of “the Wildean dandy” (Sinfield 1994, 39) who displays

²⁵ Insulting homosexuals for their biological infertility is common. In 2018, a Japanese MP came under fire because she called the LGBT community “unproductive” (McCurry 2018).

“conspicuous idleness, immorality, and effeminacy” (Sinfield 1994, 38), a figure that would eventually culminate in “queer” in twentieth century Britain. Smiley is haunted by this “Wildean dandy”, who sneaks into the narrative and then slips out of it without any trace except for his ringing voice returning to the protagonist’s mind. Through Martindale’s haunting, the spectre of Wilde looms behind the narrative.

The homoerotic overtones of the novel are also apparent in the ways it employs the term “queer”. Rogers highlights the frequent use of the word in the novel: “The word ‘queer’ itself appears five times in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. It refers to individuals, a situation and even a look” (2017, 188). The term “queer” primarily has two different meanings. One is: “strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric. Also: of questionable character; suspicious, dubious” (OED). The other is: “homosexual (frequently derogatory and offensive). In later use: denoting or relating to a sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender, especially heterosexual norms” (OED). Le Carré’s usage of “queer” in his novel oscillates between these two definitions. In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the term is used to imply something “strange”, “odd” and “peculiar”, but it is also used to describe someone who is homosexual in a mostly derogatory sense, as was still common at the time when the novel was written. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle point out that throughout the twentieth century, “‘queer’ gained currency in the English language in the United States and elsewhere as (usually) a derogatory term for (usually male) homosexual” (2004, 188). They point out that the term was still being used in a derogative manner in the 1960s and 1970s, and that it played a role in legitimising violence against gay people (Bennett and Royle 2004, 188). Indeed, although the legal and cultural attitude towards male homosexuality became more open-

minded in the late 1960s to the 1970s, a derogatory connotation of the word “queer” remained prevalent, even then.

The *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* novel uses the word both in its derogatory and non-derogatory sense; however, it is not always clear in which way the term is employed. There are some scenes where “queer” is used ambiguously, giving the readers a margin of interpretation where they could perceive this term either as “odd” or “homosexual”. For instance, the term is used to describe the bisexual agent, Haydon as follows:

Guillam noticed the queer colour of Haydon’s cheeks. A blushing red, daubed high on the bones, but deep, made up of tiny broken veins. It gave him, thought Guillam in his heightened state of nervousness, a slightly Dorian Gray look (le Carré 2018, 98).

Haydon has a “queer colour” on his cheeks which gives Guillam the impression that Haydon is somehow similar to “Dorian Gray”, a character created by Oscar Wilde. The looming shadow of Wilde not only falls over the description of Martindale; the double agent Haydon is also described through an allusion to the writer. This is also where le Carré plays with the double meaning of the word “queer”. Clearly Haydon has a strange colour on his cheek, deep red created by his veins, but by being combined with a name strongly associated with male homosexuality, the “queer” colour of Haydon’s cheeks is given a homoerotic nuance, based on the queer stereotype formed at the time of the Wilde trial (Sinfield 2004, 138).

Although the word queer had already acquired its meaning as homosexual, and this usage had become entrenched in British culture by then, this was still long before the early 1990s, when American scholars gave the term a positive meaning (Griffiths 2006, 4). Using “queer” in combination with Wilde might have sounded gravely homophobic. At the same time, this might have functioned as an allusion to readers familiar with the

queer culture developed and maintained from Wilde to Noël Coward and Quentin Crisp. Le Carré's text is thus playing with the ambiguity of the word "queer". His text would amuse those who made the connection between "queer" and "Dorian Gray", in a homophobic way or otherwise. At the same time, this exemplifies the moment when double agents are dubbed "queer" amid the Cold War.

"Queer" is also employed in a scene where Peter Guillam, Smiley's sidekick, looks out of his window, searching for possible secret agents who might be following him. He has to suspect everyone he sees during his mission to find the mole planted in the secret service.

First there had been a loving couple necking in the back of a Rover, then a lonely queer in a trilby exercising his Sealyham; then a pair of girls made an hour-long call from a phone box outside his front door. There need be nothing to any of it, except that the events were consecutive, like a changing of the guard. Now a van had parked and no one got out. More lovers, or a lamplighters' night team? The van had been there ten minutes when the Rover drove away (le Carré 2018, 128).

The people outside his window might or might not be simply "lovers", "lonely queer" and "a girl". Perhaps they might be secret agents watching Guillam, who is trying to reveal the identity of Soviet double agents. The mole is already so deep inside the secret service that, at this point, the authorities themselves might be the enemy of Guillam and Smiley. However, neither readers nor Guillam himself know the true identity of those found outside; both characters and readers are left in a paranoid state. Along with "lovers" and "girl", Guillam finds "a lonely queer in a trilby exercising his Sealyham". In this description, "queer" clearly indicates a person with same-sex desire. However, it is not clear why Guillam recognised him as homosexual and called him "lonely queer" in a ridiculing tone. Is it because the man is walking a little white dog, or was he wearing make-up just like Quentin Crisp (although this is not described in the text)? Readers are

given no information other than that the man is wearing a certain type of hat and has a dog with him; it is not clear why Guillam judged him as “a lonely queer”. It is possible to imagine that Guillam knew that he was homosexual because he himself was also homosexual. Although the novel itself describes Guillam as a heterosexual man, the surface of the text might be hiding him in his closet. Nothing is certain here, but what matters is that “a lonely queer”, a solitary figure perhaps looking for a sexual partner on a London street late at night, overlaps with the figure of the spy in two ways. Firstly, Guillam does not know whether the figure is only “a lonely queer” or a spy. Being “a lonely queer” might be a cover for this possible secret agent. Secondly, this solitary figure’s appearance is described as that of a typical spy; he is wearing a trilby hat, which is often worn by secret agents on the screen. It is likely that the stereotype of a spy as an English gentleman with a hat had already been established by this time. In 1959 in *Our Man in Havana*, the secret agent played by Noël Coward is wearing a hat similar to a trilby, tailored suits, and a perfectly matching umbrella. Furthermore, the ITV television series *The Avengers* (1961-1969) had already visualised the gentleman-spy in the figure of its protagonist John Steed (Patrick Macnee). The figure standing outside Guillam’s window might be a secret agent pretending to be “queer”, but despite his pretence looks like a stereotypical fictional spy.

When “a lonely queer” spy figure is visually represented in the television version in 1979, it acquires an uncanny ghostly queerness. In the third episode of the BBC mini-series *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, there is a scene in which Smiley (Alec Guinness) and Roy Bland (Terence Rigby) meet and have a conversation. This scene is one of the flashbacks Smiley has in the show, which is a complicated mix of incidents from both his

present and past. Bland is now one of the principal members of the new Circus after Control's (Alexander Knox) resignation. Therefore, he is one of the suspects because the mole is operating from the top of the newly formed organisation. Smiley is here remembering the meeting he had with Bland in the past, looking for any sign that could have betrayed Bland as a double agent. In this scene, they are walking in a park in London, talking to each other. There are many strangers all around them, quickly walking into the frame and then out of it, one after another. The audience does not know where they are coming from and going to, or whether they are secret agents spying Smiley and Bland. Just like secret agents thrown into a paranoid labyrinth in spy fiction, the audience has no idea whether those people surrounding the characters are spies or just passers-by. In this particular scene, these passers-by are mostly single men, just like the "lonely queer" outside Guillam's window. At the far end of the screen, there stands a vague figure wearing a suit, a long coat, and hat among other single men passing by. While the other men quickly walk out of the frame without coming back, this figure intermittently but persistently makes his indistinct appearance in the distance, as if secretly observing Smiley and Bland. Thus, the "lonely queer" with the trilby hat in the novel appears to be made flesh here on the screen in the mini-series, although the scenes between the original and the adaptation do not precisely correspond. The focus is on Smiley and Bland walking together, so this mysterious figure only dimly appears in the background. He sneaks into the frame without them noticing, disappears from it and comes back while no one is conscious of his presence. He does not even have a face; he only has a fuzzy unfocused contour, just like a ghost (Fig. 5). When the lonely queer is visually represented, he shows up as a spectre. No one knows where he and the other solitary men

come from and where they are going, they simply move and out of the frame like freely floating ghosts. They might or might not be spies, just as the “lonely queer” outside Guillam’s window might or might not be so. Similarly, they might or might not be homosexual men drifting around London looking for a partner for a night. The point here is that the overlapping of queer and spy identity found in the original novel is repeated in the 1979 visual adaptation, but here this queer spy figure is given a ghostly presence with which they haunt the screen.



Figure 5: Bland and Smiley walking together while a ghostly man stands behind them.

Although queer spies in the novel are also somewhat apparitional, such as a brief reappearance by Martindale as a voice haunting Smiley’s mind, queer spies in visual media appear even more spectral due to their repeated appearances, which leads to the definition of the uncanny. Freud argues that the phenomenon of the repetition “arouse[s] an uncanny feeling” (Freud 2001, 237). Visual media such as film and television add an uncanny feeling to the representation. On the screen, spies appear to come and go repeatedly in a way that is always immediately obvious to the viewer, while in the novels

readers have to follow their movements carefully over a longer period. Thereby, on-screen queer spies emanate an even more ghostly aura, visually embodying the uncanny.

A ghostly queer spy returns in the 2011 film, albeit in one of the deleted scenes: the beginning of the film shows a montage of Smiley's (Gary Oldman) solitary life after he left the secret service. One of the shots captures Smiley swimming naked in a desolate autumnal pond. This brief shot was originally intended for a more extended sequence. In the deleted part of this sequence, Smiley sits quietly on the poolside when suddenly an old man with grey hair pops up from beneath the water and says: "just in case you are interested, yeah? We are observed, the old bill, hiding in the bushes, not very subtle, there you are". This unnamed character is suggesting that the pond is in fact where homosexual men secretly meet each other and the "old bill", meaning police officer,²⁶ is hiding and watching them, attempting to arrest them for gross indecency. In the interview included in the DVD of the film, the director Thomas Alfredson explains this deleted scene as follows: "I'm very fond of the scene that's not in the film, which is, Smiley taking swim in the pond and there is an old queer guy turning up, flirting with him and it was, we didn't find the correct place for it in the film but it was such a sweet scene" (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* DVD, 2014). This scene manifestly repeats the overlapping of queer and spy identity presented in the original novel and 1979 mini-series. The desolate autumnal pond is the location where spy and queer meet, and the film suggests that the place secret agents hide is also where homosexual men hide. Hepburn notes that the public male bathroom "functions as a place for casual sex" (2005, 191) while at the same time the toilet is also where "spies congregate around" (Hepburn 2005, 191) in spy

²⁶ In one of the definitions of the word "old bill", the OED lists "police officer" in British slang.

fiction. In this scene in the 2011 film, this gloomy pond somewhere in London functions as a space signalling the intersection of queer and spy, analogous to the public urinal.

This deleted scene dutifully follows a queer convention of British visual media, as Santiago Fouz-Hernández notes that there is a certain tradition in British film in which water is considered a medium for “homosexual baptism” (Fouz-Hernández 2008, 154). For instance, in the numerous film adaptations of E.M. Forster’s novels, swimming works as “a metaphor for homosexual liberation” (Fouz-Hernández 2008, 154). “[T]he intertwining of male bodies and landscapes (especially water images of river or ponds)” (Fouz-Hernández 2001, 398) is visible there, and such occasions are charged with “the voyeuristic pleasure that focuses on the male body” (Fouz-Hernández 2001, 398). This deleted sequence in 2011 *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is homoerotic not only because of the presence of the “old queer guy” (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* DVD, 2014) but also because of the scene setting that features “water images of (...) ponds” (Fouz-Hernández 2001, 398). Although the sequence itself was deleted from the finished film, a fragment of it survives in the opening montage, and still endows the film with a touch of “the voyeuristic pleasure that focuses on the male body” (Fouz-Hernández 2001, 398) via Smiley’s swimming figure (Fig. 6). Smiley’s swimming sequence is later repeated in the film, suggesting that he regularly goes there to bathe naked.



Figure 6: Smiley swimming naked in the pond.

The “old queer guy” in this deleted scene has a highly spectral presence. He shows up from nowhere but under the water, and audiences have no idea where he came from. Although Smiley slightly cranes his head towards the old man, he does not react to him at all. Instead, he just sits there, staring blankly at the old man as if he was some kind of mysterious entity that he cannot comprehend (Fig. 7). Given that the story of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is set in 1973, this man’s line might impart a slightly anachronistic tone; homosexual intercourse between consenting adult men in private had already ceased to be illegal.²⁷ The way he pronounces his lines reminds us of the time when homosexual men were severely persecuted, especially in the ten years preceding the decriminalisation; it is as if he came from a different time. This old man is a ghost from the past, before the Sexual Offences Act 1967 came into effect. This also explains

²⁷ Legal persecution towards homosexual men did not entirely cease in 1967. Geraldine Bedell points out that “between 1967 and 2003, 30,000 gay and bisexual men were convicted for behaviour that would not have been a crime had their partner been a woman” (Bedell 2007).

Smiley's apathetic gaze at the old man, as if he did not really exist. As Avery F. Gordon's description of ghost suggests, the old man "appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present" (Gordon 2008, 42). Smiley cannot fully ignore his presence because he sits there in the present time; however, he does not know how to react to this phantom in the past. The ghost is "seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes" but it "makes itself known or apparent to us" (Gordon 2008, 8), in this case, through his powerful presence in front of the camera.

The fact that this scene was excluded from the film gives this man an even more ghostly aura. Even though the scene was the director's "favourite" (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* DVD, 2014), the "old queer guy" was pushed out of the film, only making his appearance in the special features on the DVD. Through his non-existence, the "old queer guy" haunts the 2011 *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* film.



Figure 7: Smiley blankly stares at the old man who emerged from the water.

Among the three texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the 2011 film version is probably the most "queered" (Randal 2017, 189) one. Filmed four decades after the

original novel and the mini-series, it makes the homoerotic nuance much more visible than in the previous versions. For instance, Guillam is turned into a homosexual, although the original novel depicts him as heterosexual and as having successive relationships with different women. Several studies mention Guillam's sexual transformation in the latest film adaptation (D'Arcy 2014, Rogers 2017).

The queering of the film is, in fact, one of the intentions of the director. Alfredson talks about this alteration in an interview held just after the film was released in 2011:

We added that the thing with Peter Guillam being a homosexual in the film because I thought it would be interesting to reflect that there were so many homosexuals working in the SIS but they were forbidden to be it, it was forbidden in the UK in general until '67. And in the service it was forbidden because you would expose yourself to be blackmailed (LucasSpeakerSeries 2011).

The director reveals that he altered Guillam's sexuality on purpose, in relation to the historical background of the film. He cites the attitude taken by Anglophone authorities under the Cold War political climate. In a way, this was a "restorative correction to history" (Randal 2017, 189). The beginning of the film depicts Guillam walking on the street and glancing at a woman walking by in a seductive manner, introducing him as a heterosexual playboy. However, in the middle of the film, shortly before the quest for the mole reaches its climax, it turns out that Guillam had a male lover at home. Guillam has to leave him so that he does not expose him to danger. In the film, Guillam is portrayed as a closeted homosexual under the guise of a womanizer. The film implies that the heterosexual Guillam in the original novel was a cover for the homosexual Guillam in 2011, as though it took 37 years for him to come out of the closet.

Guillam's break up from his male partner can be interpreted as a repetition of Haydon and Prideaux's relationship, albeit on a smaller scale, retracing their tragic separation. Geraint D'Arcy argues: "Putting Guillam under threat in such a domestic way

also allows the audience to feel differently towards the suggestion of a homosexual relationship between Prideaux and Haydon that is also present in the novel. The romantic betrayal of Prideaux becomes a deeper betrayal from Haydon than the mere political betrayal of simply being a traitor” (2014, 282). The alteration of Guillam’s sexuality queers the film adaptation not only because it adds another homosexual character to the narrative but also because it changes the way audiences interpret the betrayal of Haydon in his relationship to Prideaux. By queering Guillam, the Haydon-Prideaux relationship is also given a tragic, homoerotic dimension, which foregrounds the subtle homoeroticism indiscreetly suffusing the original novel and the television series.

However, this does not indicate a simple trajectory of homosexuality from repression to liberation. Even in the 2011 film, which presents homosexuality more openly, an unknown force constantly pushes queer desire out of the frame. The “old queer guy” in the pond water was eliminated in the process of editing. Guillam’s homosexual identity is revealed only when he leaves his male lover, after which his sexuality is never mentioned again. Rogers argues that the lover of Guillam “is identified as queer, then summarily erased and silenced once again”. He describes that “Peter Guillam’s sexuality performs a kind of haunting in the film version of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, appearing as an apparition for only a moment and then slipping away once more as he decides that double agency is his best mode in work and life” (Rogers 2017, 190). Homosexuals in the 2011 film, such as Guillam, or the old man in the pond, appear as fleeting apparitions before slipping away as a result of forces that seek to erase their presence. Although queerness is intensified in the modern film version, their status as an apparition never changes. They continue to haunt the page and screen almost for four decades.

Thus, homosexuality functions as a haunting force behind the narrative in all three texts. Ellis Hanson notes that “notions of death have been at the heart of nearly every historical construction of same-sex desire” (Hanson 1991, 324). Western media has represented homosexuals with images of “the undead”, namely, “the dead who dare to speak and sin and walk abroad” that have constituted “spectacular images of the abject” (Hanson 1991, 324). Hansen points out the “abjected space that gay men are obliged to inhabit; that space unspeakable or unnameable, itself defined as orifice, as a ‘dark continent’ men dare not penetrate” (Hanson 1991, 325). It seems that the queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* are also confined within this “abjected space”, although they occasionally escape to make their appearance on screen before returning from whence they came. Martindale and the “lonely queer” (le Carré 2018, 128) in the original novel, countless men coming and going in and out of the frame of the 1979 television series, and Guilleam himself in the 2011 film; all are pushed out of the narrative to “that space unspeakable or unnameable” that readers and audiences cannot reach.

The Queer Double Agent as Haunting Force

Although *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* depicts homosexuality as a haunting force through Guilleam and secret agents passing-by, the most significant of all of them in this narrative is Bill Haydon, the mole planted by the Soviet intelligent service. The original novel inscribes the way the main characters are obsessed with Haydon. Martindale, a haunting queer spy himself, describes the obsession as follows.

Father to them all Bill is, always was. Draws them like bees. Well, he has the glamour, hasn't he, not like some of us. (le Carré 2018, 26)

Haydon is described as a sweet flower attracting bees. Martindale illustrates how

attractive Haydon is to all those who are in the secret service by queering Haydon with a floral metaphor. Flowers, such as lavender and pansy, have long been associated with the homosexual subculture in the twentieth century. Lucy Jones explains that the term has a long history dating back to the early twentieth century: “The term ‘lavender’ is a long-standing example of lexis associated with the gay community; indeed, it was recorded as a synonym for ‘homosexual’ by Gershon Legman in his 1941 glossary of American gay slang” (Jones 2016). Incidentally, “lavender” was also used for the term “lavender scare”, which designated a fear that gays and lesbians were a threat to national security during the Cold War period.²⁸

Le Carré himself uses a floral metaphor in a derogatory address to homosexuals in *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1963), in which the protagonist, Alec Leamas, calls spies “pansies” for his self-deprecating definition of a spy: “What do you think spies are: priests, saints, martyrs? They're a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors, too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives” (le Carré 2010, 246). *OED* defines a “pansy” as follows: “a homosexual man; an effeminate man; a weakling. Frequently derogatory”. It traces the term’s first usage back to the early 1920s (*OED*). Through the metaphor of flowers and bees, Martindale suggests that Haydon queerly haunts all the seminal characters in this novel.

Among those who are obsessed with Haydon, the most significant is Smiley. As the story unfolds readers find that Smiley, the protagonist himself, is persistently engulfed by a queer obsession for Haydon, even though the synopsis portrays Smiley as a

²⁸ David K. Johnson defines “lavender scare” as “a fear that permeated Cold War political culture, this fear that gay people were a threat to national security, that they had infiltrated the federal government, and that they needed to be systematically removed from government service” (Lim and Kracov 2019).

heterosexual man.

what happens but that the assembled ghosts of his past—Lacon, Control, Karla, Alleline, Esterhase, Bland, and finally Bill Haydon himself—barged into his cell and cheerfully inform him, as they drag him back to this same garden, that everything which he had been calling vanity is truth?

‘Haydon,’ he repeated to himself, no longer able to stem the tides of memory. Even the name was like a jolt. ‘I’m told that you and Bill shared *everything* once upon a time,’ said Martindale. He stared at his chubby hands, watching them shake. Too old? Impotent? Afraid of the chase? Or afraid of what he might unearth at the end of it? (le Carré 2018, 84)

At this point in the story, Smiley is still in the early stages of his quest for the mole planted in the intelligence service. Although the narrator places particular emphasis on Haydon’s name, Smiley is not yet supposed to know that Haydon is a double agent. The very beginning of the narrative shows that Smiley is already a retired agent, living a quiet life as a civilian. Therefore, these members of the secret world are all “ghosts of his past” (le Carré 2018, 84).

Among them all, Haydon is the most insistent ghost tormenting Smiley’s psyche. As he remembers Haydon, Martindale’s voice returns to his mind like a persistent queer ghost, reminding him that Ann, his own wife, is sleeping with Haydon. The way Martindale phrases the affair between Smiley’s wife and Haydon is intensely homoerotic. He and Haydon “shared *everything*” (le Carré 2018, 84), forming what Sedgwick, interpreting a notion first proposed by René Girard, calls a “triangle of desire”. Sedgwick argues that “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved” (Sedgwick 2016, 21). Through their erotic rivalry, Haydon and Smiley cultivate their homoerotic bond, which is as powerful as the bond that links Smiley to Ann or Haydon to Ann. Sedgwick points out that Girard sees “the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle as being even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between

either of the lovers and the beloved” (Sedgwick 2016, 21). Thus, the bond between Smiley and Haydon is even more significant for the text. By sharing “*everything*” (le Carré 2018, 84), Smiley and Haydon become inseparable. It should also be noted that it is queer Martindale who returns to Smiley’s mind as a disembodied voice to confirm the homoerotic relationship they have built through the exchange of a woman.

Smiley’s queer obsession for Haydon in the original novel is expressed inexplicitly yet intensely in the 1979 television mini-series, which notably underlines their queer relationship through its uncanny imageries. Indeed, the 1979 mini-series seems at first glance reticent to make any expression of sexuality. Even le Carré remarks how asexual Alec Guinness’s Smiley seems, compared to Gary Oldman’s performance in 2011. He says: “You couldn’t really imagine Alec Guinness having a sex life, you couldn’t imagine a kiss on the screen with Alec, not one that you believed in, whereas Oldman has quite obviously a male sexuality.” (Ensor, 2011) Regarding Guinness’s performance of 1979 Smiley, le Carré states that he cannot perceive anything sexual, contrary to Oldman’s performance in the 2011 film. Whether heterosexual or homosexual, the mini-series carefully refrains from sexual expression. However, homoeroticism occasionally seeps out from the monotonous 1970s screen, as if the queer undertone of the original novel was quietly transplanted to the television. The queer spies of the original novel soundlessly emerge to haunt the later adaptations.

Smiley’s queer obsession for Haydon is also illustrated by their similarity with each other in the mini-series. In episode 3, there is a moment in which Smiley and Haydon appear strikingly similar. The scene is one of Smiley’s flashbacks from when he was still a member of the secret service. Smiley invites Haydon to his house to discuss

the new scheme for the Circus, which Smiley feels suspicious about. When they enter the house together, Smiley is the only person wearing glasses, but the next shot in Smiley's living room shows Haydon's face with thick-rimmed glasses. With these glasses, Haydon looks strikingly similar to Smiley. This sequence captures the fact that their outfits, height, and hair are similar, and the sudden appearance of Haydon's glasses underlines their visual likeness apart from their facial features; these men who share the same woman look like twins (Fig. 8). Freud lists "the phenomenon of the 'double'" as one of the most prominent "themes of uncanniness" (Freud 2001, 234). Smiley and Haydon are shown to be the uncanny doubles "who are to be considered identical because they look alike" (Freud 2001, 234) in this brief shot. These secret agents, who are tightly bound with desire for the same woman, thus come into sight as queer twins on the television screen. However, this illusion breaks when Haydon takes off his glasses, making visible the facial difference between Guinness and Richardson. When he wears glasses, the thick frame hides Richardson's distinctive facial features, but once he takes them off the image of a queer double disappears from the screen.



Figure 8: The visual likeness of Smiley and Haydon enhanced by their thick-rimmed glasses.

However, their usage of the glasses also conveys their difference. Smiley is occasionally filmed taking his glasses on and off. He usually engages in this action when he is intensely concentrating on his investigation. When the interrogation reaches its crucial stage, Smiley takes his glasses off to pensively gaze at the object of the interrogation or wears them again to stare at it intensively. Haydon also takes his glasses on and off, but unlike Smiley his gesture does not have a particular narrative function; he only toys playfully with his glasses. Haydon's gesture thus indicates his partial similarity with Smiley, but also signifies his character's emptiness contrary to Smiley's profundity.

The Queer Performance of Actors

The 1979 television series also demonstrates queer intertextuality woven by the bodies of actors. Smiley is not the first secret agent role played by Guinness. In the film *Our Man in Havana* discussed in the previous chapter, he plays the deceptive agent Jim Wormold. As discussed previously, his exchange with his co-star Noël Coward is charged with

homoeroticism. According to Sinfield, Coward “promote[s] homosexuality into public discourse under the cover of a more general context” (1991, 57) through discreet allusions to homosexuality in his stage plays. In *Our Man in Havana*, Guinness and Coward secretly succeeded in transplanting jokes for “those in the know” (Sinfield 1991, 53), those who understand homosexual allusions, from stage to screen.

Superimposed with the images of two double agents – Smiley and Wormold – Guinness seems to be an epitome of the Cold War spy. Sheridan Morley, biographer of the actor John Gielgud, says that Guinness himself was like a spy living under the cover of a heterosexual father, hiding his homosexuality: “As a character actor he [Guinness] was a sort of spy, which made him good at deception in life as well as art” (Ezard 2001). John Ezard writes: “Sir Alec Guinness had a homosexual side which remained publicly unknown in his lifetime because of the flair for evasion and secrecy which was also his trademark as an actor” (2001). Ezard reports that Guinness was even “arrested, charged and fined in court in Liverpool in 1946 for a homosexual act in a public lavatory” (Ezard 2001), but the case went unreported because he used a false name when he was captured. Although he managed to hide his sexuality from the public, Guinness was an actor with ambiguous sexual undertones, even during his lifetime. Holding a secrecy that was his “trademark as an actor” (Ezard 2001), Guinness himself embodies the intersection of queer and spy identities. Although the mini-series depicts homosexuality in a remarkably restrained way, Guinness’s presence as a secret agent gives it significant queer undertones.

Richardson, who played Haydon, is also conscious of the connection between homosexuality and spies. In an interview with John Walsh, Richardson talks about his

role as Anthony Blunt, one of the Cambridge spy ring members who was exposed as a double agent by Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Eight years on from *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, he would take on the role of Blunt in John Glenister's televised film *Blunt* (1987), which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Richardson said that he was struck by the similarity between the double agent and homosexual identity in the Cold War context, where homosexuals made "ideal spies because they spent their entire lives, from the moment of sexual awareness, concealing what they were doing" (Walsh 2011). From this guess, he deduced that "the treason they were committing was similar to the concealment of their sexuality" (Walsh 2011). It seems that Richardson was conscious of the secrecy shared by spies and homosexuals only when he worked for *Blunt*. However, in his performance as Haydon in 1979, the interconnection between homosexuality and espionage is already embodied; Richardson's Haydon is the uncanny queer spy brilliantly realised on screen. Furthermore, the portrayal of Blunt by Richardson retroactively intensifies the queerness of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, superimposing the image of Haydon with Blunt, the archetype of the queer spy from whom the recurrent narratives on secret agency and homosexuality emanate.

An Uncanny Interweaving of Fiction and Reality

After Smiley's hunt for Karla, the criminal mastermind of the Soviet secret intelligence service, concludes with the 1979 novel *Smiley's People*, Smiley disappears from Le Carré's literary universe for a while. Despite his immense popularity, he would not return until 1990 in *The Secret Pilgrim*.²⁹ Le Carré says that Guinness's portrayal of Smiley

²⁹ After *The Secret Pilgrim*, Smiley appears in *A Legacy of Spies* in 2017, breaking his silence in the post-Cold War world once again.

was so perfect that the author “felt that Guinness took Smiley from him, making him unable to write the character anymore” (Fisher 2011, 37). Guinness’s perfect performance haunts Smiley, making it impossible for the author to retrieve the character from the image produced by the actor. The television version of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* takes on a further uncanny aura because of the way reality is intermingled with fiction through the actors’ bodies.

The timely status of the mini-series further consolidates the uncanny intersection of fiction and reality. On 16 November 1979, then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher revealed Blunt to be a Soviet double agent who worked with Burgess and Maclean (Lemoyne and Downie 1979). Joseph Oldham notes that this revelation coincided with the broadcast of the mini-series. Thatcher’s revelation “came right in the middle of the first broadcast of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*”, and therefore the mini-series “acquired a fortuitously topical edge” (Oldham 2013, 739). The timely revelation of Blunt blurred the boundary between reality and fiction for 1970s viewers. While the viewers were holding their breath for the revelation of the mole, the fourth man Blunt suddenly appeared in reality, with an enormous amount of media coverage.

The 1979 mini-series is uncanny in the sense defined by Terry Castle. Castle notes that the “uncanny themes” listed by Freud (doubles, automata, among others) are uncanny because of “the way they subvert the distinction between the real and the phantasmatic” (Castle 1995, 5). The mini-series conjures this uncanny space for audience members in the late 1970s. They are thrown into the realm of espionage fiction where spectral queer spies hover, struck by the confusion between reality and fiction, and

probably bewildered and amazed at the revelations simultaneously made by both the mini-series and real-life events.

The reality and the fictional world of espionage are mixed up, and their boundary is further blurred by the coincidental similarity between Blunt and Haydon. The public became aware that Blunt was a double agent in November 1979, the same year as the television broadcast and five years after the publication of the original novel. Until then, Blunt was known only as a prestigious art historian. Yet strangely, Haydon on the 1979 screen had already exhibited some similarities to Blunt. They both come from upper-middle-class families sharing the passion for art and, most importantly, Blunt was not heterosexual, just like Haydon. They were both sophisticated suave gentlemen with same-sex desire. Haydon and Blunt are already strangely similar in the 1970s version of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. The representation of Haydon, who is supposed to be an amalgam of the Cambridge spies already known at that time (Burgess, Philby and Maclean), seems to be an uncanny prophecy of the fourth man's revelation. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* blurs the distinction between fiction and reality through its presentation of Haydon.

Such confusion of reality and fiction creates an uncanny space in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, through which ghosts may enter. Freud says that “an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality” (Freud 2001, 244). When reality and fiction are mixed up, things become more uncanny, and this uncanny space invites the ghost we have already seen in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Gordon describes that “*Somewhere between the Actual and the Imaginary ghosts might enter without affrighting us.*” (Gordon 2008, 139). The mini-series *Tinker Tailor*

Soldier Spy creates an uncanny space, augmenting its spectral nature by rendering vague the boundary between fiction and reality surrounding the Cambridge spies. Thereby, ghost walk into the screen, haunting the representation of spies since here on.

The uncanny interweaving between Haydon and Blunt would eventually lead to a template for a fictional representation of double agents in the 1980s. The television films and plays discussed later in this thesis – *A Question of Attribution* (1991), *Blunt* (1987), and *Cambridge Spies* (2003) – all share the portrayal of Blunt as an upper-class connoisseur concealing same-sex desire beneath his restrained manner, which bears a certain similarity to Richardson's Haydon. Moreover, Richardson himself would play Blunt eight years later in the television film *Blunt*, further inviting viewers into the strange interplay between future and past, the reality and fiction. By initiating a fictionalisation of the Cambridge spies, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* creates a realm filled with the uncanny. This realm would then be taken over by multiple different artists who portray the Cambridge spy ring in their own narratives, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Emanating from the master narrative *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the Cambridge spies become an amalgam of fictional characters, historical figures, and the actors on British screen in the coming decades, generating the uncanny projection of queer spies.

Queer Spies, the Uncanny, and the British Class System

Importantly, the question remains as to why uncanny queer spies fill *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*'s narrative, persisting across decades through adaptation. I propose that the ghostly representation of queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* conceals something related to

larger issues beyond the narrative. As Manning notes, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is a novel that displays an impetus “to unearth its own fourth man and to reveal the dark secret in Britain’s unconscious” (Manning 2018, 104). The novel is not simply about finding the mole planted in MI6, as the narrative tells us, but rather aims to uncover something concealed in “Britain’s unconscious” (Manning 2018, 104). In the original novel, le Carré writes that “secret services were the only real measure of a nation’s political health, the only real expression of its subconscious” (le Carré 2018, 389). Thus, everything taking place in the novel addressed the nation’s collective unconscious. Spectral queer spies are also a variation of the expression of Britain’s “subconscious” (le Carré 2018, 389). The queer ghosts lurking in the narrative express something deeply related to British society and projected through the nation’s unconscious.

In understanding what lies behind these uncanny queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the author’s own intentions should not be overlooked. Le Carré once said that “[o]ne of the greatest realities is sex, but we almost never succeed in betraying our sexuality to one another fully”. He continues by saying that “the figure of the spy” seems to be “infinitely capable of exploitation for purposes of articulating all sorts of submerged things in our society” (Brucoli and Baughman 2004, 36). In le Carré’s literary universe, spies are there to reveal the sexuality concealed at the heart of society. In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, queer spies expose what is hidden in British culture in terms of homosexuality.

British culture has historically treated male homosexuality as an open secret, which is traced by the ghostly presentation of queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Referring to D.A Miller’s open secret concept, Sinfield discusses the role of

homosexuality in Britain. He writes that “[h]omosexuality must not be allowed fully into the open, for that would grant it public status; yet it must not disappear altogether, for then it would be beyond control and would no longer effect a general surveillance of aberrant desire” (1991, 50). The ghostliness of queer spies is thus a metaphor of the position society has assigned to homosexuality. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*’s queer spies appear as ghosts lingering in, and peripheral to, the texts, analogous to the positioning of homosexuality between visibility and invisibility.

The open secrecy of male homosexuality is intense in certain classes, rather than in British society as a whole. Houlbrook describes differences in attitudes among homosexual men across classes. Middle-and upper-class homosexual men remained invisible and discreet while working-class homosexual men were easier to spot (Houlbrook 2006, 75). According to Houlbrook, some working-class men did not hesitate to construct an effeminate public persona, walking in public in a flamboyant fashion like Quentin Crisp. Conversely, for “middle-and upper-class men, by contrast [to the working-class men], their choice of sexual partner was the *only* thing that made them different” (Houlbrook 2006, 7). Neither their clothes nor behaviour designated the sexuality of middle-and upper-class men. Houlbrook continues: “Conventionally masculine and discreet, they [middle-and upper-class men] neither looked nor behaved ‘differently’ and remained invisible to passersby” (Houlbrook 2006, 7). Homosexuality was therefore an invisible secret for men who were not working-class.

In pre-1967 Britain, although male homosexuality was secret and invisible for middle-and upper-class men, it was familiar to them due to their formative years. This was especially so for the ruling class, whose members spent a significant amount of time

at public schools. Although the British establishment never makes it explicit, same-sex desire is something they are always familiar with; it has been always there from their childhood. Florence Tamagne notes that “the English public school often regards homosexuality as normal” and this topic is “common in British literature”. However, “school headmasters and educational authorities often try to refute it” (Tamagne 2006, 106). Thus, homosexuality in public schools has never been publicly approved in the official realm. However normal homosexuality was for school pupils, it transforms into deviancy once they are out of school. Although boys grow up in an atmosphere where homosexual relationships are normal, they must renounce such desire or cover its presence once they become adult.

The original *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* novel figuratively expresses this status of homosexuality as an open secret among the establishment class. The novel metaphorically describes this half-recognition of homoerotic desire in the British upper-class by portraying each character attracted to Haydon while secretly knowing his betrayal. Although Haydon’s role as a double agent is a pivotal mystery to solve in the narrative, the novel implies that the characters, members of the establishment class, were always unconsciously aware that he was guilty of this. Nevertheless, they cannot resist the charm of Haydon as I described in the subsection “Queer Double Agent as the Haunting Force in the Narrative”; they are drawn to him as bees are to a flower. They eventually repress their doubt, deceiving themselves. The citation below depicts the members of the ruling class trying to repress their doubt, while remaining perfectly aware of his guilt.

He [Smiley] knew, of course. He had always known it was Bill. Just as Control had known, and Lacon in Mendel’s house. Just as Connie and Jim had known, and

Alleline and Esterhase, all of them had tacitly shared that unexpressed half-knowledge which like an illness they hoped would go away if it was never owned to, never diagnosed. (le Carré 2018, 378)

Smiley the protagonist spy, Control (the former head of the Circus), Lacon (undersecretary), Connie (retired secret service researcher), Jim (the former head of a division of the Circus), Alleline (current Circus chief), and Esterhase (high-ranking Circus officer); these prominent people all knew that Haydon was leaking vital information on British national security to the Soviet Union. However, they were incessantly drawn to him, suppressing their slight doubt over Haydon as if it did not exist.

These who repress their doubt are like the “school headmasters and educational authorities” (Tamagne 2006, 106) who try to refute male homosexuality among themselves while remaining aware of its existence. They all know that some boys are committed to same-sex relationships, and some of them grow up into gay men, but this is never publicly acknowledged. Male homosexuality has been an open secret “vice” (Tamagne 2006, 106) never diagnosed as such in the establishment class. Both the characters in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and the adults in the establishment class behave as if their “vice” does not exist so long as they maintain their pretence. Le Carré writes that British secret services are “microcosms of the British condition, of our social attitudes and vanities” (le Carré 1979, 33). Thus, the mindset of secret service members portrayed above epitomises the attitude of their class towards male homosexuality; their half-knowledge and reluctance to admit co-exist ambivalently.

Male homosexuality is uncanny for the British ruling class in the way defined by Sigmund Freud. Although the establishment class members are familiar with homosexuality throughout their childhood, they must keep it at a distance once they grow up. For them, homosexuality is “familiar and agreeable” (Freud 2001, 224), yet has to be

“concealed and kept out of sight” (Freud 2001, 224-225). In these texts, homosexuality, which “ought to have remained secret and hidden” (Freud 2001, 225) among middle-and upper-class men, “come[s] to light” (Freud 2001, 225), exposing its presence to the eyes of readers and audiences through the apparition of queer spies. It is useful now to revisit le Carré’s assertion that the intelligent services express what is concealed in the nation’s subconscious (2018, 389). The novel implies that in the subconscious of the British establishment class, whose members the Circus consists of, there lies an unresolved dilemma about male homosexuality. Ghostly queer spies reveal the content of this subconscious through their half-seen apparition. The queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* are uncanny because they constitute a metaphor for the half-visible open secret status of homosexuality in the British establishment class, and they come back to the narrative to remind the readers and the audiences of this upper-class hypocrisy.

The fact that queer spies are the projection of the ruling class’s collective unconscious in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* reflects le Carré’s harsh criticism of this class. The author’s hostility to the ruling class is evident to those who read his novels. In his obituary for the author, Eric Homberger writes that “[t]he real enemies for Le Carré were not the Russian gangsters, for all their brutality, but the western, and particularly British, enablers and louche House of Lords and City corruptionists” (2020). Homberger contends that “[t]he upper-class rogues who control ‘Great Britain plc’ come quite high in Le Carré’s ranking of evil men” (Homberger 2020). Furthermore, le Carré blames this class for creating a figure like Philby, and calls them “[s]tupid, credulous, smug and torpid” (1979, 42). He contends that the ruling class itself is responsible for creating the double agent because Philby was “born and trained into the establishment” (le Carré

1979, 31). The author writes that Philby experienced “the capacity of the British ruling class for reluctant betrayal and polite self-reservation” and he “played the parts which the establishment could recognize” (le Carré 1979, 31) in conducting his betrayal. After all, his status as a double agent was complete because “Philby was able to rally the establishment to his side and manoeuvre it into protecting him as its own” (le Carré 1979, 31). According to le Carré, Philby, one of the Cambridge spies, was created by the very incompetence and self-complacency of the class. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* depicts these establishment class characters as attracted to Haydon while deceiving themselves so that they do not have to identify his betrayal. This depiction traces the very structure of the relationship between Philby and the establishment class.

Le Carré’s harsh criticism of the ruling class motivates the spectral apparition of the spies. Queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* betray the structure of self-deception inherent in the British ruling class through their very presence. By portraying such haunting, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* demonstrates how that which is suppressed can return, however solid the self-deception may seem. It is instructive at this point to recite the words of Denning, who asserts that spy fiction functions as cover stories that “wish to conceal” (Denning 2014, 1) something other than that which it narrates. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* unveils the structure of hypocrisy in the British ruling class by making such haunting visible.

As this thesis will see from here on, ghosts return to spy fiction after *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* to remind us of what British society suppresses. Gordon argues that “[t]he uncanny is the return, in psychoanalytic terms, of what the concept of the unconscious represses” (Gordon 2008, 55). Gordon continues that every time ghosts return, they

demand “a different kind of knowledge, a different kind of acknowledgment” (Gordon 2008, 64). The ghosts in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, such as the old man in the pond and the countless men passing through the mini-series, exist for a reason, seeking for some recognition in a society which has attempted to erase them. This thesis, from here on, will investigate why these ghosts return to spy fiction in texts that follow after *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, revealing themselves to the readers and viewers.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the recurrent adaptations of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* – 1974 novel, 1979 BBC mini-series, and 2011 film. In all versions of the text, male homosexuality is carefully inscribed as a tangible undercurrent. However, same-sex desire is always illustrated as a fleeting ghost, appearing on the edge of pages and screen. Queer spies have haunted the narrative across the decades from the 1970s to the 2010s. During this period, different versions of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* were adapted and re-written as a new text. Even though the cultural visibility of male homosexuality increased from the late half of twentieth century to the 2010s, the film adaptation in 2011 still pushes homosexual representation to the edge of the screen. In this way, the haunting of queer spies has been discreetly transmitted through texts and across decades.

Although the haunting is illustrated by several different homosexual characters in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, the most significant is Bill Haydon, the mole planted in MI6 by KGB, and the narrative’s foremost queer spy. By describing the way Haydon haunts the narrative, this chapter clarified that *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* creates a realm of the uncanny in spy fiction, where fiction and reality are conjoined, and in which the

performance of the actors plays an important role. In the transition from the written text to screen, the narrative gains a further uncanny aura, decisively inscribing the image of queer spies into British representational history. The 1970s television series is especially relevant for the construction of this image, although at first glance it appears to be highly reticent about any expression of sexuality, let alone queerness.

Finally, the chapter discussed what structures the uncanny in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. I explained that the texts betrayed the hypocrisy in the British establishment class by making spectral queer spies visible. The original novel describes upper-class characters incessantly drawn to Haydon while repressing their doubt that he is a double agent planted in the secret service. This half-recognition traces the attitude of the British establishment class towards homosexuality. Queer spies in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* expose this structure of hypocrisy by their very presence. Thus, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* functions as a critical commentary on the British ruling class, which le Carré was both part of, and simultaneously resistant to.

After the publication and television broadcast of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in the 1970s, the 1980s saw the production of a multitude of television films and series concerning the Cambridge spy ring. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* forms a kind of a master narrative to the works that came after it. The next chapter examines how these films and television productions reflect the fascination and haunting of the Cambridge spies, transmitted from *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Queer spies go beyond le Carré's literary world, portraying their image widely in the British cultural imagination afterward.

Chapter 3. Queer Spooks on Stage: Queer Spies in the Plays of Alan Bennett and His Contemporaries

This chapter will focus on spy plays from the 1960s to the early 1990s, and their subsequent adaptation into film and television. Alan Bennett's spy trilogy, which consists of *The Old Country* (1977), *An Englishman Abroad* (television film in 1983, stage play in 1988), *A Question of Attribution* (stage play in 1988, television film in 1991) is the central focus of this chapter. John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965) and Julian Mitchell's *Another Country* (stage play in 1981, film adaptation by Marek Kaniévski in 1984) will also be mentioned in relation to Bennett's spy trilogy. These plays all feature spy characters based on the Cambridge spy ring. The theatrical spies demonstrate the complex relationship between homosexuality and double agency, calling attention to the moment when spies became queer on stage.

What all of these plays have in common is that, while they acknowledge the Cold War association between homosexuality and secret agency, they do so without endorsing the assumption that homosexuality is inherently tied to secret agency. Bennett himself clearly doubts the essential link between these identities in his diary entries, as this chapter later demonstrates. The association between homosexuality and secret agency suggests that homosexuals are essentially treacherous, just as the Cold Warriors in the 1950s United States claimed. However, Bennett dismisses the identity association as an erroneous assumption. Nevertheless, the way he dismisses it in his plays is not as straightforward as his diary suggests. For instance, Bennett positions homosexual double agents as the protagonists of his plays while underlining their homosexuality, depicting the intersection of the identities through his enigmatic queer spies. Although his plays

eventually deny the essential connection between these two identities, they occasionally suggest that the homosexuality of the double agents might have something to do with their treachery, as if they were flirting with the cultural association of homosexuals and spies through the fictional representation of Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt. Through a close reading of his plays, this chapter will investigate how Bennett dislocates the homophobia in the Cold War culture while playing with this association of identities.

However, I will first draw a timeline of queer spies on stage, by referring to John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965). Osborne's play denotes an initial attempt to present a queer spy in the 1960s British theatre, amid the Cold War and the Cambridge spy scandal. Although Osborne's play is not the primary focus of this chapter, it is relevant because it shows a stark contrast with Bennett's in terms of homosexuality on stage. Two decades before Bennett, Osborne described homosexuals as innate double agents, and in this sense, his play is indeed a product of the Anglophone Cold War culture. This chapter thus positions Osborne's work in the intertextual relation with the subsequent spy plays of Bennett. By comparing these plays, I will investigate how Bennett subverts the relationship between homosexuality and spies depicted in Osborne's play. If *A Patriot for Me* is the cultural artefact that captures the moment when spies became queer in the Cold War context, Bennett's subsequent plays revisit the moment by positioning the Cambridge spies on stage so as to redefine the meaning of queer spies from the perspective of the late Cold War era.

Finally, the chapter proceeds with an analysis of the plays of Osborne and Bennett as a theatrical continuum that expresses queer spies haunting the stage through the generations. As the previous chapter discussed through *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, there

exists a representational history of homosexuality as the uncanny other in Western culture. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* expresses the queer becoming of spies in conjunction with this representational trend. In this work queer spies are ghosts transmitted through generations. This chapter proposes that the haunting of queer spies also exists on the British stage. For this discussion, I will refer to *Another Country* in order to follow theatrical queer haunting from a broader perspective, covering the Cold War period for three decades, from the 1960s to the 1980s.

What is at stake in this chapter is the possibility of rewriting a pejorative association once widely shared in culture. In his discussion of the representation of a homosexual murderer on the American stage, Jordan Schildcrout notes that American queer theatre artists “have rewritten and radically altered the significance of the homicidal homosexual” (Schildcrout 2014, 4) through the portrayal of queer murderers on stages. Schildcrout continues: “By reclaiming and reforming a homophobic archetype, the artist might destabilize the homicidal homosexual’s significance and redirect him or her within a new script” (2014, 8). There has been a homophobic tradition associating homosexuality with villainous characteristics in America (Schildcrout 2014, 1). These artists, Schildcrout argues, seek to undermine this negative association by rewriting queer murderers. What Bennett does in his spy plays is not dissimilar to the method adapted by American queer theatre artists. Bennett’s spy plays take this widely shared homophobic association – wrongful assumptions mixing up double agents and homosexuals – by positioning the Cambridge spies as their main characters. Bennett then rewrites the homosexual double agents, altering the relationship between double agency and homosexuality through his meticulously designed scripts and the intricate portrayal of his

characters. Schildcrout asks, “what connection is there between their homosexuality and their murder?” (2014, 41), concluding that such a connection changes according to how society treats same-sex desire: “As our society changes its understanding of crime and of homosexuality, and of homosexuality *as* a crime, these factors are reimagined in each retelling of the case” (Schildcrout 2014, 41). Whatever is associated with homosexual identity, these identity associations are reimagined in a different form in a different temporal and spatial context. The association between homosexuality and double agency is no exception: as “our society changes its understanding of” homosexuality and secret agency, the meaning of this association is open to alteration, constantly reimagined in a different time and space. This chapter will examine how it is reimagined on the stage in late Cold War-era Britain.

The Medium Specificity of Theatre

Theatre is a medium open to diverse meanings; representations on stage are constantly rewritten. Before going into the discussion of each theatrical text, I would like to refer to the medium specificity of theatre. After this, I will move onto the interrelation of theatre and visual media such as film and television in the next subsection. What matters here is that theatre is a medium where multiple interpretations become available through time through constant rewriting. Furthermore, sexual representations are particularly likely to shift during this rewriting process. Theatre has changed the meanings attached to some sexual identities, and it plays a significant role in re-drawing queer spy identities. Moreover, when theatre productions are adapted into other visual media, these characteristics are amplified.

Some drama scholars argue that the theatre is a medium exposed to constant change. Margherita Laera summarises the medium specificity of theatre in terms of rewriting as follows: “Theatre also rewrites. It constantly does. It rewrites history, relationships, stories and rules. It refashions beliefs, recycles old and used objects and reassembles them into new embodied experiences.” (Laera 2014, 1) Theatre has always rewritten the meanings of the issues presented on stage, and brought about new experiences to the audience members by recycling the pre-existing texts. Given that theatrical texts are often re-enacted in different periods of time – adjusting old texts in a new context – this kind of rewriting is the hallmark of the medium. Marvin Carlson also emphasises theatre’s propensity for shifting meanings. He writes that theatre is “the repository of cultural memory, but, like the memory of each individual, it is also subject to continual adjustment and modification as the memory is recalled in new circumstances and contexts” (Carlson 2003, 2). What is presented on stage is always subject to change, just as people’s memory is susceptible to adjustment. As Laera and Carlson argue, what is presented on stage shifts continuously, which is relevant in the discussion of queer spies on stage.

The representation of homosexuality is, of course, also subject to theatre’s propensity to rewrite and recast. Theatre is a medium often associated with queerness; Sinfield writes that “theatre and theatricality have been experienced throughout the twentieth century as queer” (Sinfield 1999, 1) due to the accumulated history in which homosexuality was associated with theatrical culture. As Sinfield discusses, “theatre has been a particular site for the formation of dissident sexual identities” (Sinfield 1999, 1). Furthermore, Sinfield writes that “changes in theatre as an institution interact with shifts

in ideologies of gender and sexuality” (Sinfield 1999, 1). Countless changes in the social norms surrounding gender and sexuality rather proceed hand in hand with theatre, for over hundred years from Oscar Wilde to the end of the twentieth century when “the conditions for explicit lesbian and gay theatre have been achieved” (Sinfield 1991, 1). Thus, theatre is a contesting space that shows the interaction between shifting meanings and queerness, where sexual identities are subject to adjustment.

In terms of the shifting representation of homosexuality on stage, collaboration functions as a significant factor. Michelene Wandor writes about the history of the gay and feminist alternative theatre, pointing out that those working in the movement in the 1970s-1980s “have sought to democratise the social division of labour in the theatre by developing flexible and collaborative work methods, by introducing theatre to new audiences, and by representing the experiences and interests of groups of oppressed and exploited people” (Wandor 2005, xiv). Theatre has thereby acquired a political role in changing how sexuality is perceived by the broader society, which has come about through the struggle and collective work of those fighting for the rights of sexual minorities.

Let me summarise what I have stated about the medium specificity of theatre. First, theatre is a medium which brings about continuous change. Secondly, such shifting status affects the sexual representation in theatre, where queerness always mattered throughout history. Lastly, collaboration among multiple different people contributes to the shifting status of gender on stage. Schildcrout also supports the last point, emphasising the significance of the collective work for changing the meanings of sexualities on stage. He argues that “[t]he potential meaning of a dramatic text in

performance can vary wildly depending on the artistic choices made by directors, actors, designers, and other members of the production team”. Thus, a play “does not have a single secured meaning determined by the author, but rather is a site of many potential meanings” (Schildcrout 2014, 4). The re-imagination of queer spies is not solely dependent on the playwrights’ intentions because a play involves numerous people in its production. Moreover, each audience interprets individual plays differently: “individual audience members can view the same performance but find different ideas, emotions, and meanings” (Schildcrout 2014, 4). As a result, “[p]erformances can create new narratives”, even from the representations previously deemed homophobic, encouraging “different meanings to emerge” (Schildcrout 2014, 39). The representation of queer spies thereby draws a complex pattern in theatre, a medium which produces rich possibilities for new meaning. Therefore, even a play like *A Patriot For Me* can create meanings that transcend the homophobic attitude prevalent in the original text.

Homosexual spies have been represented as traitors in Cold War culture; queer spies are a crystallisation of such a cultural imagination. However, theatre brought about a continuous shift in meaning and representation surrounding queer spies on stage. Osborne adopts the view associating homosexuals and spies in his theatre production *A Patriot For Me*; however, later revivals of the same play alter this identity association. Furthermore, Bennett and Mitchell also try to re-draw this cultural association. Theatre is a medium suitable for this kind of re-imagination because of several reasons discussed here, and above all, because it is a collective medium in which multiple different views are involved, rather than that of a single author.

Interrelation Between Theatre and Visual Media

When the visual adaptation is taken into consideration, the re-drawing of queer spies is even more multi-faceted and open to diverse interpretation. Most plays discussed in this chapter were adapted into film and television: Bennett's spy plays – *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and *A Question of Attribution* (1991) – were made into a BBC television film under the direction of John Schlesinger. Mitchell's *Another Country* (1984) was adapted into a film. I argue that television and film, too, are “site[s] of many potential meanings” (Schildcrout 2014, 4), because they are also cultural artefacts made by multiple hands – directors, actors, writers, and the other staff members involved in the production – and equally evoke multiple interpretations from audiences.

Moreover, film and television are open to even more diverse responses than the theatre. Visual media has global accessibility; the audience enjoys texts regardless of the location and time in which they are produced. Therefore, potential responses from audience members come with even greater variety. Thus, the homophobic Cold War association of homosexuality with secret agency is subject to drastic alterations through the cooperation of the playwrights, film and stage directors, the actors, and audience members, transcending regions and times through film distribution and television broadcasts.

Whenever a text is adapted, each version of the text differs from the previous version. This gives further impetus to the redrawing of identities. Multiple alterations take place during the process of adaptation from stage to screen and vice versa, as in the case of *An Englishman Abroad*, which was first produced as a TV film and then later adapted onto the stage. This chapter will investigate the variations created by a recurrent

adaptation process. None of these works exist solely on stage or screen but are rather an amalgam of the different versions represented on diverse media. The collective re-imagination of queer spies in *An Englishman Abroad*, *A Question of Attribution*, and *Another Country* create specifically complex patterns because of the involvement of these close but disparate media of theatre, television, and film.

Along with the co-production of diverse artists across media, this chapter focuses especially on the actors' performance in the creation of new meanings for treacherous queer spies. As this chapter discusses later, the performance of the actors contributes to altering the meanings attributed to homosexuality and secret agency. Furthermore, the intertextual relation of multiple plays and visual works is also created via the actors' bodies, significantly influencing possible interpretations of these works. Kerin Eram explains that "[a] well-known actor will bring to his performance, moreover, an 'intertextual' history which invites the spectator to compare it with past performances, thus drawing attention to the performer's idiolectal traits (common to all his performances)" (Elam 2002, 77-78). The actors who repeatedly appear in spy plays, films, and television accumulate this intertextual history. Their frequent returns to the stage and screen encourage audiences to give narratives new interpretations. Their performance draws palimpsests through which the audience's memory of other works of spy fiction echo through "repetition with variation" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 8).

Bennett and the Cold War

The playwright Alan Bennett expresses his discomfort with the assumption that homosexuality and double agency are inherently connected, and such expressions are

found in his diary entries. From the 1980s to 2010s, he has been conscious of the long-existing association between spies and homosexuals, constantly casting doubt on it. His scepticism eventually inspired him to write his own spy trilogy on homosexuality and secret agency.

In the days when I wrote about spies, notably in *The Old Country*, *An Englishman Abroad* and *A Question of Attribution*, it was often assumed, though not by me, that being homosexual predisposes a person to treachery – a view implicitly endorsed by historians as diverse as A. J. P. Taylor and Richard Cobb, neither of whom believed homosexuals were to be trusted. This never seemed plausible to me nor did I feel my (as it would be called today) relaxed attitude to treachery was to do with my own sexual predilections. (Bennett 2016, 264)

In this entry on the 3rd December 2011, Bennett expresses the scepticism he felt towards this cultural association while writing his plays on spies. Although he does not clarify, it stands to reason that such a vexation impels the playwright to complete plays featuring queer spies. His espionage plays function as a declaration that secret agents' treachery has nothing to do with their "sexual predilections".

Bennett's scepticism of equating the two is also expressed on other occasions, as shown on the 1st October 1999 in his review of Kimberly Cornish's history book *The Jew of Linz* (1998).

[Kimberly] Cornish goes on to suggest that (while at Cambridge) Wittgenstein may have been the master spy who recruited for the Soviets, this line of reasoning having much to do with Wittgenstein's homosexuality. So we have lists of Trinity men who were Apostles, which of them were homosexual and so on, Cornish dodgily assuming, as did Andrew Boyle and John Costello before him, that homosexuality is itself a bond and that if two men can be shown to be homosexual the likelihood is that they're sleeping together. So we trail down that road looking for cliques and coteries with even G. M. Trevelyan's sexual credentials called into question because he happens to have recommended the homosexual Guy Burgess for a job at the BBC (Bennett 2005a, 255).

According to Cornish, Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the greatest philosophers in history, might have been a hidden double agent working alongside Cambridge spies such as

Burgess and Blunt. His accusation relies on the fact that Wittgenstein was also homosexual. Bennett criticises this assumption that confuses sexual and political identities, acknowledging that Cornish is not the only historian expressing such a view: others include Andrew Boyle who wrote *The Climate of Treason: Five who Spied for Russia* (1979) and John Costello who wrote *Mask of Treachery* (1988). All these historians presume that these spies are united by a bond deriving from their homosexuality; they confuse homosexual identity with treachery. They contend that these men are simply sharing their bed regardless of their personal choice or relationship, and only their sexual identity is enough to bind them all together as lovers and betrayers. The historians all categorise homosexuals as the other who team up with each other both politically and sexually to betray the heteronormative nation.

Bennett's vexation is further expressed in a diary entry on the 4th December 2005, where he reminisces about Jeremy Wolfenden, a foreign correspondent and gay double agent who died in 1965 at the age of 31. He was also the son of John Wolfenden, who chaired the committee that published the Wolfenden report in 1957.

As with Guy Burgess, with whom it was said [Jeremy] Wolfenden later had an affair, there was a good deal of drink, nicotine and dirty fingernails though, unlike Burgess, Wolfenden doesn't seem to have been big on charm. Whether they had an affair I doubt. The same assumption was made about Burgess and Blunt, less on the actual evidence than on the algebraic principle of getting everybody of the same sexuality on the same side of the equation and in one bracket. (Bennett 2016, 41-42)

Bennett, who was a personal acquaintance of Jeremy Wolfenden during his Cambridge years, albeit remotely, mentions the rumour concerning the sexual relationship between Wolfenden and Burgess. Once again, Bennett refutes a rumour that implies Wolfenden and Burgess were together solely because they both happened to be homosexuals.

According to Bennett, Burgess and Blunt were also rumoured to be in an intimate

relationship for the same reason. Bennett calls such an assumption “the algebraic principle of getting everybody of the same sexuality on the same side of the equation and in one bracket” (2016, 42); this is what he criticises in his plays through his intricate portrayal of Burgess and Blunt.

For several decades, Bennett’s diary has presented a critical attitude towards the homophobic view that confuses homosexuals and spies, as we have just seen in the entries from 1999, 2005, and 2011. Stephen Unwin (2006) notes that Bennett’s “published diaries suddenly flash with a carefully modulated but unmistakeable rage” and these entries are exactly where readers encounter this. However, his criticism is always covered with witty tones, whether it is in his diary or play script; his enraged criticism is “carefully modulated” (Unwin 2006). Indeed, Peter Wolfe notes that “Bennett’s writing conveys a sense of anger both controlled and transcended” (1999, 230), opining that Bennett “can describe ugliness without becoming its spokesperson” (Wolfe 1999, 230). This is what Bennett’s Burgess and Blunt tacitly convey on stage. Although they never explicitly denounce the assumption that confuses spies and homosexuals, they dislocate such an assumption with witty yet enigmatic lines through which their elaborate character is portrayed, as a close reading of his plays will later demonstrate.

Along with the Cambridge spies, Wittgenstein and Jeremy Wolfenden, the playwright himself was also a target of a homophobic attack based on the confusion between homosexuals and traitors. In his diary entry on 11th June 2014, Bennett notes his reaction to some articles in the *Daily Mail* in 2014. In this entry, he writes about the press cuttings of articles about himself, which he occasionally receives from an anonymous sender. On this day, he happened to find a piece that criticised his relatively tolerant view

towards the Cambridge spies, expressed during his BBC interview with his long-time stage director Nicholas Hytner. It is not clear exactly which *Daily Mail* article Bennett is referring to here, because there are two articles on Bennett and the Cambridge spies in the newspaper in May 2014. One is written by a historian, Dominic Sandbrook (2014), who vehemently attacks Bennett because he interprets his relaxed attitude towards the Cambridge spies as a defence of Kim Philby, who is responsible for the deaths of thousands of agents. The other is entitled “Treachery of the Cambridge spies was no big deal claims Bennett: Playwright says he backs fugitive Edward Snowden too” (Daily Mail Reporter 2014). Although the tone of this article is not as harsh, it still voices criticism against Bennett for having a sympathetic opinion of the double agents. It is notable that the *Daily Mail* expressed such a negative reaction to Bennett’s 2014 BBC interview that it published two articles for two consecutive days.³⁰ Bennett describes how he found these articles on a day in June 2014:

So it is this morning, the bundle including various letters from the correspondence columns, so called, of the *Mail*, occasioned by my remarks in the television interview I did with Nicholas Hytner exculpating the Cambridge spies. All the sometimes almost incoherent correspondents take this to include Philby, which was not my intention and whom I have in the past both in print and in interviews taken care to distinguish from Burgess, Blunt and their associates. Cold-hearted, devious and supposedly a good chap, Philby has never appealed to me any more than Graham Greene does, who was his friend and admirer. It’s ironical that even after his departure for Moscow Philby was always more sympathetically treated by journalists because he was a journalist himself, supposedly a good sort and of course he wasn’t homosexual. Unsurprisingly, none of this has registered with the Mail or its readers, one of them so incensed that he suggests that had I been older and at Cambridge not Oxford I might have been a spy myself. Not so,

³⁰ The playwright does not hide his hostile opinion towards *the Daily Mail*. Bennett once stated: “The lies on the front page of the Mail are so vulgar and glaring. Occasionally people say they like my work and then I see they have a copy of the Mail, and you think, ‘Well, how can you?’” (Higgins 2015).

though it wasn't age or university or sexual inclination that would have ruled me out. It was class. (Bennett 2016, 329-330)

This entry serves as a defence to Sandbrook. He explains that Philby is carefully excluded from his tolerant view of the spies. However, the most important factor is that Bennett could not help noticing the reaction by one of the readers that associates him with the double agents; if Bennett had been “older and at Cambridge not Oxford” he “might have been a spy” (Bennett 2016, 329-330) himself. Here again, the Cold War homophobic attitude reveals itself as a voice of the reader, although the Soviet Union had long ceased to exist. The reader associated Bennett with the spies due to the playwright's sexuality, as well as his privileged academic background. For this reader of the *Daily Mail*, Bennett, who shares same-sex desire and a privileged academic background with the spies, is part of the “mutually reinforcing trinity” (Mars-Jones 2017) of high status, homosexuality, and double agency, created within Cold War homophobia after the defection of the spies. However, he defiantly refutes such a comparison, adding that his “class” would rule him out from this category. Born as a son of a butcher in Leeds, Bennett has always been conscious of the social class he came from. When Bennett himself is included in this association between spy and homosexuality, he confronts it with his class consciousness.

***A Patriot for Me* (1965) and Mid-twentieth Century British Theatre**

John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965) is a play that draws a stark contrast with Bennett's plays. The idea that underpins the play is exactly the one to which Bennett directed his indignation in his diary entries. Written two decades before Bennett and Mitchell published their spy plays, Osborne's play juxtaposes homosexual and double

agent identities in a homophobic manner as if being homosexual automatically makes one into a traitor. *A Patriot For Me* features Alfred Redl, a gay military officer in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and is based on his real story. Redl, who was building a brilliant career in the Austro-Hungary army, turns out to be a double agent for Russia. He was blackmailed into spying due to his homosexuality which he had been hiding from the public. The play ends with his suicide after his identity as homosexual and a double agent is exposed.

In British theatrical history, this play occupies a significant place in terms of the representation of homosexuality and censorship. Michael Billington reports that *A Patriot for Me* “fell foul of the Lord Chamberlain’s arbitrary power of censorship” (2014), due to its presentation of same-sex desire on stage. First, it was only “[s]taged at the Royal Court as a club production for consenting theatre-goers” (Billington 2014). Because of its subject matter, this play was never opened for general public performance in 1965. Before 1968, all the plays created in England had to be submitted to Lord Chamberlain’s office to be granted a license for public performance.³¹ Theatrical censorship by the authorities, which attempted to ban plays that are deemed “indecent, offensive, blasphemous, calculated to inspire crime or vice” (Buzwell 2019), was imposed on all theatrical productions in the mid-twentieth century Britain. Greg Buzwell notes that this “[t]heatre censorship was particularly strict concerning the representation of homosexuality” (2019). Thus, *A Patriot For Me*, featuring several gay characters as well as the protagonist, could not be staged in 1965 unless it was a closed performance for a limited audience. Lord Chamberlain’s censorship was abandoned in 1968; Buzwell

³¹ See Buzwell (2019) and Nathan (2019).

attributes the importance of the increased visibility of homosexuals and changing attitudes towards homosexuality in British society in the mid-twentieth century for the end of such censorship. He notes: “With this increased level of discussion and media coverage, public attitudes began to change – and so did the censorship policy of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office. By the end of the decade, playwrights had gained new freedoms to represent homosexual characters and themes on the stage” (Buzwell 2019).

A Patriot for Me is a piece located in the most turbulent time in terms of male homosexual representation in British culture, which saw a drastic change in the way male homosexuality was portrayed. The decade beginning with the publication of the Wolfenden report in 1957 culminated in the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act 1967. A year later, in 1968, theatre artists finally acquired freedoms to portray homosexuality, only three years after *A Patriot for Me*. The fact that the play was shown to a limited number of theatregoers, without being entirely banned, seems to illustrate the decade’s constantly fluctuating view towards male homosexuality. The decade wavered between conservative moral rigour and a more relaxed attitude towards homosexuality, which would eventually culminate in the decriminalisation and abolition of censorship.

Although the play takes place in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn of the century, *A Patriot for Me* functions as a commentary on 1960s Britain. James M. Harding highlights the contemporaneity of *A Patriot for Me* and Anthony Blunt’s confession in 1964. He emphasises how close *A Patriot for Me* was to “the major political issues that the intelligence community was addressing in the mid-1960s” (Harding 2015, 210). According to Harding, Blunt’s confession “bore just enough resemblance to the rough plot of Osborne’s play” (Harding 2015, 210). Although Blunt was not publicly

denounced as a double agent until 1979, he had already confessed his betrayal in 1964.³² However, Blunt's confession was classified as a state secret and "Blunt was granted immunity from persecution in exchange for his confession" (Harding 2015, 210). Harding argues that both Blunt and Colonel Redl are granted "social privilege and entitlement" (Harding 2015, 210) and Osborne criticised Blunt "through his creative manipulation of Redl's history" (Harding 2015, 210). Blunt and Colonel Redl "were the kind of exemptions — indeed, the kind of social privilege and entitlement — that were not far removed from the focus of the criticism that Osborne articulated through his creative manipulation of Redl's history" (Harding 2015, 210). *A Patriot for Me* is not so much about Austria-Hungary, as it is about Cold War Britain where upper-class double agents received media attention. It was 1965, just a year after Blunt's confession, when Osborne adopted Colonel Redl for his protagonist, highlighting the similarity of the scandal with that of one of the Cambridge spy ring. Although it is never clear if the playwright himself shared the state secret surrounding Blunt's identity,³³ the script

³² For more details on Blunt's espionage history and the timeline of his confession and unmasking, see Thomas (1991).

³³ It is not clear to what degree the state secret about spies was shared among those in the theatre industry in mid-twentieth century Britain. However, a notable record can be found in Bennett's memoir: "During the run of *The Old Country* (1978), as happens, friends and well-wishers would come round after the performance to greet Alec Guinness, often with personal reminiscences of Philby and of his predecessors, Burgess and Maclean. Hints would be dropped as to the identity of spies still ensconced in the upper reaches of the Foreign Office or the Diplomatic, and when I next dropped into the theatre I would be given a précis of these titbits, though necessarily at second hand" (Bennett 2005b, 329-330). It is not impossible to presume that "the identity of spies still ensconced in the upper reaches of the Foreign Office or the Diplomatic" implicates Blunt, whose unmasking took place in the following year, 1979. As the previous chapter on *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* has discussed, there had been an uncanny similarity between Blunt and the fictional spies, even in the works released or performed before his exposure in 1979. Margaret Scanlan notes that writers like le Carré and Alan Williams "hinted at Anthony Blunt's identity as the "fourth man" several years before the British government confirmed it" (Scanlan 1983, 533). Given this, it would not be too absurd to imagine that some writers, playwrights and film/television creators might have already known the state secret about Blunt in the 1960s and the early 1970s.

demonstrates the uncanny similarity with which the story of the Austro-Hungarian officer could be read as a metaphor for the fourth Cambridge spy, who is not yet revealed to the public.

Just as Redl's story draws parallels with Cold War Britain, what Osborne writes about the homosexual military officer in *A Patriot for Me* sounds like it is directed at the Cambridge spies, who share features similar to the former. John M. Clum notes that "[t]he presentation of homosexuality in Osborne's play is seen from the vantage point of 1960s Britain" (1989, 181). The similarity between Redl and Blunt is demonstrated in a line in *A Patriot for Me* that describes the protagonist's exposure as a double agent: "How people enjoy this, they'll enjoy this. The *élite* caught out! Right at the centre of the Empire. You know what they'll say, of course? About the *élite*" (Osborne 1966, 121). This line can be interpreted as contemporary criticism of Blunt and his fellow Cambridge spies, who all came from the heart of the British upper-middle class. Every time a Cambridge spy was exposed, it received substantial media coverage and what interested the public the most was the fact that they were those who were "[r]ight at the centre of the Empire" (Osborne 1966, 121) and came from the establishment class of Great Britain, the Empire that would see its end in the very near future.³⁴ Just like Redl's Austro-Hungary would see its end in 1918, five years after the play's concluding scene, the Cambridge spy scandal was an event which took place during the declining years of an empire.

³⁴ Sarah Stockwell explains the state Britain was in around 1965: "Although a process of imperial retreat would continue in relation to smaller territories, most of the Empire had gone, and Britain had entered an era that many would consider 'postcolonial'" (Stockwell 2018, 2).

What *A Patriot for Me* conveys regarding the homosexual double agent reflects the homophobic attitude that was common in mid-twentieth century Britain. Nicholas de Jongh notes that the play characterises “prevailing sexual attitudes of the time [1965]” (De Jongh 1992b, 102). He describes the playwright’s view on homosexuality as follows:

The play itself conformed to that decade’s authoritative view of homosexuals. Osborne’s homosexual anti-hero is viewed ambivalently with contempt and pity. His desires are overwhelming impulses that ruin his life. (...) Osborne shared the same contempt for homosexuals that the Lord Chamberlain’s office displayed; but office and author were old adversaries and could not see how close they were (De Jongh 1992a).

As De Jongh notes, the homosexual characters in *A Patriot for Me* are “viewed ambivalently with contempt and pity” (1992a). The ambivalence of “contempt and pity” characterises the mainstream attitude towards same-sex desire in the British media in the mid-twentieth century. As the previous chapter mentioned, Richard Dyer describes a “stereotype of gay men as sad young men” (Dyer 2002a, 116) in British films in the 1960s. He highlighted “the two main messages” in this stereotype, which is “to be homosexual was both irremediably sad and overwhelmingly desirable” (Dyer 2002a, 116). Osborne’s Redl is not far removed from this “sad young men” (Dyer 2002a, 116) stereotype. In the citation above, De Jongh summarises Osborne’s homophobic view as one in line with mainstream society, even with the authorities, which is ironic because Osborne’s play was banned as a result of their censorship. Both authorities and the play itself demonstrated their homophobic attitude despite the difference in their positions.³⁵

³⁵ In an ironic twist of theatrical history, Osborne ends up sharing the same homophobic view as the Lord Chamberlain’s office, which banned his play. Being called an “Angry Young Man”, Osborne was one of the most controversial and revolutionary playwrights in the twentieth century. His play challenged the old theatrical world and “[c]ensorship would become one of Osborne’s fiercest battlegrounds, as if he were on a personal mission to do away with the Lord Chamberlain” (Heilpern 2008, 108). For such a playwright, the Lord Chamberlain, who

This kind of pervasive homophobia would be challenged in later periods by playwrights such as Bennett and Mitchell, who attempt to rewrite homosexual double agents.

Osborne's Ambivalent Attitude towards Homosexuality: Revulsion and Fascination

Although Osborne appears straightforwardly homophobic, this view has several complications. Anthony Creighton, a co-author of Osborne's early plays such as *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1957), asserts that Osborne "subjected homosexuals to derision, contempt and malice" (Heilpern 2008, 138), a homophobia which Creighton speculates stemmed from self-disgust. Creighton calls Osborne's homophobic representation in *A Patriot for Me* "a projection of his own self-hatred", viewing the playwright as a closeted homosexual.³⁶ It is not certain whether the playwright himself secretly shared the same-sex desire of his Austro-Hungarian protagonist. However, there remains the fact that Osborne was incessantly fascinated by homosexuality, even though his plays were often said to be homophobic. Michael Billington notes that Osborne "was always fascinated" by "the subject of sexual ambiguity" (Billington 2014) and *A Patriot for Me* allowed him to develop this subject on stage. Luc Gilleman, citing the playwright's own words, notes that "[h]omosexuality, to him, was 'a place of tremendous pain for people' but also 'a fascinating metaphor for human ambiguity': 'where does friendship end and where do people become queer?'" (Gilleman 2002, 14) *A Patriot for Me* can be read as the

represents "Establishment at mandarin work" (Heilpern 2008, 108) was a natural enemy. Nevertheless, these adversaries happened to share a similar view on male homosexuality because of the contempt both parties held for them.

³⁶ There is a complicated queer history in the life of the playwright. In the 1990s, Creighton asserted that he and Osborne were in a sexually intimate relationship although Osborne's family rejected this assertion. See Strachan (2005).

playwright's exploration of the ambiguity between friendship and queerness through the tragic life of Redl.

A Patriot for Me is not the only play depicting the playwright's complicated attitude towards same-sex desire. Aleks Sierz notes that in his most famous play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), the protagonist's "attitude to homosexuals is, by the standards of the 1950s, an odd mix of tolerance and provocation" (Sierz 2008, 42). Jimmy Porter, an angry young university-educated working-class protagonist, says that he almost envies "old Gide and the Greek Chorus Boys" (Osborne 1996, 34). To him, homosexuals "seem to have a revolutionary fire" and he refuses to treat them "either as a clown or as a tragic hero" (Osborne 1996, 34), which are, according to Sierz, "two of the ways that gays were portrayed on the stage at the time" (2008, 42). Despite the homophobia common in 1950s Britain, the playwright was not entirely affected by this. Although *A Patriot for Me* exhibits homophobic traits, as noted by De Jongh and Creighton, the play might also conceal some element that exceeds the period's limitations. Given the playwright's highly complicated attitude towards male homosexuality, this demonstrates a slight possibility of overcoming the mid-twentieth century homophobia.

Regardless of the original text's implications, theatre artists have striven to find new possibilities from the old script in later periods, a process of adaptation for which theatre as a medium is uniquely suited. As I explained earlier by citing Schildcrout, "[t]he potential meaning of a dramatic text in performance" changes within the collaborative work (Schildcrout 2014, 4). Through the collaboration of multiple production members, the homophobic meaning of the original text transforms. Furthermore, this transformation

takes a more radical form when this collaboration is conducted across time, as with the revival of theatre production.

The interpretation of the play also changes as time passes. Even for a play that initially seemed homophobic in the 1960s, a different interpretation becomes possible after several decades. After 1965, *A Patriot for Me* was revived twice in 1983 and 1995. In 1983, Chichester Festival Theatre's *A Patriot for Me* was directed by Ronald Eyre who, like Bennett, rejects the association between homosexuality and secret agency. The following extract is an interview with Eyre, participating in the BBC radio program *Meridian* in 1983. His words demonstrate his intention to redraw the homophobic attitude of the original text.

INTERVIEWER: Now in the 18 years since the play was first seen, a number of its themes, particularly the link between homosexuality and treachery, have come up in all kinds of other areas, for instance, the Blunt scandal, the final revelation of Burgess and Maclean. There has been a number of other plays that have now dealt with that topic. Did you feel that in some way the audience was coming better prepared now to *A Patriot for Me* than they were in '65?

EYRE: Yes, they didn't find that connection such an oddity. I hate it to be thought that generally homosexuals are more likely to be spies. I mean I think that is deeply questionable. But there has been a history of people who have had something to hide in one area and therefore could hide other things in other areas. What was nice about doing it now is that you could really think that the audience, without being jaded, knew enough about that particular connection to, in a way, forget about it and let the play speak with other voices. (Eyre 1983)

From the interviewer's question, it seems clear that the connection between homosexuality and secret agency was widely shared in British culture in the 1980s. "[T]he link between homosexuality and treachery", as stated by the interviewer, was taken for granted, probably due to the consecutive Cambridge spy scandals in the previous decades. However, Eyre defiantly refuses such a presumption by proclaiming that he "hates it to be thought that generally homosexuals are more likely to be spies" and calling such a connection "questionable". While acknowledging that it exists, Eyre

asserts that the audience could “forget about it” and now is the time when “the play speaks with other voices” that are not homophobic.

The Radical Reconstruction of Homosexuality and Secret Agency in the 1980s

The 1980s was a critical decade for the transformation of the cultural connection between homosexuality and spies in theatre. In May 1983, the Chichester Festival Theatre revived *A Patriot for Me* (Denison 2011, xxxiii), and which was mentioned by Eyre; BBC 1 produced *An Englishman Abroad*, a television film written by Bennett, in November of the same year (Giles 2006, 60). Five years later, in 1988, *An Englishman Abroad* was paired with *A Question of Attribution* to be performed as a double bill under the title *Single Spies* at the National Theatre in London (Rich 1988). In autumn 1981, Mitchell’s *Another Country* was premiered in the Greenwich Theatre and “went on to become one of the theatrical events of the decade and launch a quartet of stratospheric careers” (Rees 2013). This decade saw these stage performances and the television broadcast reconstruct the meaning of the connection between homosexuality and secret agency. If the Cold War culture had made spies queer by pushing both homosexuality and secret agency outside of its heteronormative order since 1951, the year of the defection of Burgess and Maclean, the 1980s is the decade when the radical reconsideration of this identity association took place. In this representational shift, the theatrical productions mentioned above played a significant role.

It is essential to consider why these events took place specifically in the 1980s. When remembering this decade in terms of queer history, the foremost issue is the global AIDS epidemic and the subsequent gay political activism that developed to support the

survival of gay men suffering both the disease and discrimination.³⁷ Specifically, in the British context, the 1980s was also a time in which gays and lesbians faced significant political backlash. For instance, Section 28 was introduced by the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher in 1988. This “banned the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality by local authorities and in Britain’s schools” (Sommerlad 2018) and subsequently gave rise to massive protests from those who supported LGBTQ rights, including the actor Ian McKellen who came out of the closet to express his opposition to Section 28 (Sommerlad 2018). Backlashes and protests characterise the gay history of the 1980s, and these plays and television films should be interpreted as a response to these events, forming dissent from within the theatrical discipline.

Bennett’s Spy Trilogy: *An Englishman Abroad*, *A Question of Attribution*, and *The Old Country*

This section presents a close reading of Bennett’s spy trilogy: *An Englishman Abroad*, *A Question of Attribution* and *The Old Country*. I will discuss how the playwright updates queer spy identity in these pieces. In Bennett’s case, as stated already, the update of the queer spy identity is not straightforward. It involves an ambiguous attitude towards this cultural connection. Bennett’s characters occasionally seem to allude to a connection between homosexuality and secret agency in their dialogue. However, the juxtaposition of these identities is illustrated in such a playful way that it sometimes appears as if the playwright is flirting with the idea that homosexual men are double agents, although he explicitly criticises such an assumption in his diary.

³⁷ See France (2016).

The two main characters are Burgess (Simon Callow on stage; Alan Bates in the original television film) and Coral Brown (Prunella Scales; in the original television version Coral Brown played herself). Coral is an actress who visits Moscow to perform in *Hamlet* with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1958. The play takes place in Burgess's seedy flat in Moscow one afternoon when Brown visits him³⁸ following a conversation they had.

In *An Englishman Abroad*, Bennett occasionally inserts lines in which political allegiance and sexual identity are humorously mixed up. Although these lines seem to juxtapose homosexuality and secret agency, as if they were illustrating the connection between these identities, they skilfully dismiss such a connection as something simply ridiculous and laughable. Burgess asks Coral to buy a set of suits for him after returning to London. Unable to acquire a well-cut English suit in Moscow, he rejoices after receiving the made-to-order clothes Coral bought in Savile Row. Towards the end of the play, Coral receives a letter from Burgess thanking her for running errands for him. In this letter, Burgess asks Coral to buy one more set of clothes for him, namely his pyjamas.

CORAL: "... Four pairs. Quite plain and only those two colours. Then at last my outfit will be complete and I shall look like a real agent again." (*She looks twice.*) "Then I shall look like a real gent again." (Bennett 1998, 297)

³⁸ *An Englishman Abroad* is based on the true story of the actress Coral Brown. During the run of the *Old Country* in 1971, the first play in Bennett's spy trilogy, the actress visited the playwright after the performance. She told him about "her visit to Russia with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1958 and the particular incidents" (Bennett 1998, ix), which included her encounter with Burgess. Eventually, this led Bennett to write *An Englishman Abroad* (Bennett 1998, ix). The 1983 television film features Coral Brown as herself, although the 1988 stage adaptation cast Prunella Scales in her role.

Coral's misreading suggests a node of identities consisting of secret agency, high-class status, and homosexuality. She mistakes "a real gent" for "a real agent"; in her misreading, being a gentleman and secret agent is aligned. Furthermore, "gent" as an abbreviation of "gentleman" rather sounds like the "[d]esignation of a public convenience for male persons" (*OED*) as this is the definition of "gent" in the *OED*. Moreover, the choice of the word "gent" resonates with the well-known sexual history of the Cambridge spies'. Blunt and Burgess were known to have engaged in anonymous sexual cruising in the public toilets in London (Sommer 1995, 279). Although her misreading illustrates the juxtaposition of these identities, it works simply as a humorous remark that amuses those who are conscious of the cultural connection of these identities. Moreover, she immediately realises her mistake by looking at the letter twice. This swift cognitive shift suggests that these identities are treated as something easily interchangeable at the performer's whim for comic effect, and there is no intrinsic connection between them.

The original television film of *An Englishman Abroad* also reveals the moment in which political and sexual orientations are entangled. The beginning of the film shows Coral (played by herself) talking with Michael Redgrave (Charles Gray) about Burgess, who surprised them by showing up at their performance. Coral, curious about this infamous spy, is amazed to learn that Redgrave personally knew Burgess.

REDGRAVE: He's a lot fatter.

CORAL: You knew him?

REDGRAVE: Oh, I used to run across him years ago, the way one does, you know.

CORAL: [with a little pause] You are rather that way, aren't you?

REDGRAVE: What way?

CORAL: Left.

REDGRAVE: Oh [as if he finally realised what Coral meant]. I was. Everyone was in those days.

When Coral poses the question "You are rather that way, aren't you?", their conversation

straddles sexuality and politics. Redgrave misunderstands Coral's remark "you are rather that way", presuming that she alludes to his homosexuality,³⁹ but in fact she was talking about his political attitude. She is only confirming that he was "left" as several groups of young men at Cambridge University in the 1930s were also intensely left-wing.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Redgrave interprets her question as addressing his sexuality for a fraction of a second. However, the subject of her question quickly shifts from sexuality to politics. When she is asked "what way?" by Redgrave, she answers "left", so that her question sounds as if it solely concerned politics, not sexuality. The way Redgrave continues their conversation is also suggestive. He pronounces "oh" with a tremendous sigh as if he finally realised what she meant and is half-convinced, half relieved. When asked which way he inclines, he is fully conscious of the implication hidden in Coral's question and relieved to confirm that it is not about his sexuality, about which he must be discreet in a world intolerant towards anything outside of the heterosexual norm.

In this conversation, politics and sexuality are juxtaposed as if they are swiftly interchangeable categories. Although being homosexual and being a double agent are two different things, these disparate matters are bound to each other in this whimsical exchange. The connection between homosexuality and secret agency in the Cold War context is reliant upon this alignment, and these actors are demonstrating that this alignment is arbitrary and capriciously interchangeable simply to create a comical effect. Rather than underline the association between homosexuality and secret agency, they instead dislocate the link between these identities through the nonchalant conversation

³⁹ Pier Paul Read mentions Redgrave's homosexuality in the biography of Alec Guinness. Although Redgrave was married to Rachel Kempson, "he had told her of his homosexual leanings", and Redgrave had a male lover during their marriage (Read 2003, 247)

⁴⁰ See Deakin (2013).

effortlessly controlled at the whim of the actress.

When Coral poses the question to Redgrave, she is fully conscious of the queer history of the British theatrical world. In a conversation held with Burgess in his flat, she recognises the history of the 1950s in which British actors were continuously arrested for gross indecency:

Only it occurs to me that we have sat here all afternoon pretending that spying, which is what you did, darling, was just a minor social misdemeanour, no worse – and I’m sure in certain people’s minds much better – than being caught in a public lavatory the way gentlemen in my profession constantly are, and that it’s just something one shouldn’t mention. Out of politeness. So that we won’t be embarrassed. That’s very English. We will pretend it hasn’t happened because we are both civilized people (Bennett 1998, 292).

When Coral tells him that spying is better than “being caught in a public lavatory the way gentlemen in my profession constantly are” (Bennett 1998, 292), she alludes to several cases in which renowned actors were arrested for gross indecency, such as the incidents involving John Gielgud and Alec Guinness. Therefore, when Coral asks Redgrave “you are rather that way, aren’t you?”, it seems she is fully conscious that she is referring to his homosexuality, as she knows a great deal about the “gentlemen in my [her] profession”, of whom Redgrave is no exception. Moreover, she associates it with the crime of double agents and condemns the fact that English society “pretend[s] it hasn’t happened” (Bennett 1998, 292). Within this remark, she also reveals the hypocrisy of English culture, which tried to cover the crime committed by the high-class double agents, as well as a society that represses homosexuality as an invisible yet familiar vice.

In his monologue, Burgess criticises the assumption that homosexuality and double agency are essentially linked. The dislocation of the identity nexus is demonstrated not only in the actors’ control of the dialogue but is also verbally expressed by the protagonist. The stage version of *An Englishman Abroad* opens with a prologue

performed by Burgess and Coral. In his monologue, Burgess refers to the discomfort he feels when someone mentions him and Donald Maclean as a pair in the same category.

I say 'we', meaning my colleague Maclean, with some diffidence. It's dispiriting to find oneself yoked permanently to someone who was never meant to be more than a travelling companion (besides having been a fellow travelling companion, of course). Now it was 'we', handcuffed together in the same personal pronoun (Bennett 1998, 278-279).

In this prologue, Burgess tells his audience members how he reacted to Stalin's death in 1953 and the subsequent boring life he had to endure in Moscow. Although Burgess and Maclean defected to the Soviet Union together in 1951, and they both shared the same-sex desires, Burgess considers him to be nothing more than a "colleague" (Bennett 1998, 278) and "a travelling companion" (Bennett 1998, 278). His defection accompanied that of Maclean only out of professional necessity, and Burgess rarely contacts him as a friend even though they live in the same city, as he later tells Coral: "Maclean's not my friend. Oh, ducky. Oh no, not Maclean. He's so unfunny, no jokes, no jokes at all. Positively the last person one would have chosen if one had had the choice" (Bennett 1998, 284). Nevertheless, whenever they are mentioned by someone else, they are lumped together because they both happened to be non-heterosexual double agents. His frustration to be "yoked permanently" with Maclean reflects Bennett's own vexation.

The dissatisfaction evident in Burgess's monologue resembles the playwright's criticism in his diary entries. For instance, Bennett wrote that British media and historians in the late-twentieth century consider "that homosexuality is itself a bond and that if two men can be shown to be homosexual the likelihood is that they're sleeping together" (Bennett 2005a, 255). Those "on the same side of the equation" in terms of sexual deviation from heterosexuality are considered treacherous. The cultural formation of the Cold War confuses one's sexual orientation with political allegiance; as Bennett suggests,

“being homosexual predisposes a person to treachery” (2016, 264). Burgess and Maclean are thus “handcuffed together in the same personal pronoun” (Bennett 1998, 279) as treacherous queers, somehow united by same-sex desire, and plotting to overthrow the heteronormative world on the other side of the Iron curtain.

A Question of Attribution also conveys the playwright’s restrained irritation towards the assumption of coupling homosexuality with secret agency. Just like in *An Englishman Abroad*, its expression is carefully covered with skilfully controlled, witty conversations. This play features Anthony Blunt (acted by the playwright Bennett himself on stage; James Fox on television) and portrays his life in 1979 when he was exposed as a Soviet double agent, losing his reputation as a renowned art historian and the Surveyor of the Queen’s pictures. The first half of the play depicts an investigation into the Cambridge spy case by an MI5 officer named Chubb (Simon Callow on stage; David Calder on television). In an interrogation scene, Blunt and Chubb exchange the following conversation:

BLUNT: My pupils like me. My colleagues...I don’t know. I have a life, you see. Two lives. Some of my colleagues scarcely have one.

CHUBB: They don’t know about your other life.

BLUNT: In the Household.

CHUBB: I see. In that case, three lives. But who’s counting. (Bennett 1998, 316)

Blunt brings up the phrase “[t]wo lives” (Bennett 1998, 316), meaning his private life and his professional life, adding that his colleagues devote themselves solely to their profession. Nevertheless, Chubb interprets Blunt’s “[t]wo lives” (Bennett 1998, 316) as referring to his professional life and his life as a Soviet double agent. When Blunt mentions his life “in the Household” (Bennett 1998, 316), Chubb immediately adds the third life, which is Blunt’s life as a gay man in the closet. In the written script, Chubb projects a picture of a naked man onto the back of the stage right after this exchange,

asking Blunt if he knows him. By utilising the naked man's photo as an interrogation tool, the scene suggests that the exposé of Blunt's identity as a Soviet agent inevitably involves the outing of his homosexuality. However, Blunt always avoids Chubb's persecution in order to identify another Soviet agent who is still in hiding. He has to name an agent, but intentionally pronounces the names of old paintings, mixing up the identity of fictitious personages and the real people. Chubb is not able to disclose the mystery Blunt represents, and all of his three lives are withheld from the detective.

The second half of the play depicts the conversation held between Blunt and Queen Elizabeth, in which she explores Blunt's identity. In this sequence, Blunt again adroitly evades the investigation that is attempting to close in on his identity. On the surface, the conversation between Blunt and the Queen seems to be simply about art. She asks questions about paintings Blunt maintains in the palace. However, she is, in fact, trying to investigate Blunt's identity. The Queen skilfully utilises double entendre in her language, hiding her real intention to expose Blunt's identity as a Soviet double agent. After the Queen exits, Blunt's pupil asks him what their conversation was about, and he answers "I was talking about art. I'm not sure that she was" (Bennett 1998, 346).

Their exchange about art forgery betrays the Queen as a persistent interrogator of Blunt, who shrewdly eludes her. The Queen asks whether Blunt's job was to prove her paintings are fake, to which Blunt answers "because something is not what it is said to be, Ma'am, does not mean it is a fake. It may just have been wrongly attributed" (Bennett 1998, 333). Blunt claims that he is not fake just because he is a double agent, but that he was wrongly attributed. As Blunt retorts to her persistent usage of the word "fake" by telling her that "the word 'fake' is inappropriate" (Bennett 1998, 344), she raises a

question touching on the core of Blunt's identity: "If something is not what it is claimed to be, what is it?" (Bennett 1998, 344). Blunt simply answers, "an enigma" (Bennett 1998, 344). Her questions concern whether Blunt is real or fake, whether he is a genuine royal servant of hers, a British gentleman of the ruling class whose sexuality fits the heteronormative monogamous kingdom she reigns. However, Blunt does not fit such a dichotomy. His identity has no name with which to express itself in a Cold War ideological framework that wrongfully associates homosexuality with being a double agent.

The first play in Bennett's spy trilogy *The Old Country* (1977)⁴¹ also includes a denial of the cultural link between homosexuals and spies, just as in *An Englishman Abroad* and *The Question of Attribution*. *The Old Country* portrays a day when Hilary (Alec Guinness), an old spy who has already defected to the Soviet Union, and his wife Bron (Rachel Kempson) welcome their family from the UK into their solitary house. In Act two, Hilary's brother-in-law Duff (John Phillips) cites E.M. Forster's famous line in the essay "What I Believe" (1938): "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country'" (Bennett 1998, 251). Upon hearing this statement Hilary dismisses it as "nancy rubbish" (Bennett 1998, 251)

Nancy rubbish. You only have to substitute 'my wife' for 'my friend' to find it's nothing like as noble. 'If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my wife I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.' (Bennett 1998, 251)

Joseph O'Mealy argues that Hilary mocks this statement as "nancy rubbish" because

⁴¹ "The Old Country" opened at the Queen's Theatre in London in September 1977 (Bennett 1998, 196).

“‘friend’ is Forster’s code word for homosexual partner” (O’Mealy 2001, 58). O’Mealy continues: “That kind of intimate loyalty unnerves Hilary. His defection arises from no emotional or intellectual commitment” (2001, 58). In *The Old Country*, the confusion of sexuality and politics is carefully avoided. Through mockery, Hilary declares that being a double agent has nothing to do with one’s sexual relationship. He interprets Forster’s word as part of the Cold War association that presumes that double agents betray because of their personal and sexual attachment and he defiantly rejects this. He makes it clear that spies betray, but that this has nothing to do with their sexuality.

Bennett’s characters never exhibit outright anger towards this link. Rather they seem to play with it by using the double meaning of the words and the deliberate misunderstanding. However, this is where Bennett’s technical precision as a brilliant playwright works so effectively. Bennett once commented:

One isn’t supposed to preach and gets told off if one does. Poets are allowed to, but not playwrights, who if they have naked opinions, do better to clothe them in the decent ambiguities of their characters or conceal them in the sometimes all too thin thicket of the plot. Just don’t speak to the audience. (Bennett 2014)

Bennett meticulously avoids demonstrating his “naked opinions” (Bennett 2014) in his plays. His annoyance towards the association between homosexuality and double agency is carefully concealed in “the decent ambiguities” (Bennett 2014) of characters such as Coral, Burgess, Blunt, and Hilary, while it is expressed more frankly in his diary.

This dislocation of the identity politics of the Cold War is also made possible by the collaboration of multiple different artists involved both in filming and stage performance. The actor’s performance contributes to the playwright’s criticism, especially through the skilful delivery of the lines and the meticulous timing. This is particularly clear in a scene in *An Englishman Abroad* in which Coral and Redgrave

discuss the sexual and political inclinations of the latter. The performances of Coral Brown and Charles Grey contribute greatly to this effect. As this scene exists only in the television film, the director's effort is worth mentioning. As described in the previous chapter on *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, John Schlesinger played a vital role in the representational history of male homosexuality in Britain, depicting men kissing each other without homophobic nuance in national mainstream cinema in 1971, when such representation was scarce. The vexation Bennett carefully concealed between his lines is skilfully enacted and effectively expressed by the multiple artists involved in the final version of his productions.

A Theatrical Continuum of Haunted Queer Spies

Although Bennett's plays show a stark contrast with Osborne's, what is common to both playwrights is their depiction of homosexuality as a phantom other. A theatrical presentation of queer spies as a phantom can also be found in Julian Mitchell's *Another Country*. The British stage is haunted by queer spies from the 1960s to the 1980s, from Osborne to Bennett and Mitchell, although their expression differs. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* represents homosexual spies "as specter and phantom, as spirit and revenant, as abject and undead" (Fuss 1991, 3) by capturing the queer spies haunting the adapted texts across decades. Similarly, the plays discussed in this chapter also present homosexual spies in a spectral manner. However, theatrical queer spies are given a more prominent place in the spotlight, unlike *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* where their appearance is hardly noticeable at first glance. The plays of Osborne, Bennett, and Mitchell all express queer spies haunting the stage through generations. They collectively create a continuum of

spectral queer spies in theatre, through which the phantom in Osborne's piece transferred intact into the plays of Bennett and Mitchell.

Even before *A Patriot for Me*, Osborne's theatrical universe was haunted by the spectral presence of homosexuality. De Jongh (1992a) notes: "Although Osborne did not write about homosexuality in direct terms again until *A Patriot For Me*, it had remained a ghostly presence shuffling between the lines. And the drama critic of the Times, Irving Wardle, aptly noted in his review of *A Patriot For Me* that a 'preoccupation' with homosexuality had 'haunted' Osborne's work since the days of *Look Back in Anger*." The homosexuality haunting Osborne's stage culminates in *A Patriot for Me*, in the form of a treacherous double agent. As the next paragraph demonstrates, Bennett's *A Question of Attribution* depicts homosexuality in a ghostly light. Thus, the spectral presence of homosexuality in Osborne's theatre is transmitted intact through the generations to Bennett's plays.

The queer spies haunting *A Question of Attribution* appear in Titian's painting *Titian and His Friends* (1550-60), which Bennett locates at the centre of the play, as a metaphor for double agents such as Blunt, Burgess, and the hidden Fifth Man, whom the authorities try to identify in the narrative. In an introductory interview to *A Question of Attribution* recorded for the DVD edition, Bennett clarifies the meaning of this painting for the play:

The painting at the centre of the play is actually a picture in the Royal Collection, a triple portrait [*Titian and his Friends*] attributed to Titian. Originally, the painting had included only two figures. Cleaning revealed the third figure. An x-ray revealed the fourth figure. And when the painting was revolved, there was the shadow of a fifth figure. The analogy with the Cambridge spies seemed obvious. Say the two original figures stand in for the first defectors, Burgess and Maclean, and the third figure the next defector, Kim Philby, the fourth figure is Blunt, and the fifth figure is... Well, who knows? It was this painting and related art

historical matters which provided the framework of the play, though the deeply ambiguous conversation the Queen has with Blunt is at its heart (*Alan Bennett at the BBC DVD*, 2009).

Bennett creates an analogy between the concealed figures in Titian's painting and the double agents portrayed on stage. According to the Royal Collection Trust website, the triple portrait used to show two figures. In 1957 the third figure was discovered beneath (Royal Collection Trust, n.d.). Bennett utilises this painting as the essential background for portraying Blunt's final days as a respectable art historian with a knighthood, which would end on the 16th November 1979 when he was named as the Fourth Man of the Cambridge spy ring by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Lemoyne and Downie 1979).

We catch a glimpse of the haunting of the play through this painting. A dialogue between two characters in the televised version focuses on the concealed double agents in *Titian and his Friends*. Pointing to one of the visible figures in *Titian and His Friends*, Colin, a young assistant for Blunt, remarks "A bit creepy looking". A restorer, who is working on the painting, answers: "'Haunting' is, I think, the word, Colin. Haunting face" (Fig. 9). Colin feels that the painting has a spectral aura, and the restorer summarises the uncanny quality this portrait emanates with the word "haunting". The dialogue suggests that the figures on the painting in this televised play are uncanny ghosts, as are the double agents whom this painting figuratively demonstrates. In *A Question of Attribution*, spies are the source of haunting and presented metaphorically as "phantom Other" (Fuss 1991, 4) through Titian's painting.



Figure 9: *Titian and his Friends* presented as the uncanny in *A Question of Attribution*; three more figures have yet to be revealed.

This televised play clearly denotes queer spies as a spectre, unlike Osborne's plays and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. As stated by De Jongh (1992a), Osborne's plays are only haunted by "a ghostly presence shuffling between the lines". Marginalised queer sexuality materialises only through the homophobic depiction of a queer spy in *A Patriot for Me* while *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* depicts ephemeral queer spies hovering at the margin of pages and screen as a transparent yet ubiquitously haunting phantom. In these works, homosexuality drifts around the margin of texts without being named as such. However, Bennett's characters directly point to the metaphorical queer spies in the painting and declare that they are ghosts, right in front of the camera. Thus, queer spies finally acquire visibility in Bennett's play.

The visualisation of haunting queer spies is highly conspicuous in *Another Country*. Like *A Patriot for Me*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, and Bennett's spy plays, *Another Country* is contemporaneous to the Cambridge spy scandal. Mitchell started to

write *Another Country* “[i]n 1980, only months after Anthony Blunt’s exposure as the so-called fourth man in the Cambridge spy ring” (Rees 2013). The play’s protagonist is Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett), who is modelled on Guy Burgess and whose name sounds like a strange amalgam of Guy Burgess and Alan Bennett.⁴² The play portrays the future double agent’s formative years at a 1930s boarding school, before his defection to the Soviet Union later in life. At the end of the play and the film, Bennett exclaims: “I’ll haunt the whole bloody lot of them!” (Mitchell 1982, 98), expressing his grudge against the British establishment class, as represented by the privileged students in his public school. What he would do after this ending is apparent to the audience. He would proceed with his career as a Soviet double agent to “haunt” (Mitchell 1982, 98) the British establishment class from within, just as Guy Burgess did. In *Another Country*, the betrayal of the double agent is itself described as a spectral “haunting” (Mitchell 1982, 98). Double agents haunt the community by giving away information concerning national security to the USSR.

Guy Bennett declares his decision to haunt the British establishment class in which homosexuality remains unspoken despite always having been at the centre of their upbringing in public schools. As shown in the Introduction and the previous chapter, male homosexuality is something “familiar and agreeable” (Freud 2001, 224), yet “concealed and kept out of sight” (Freud 2001, 224-225) in the British ruling class. The

⁴² In the film adaptation of *Another Country*, there is a scene in which Guy Bennett sings Jack Buchanan’s “Who (Stole My Heart Away)?” This song was featured in *An Englishman Abroad* broadcast on BBC in 1983, a year before the film *Another Country* was released. Burgess and Coral listen to this record; the only one Burges had in his dingy flat in Moscow. It seems that Kanievskia is expressing his homage to this televised play. Mitchell’s selection of Bennett as the protagonist’s name might also be the playwright’s homage to Bennett who had already written the first of his spy trilogy *the Old Country* in 1977.

narratives of the Cambridge spies are the site in which homosexuality, as the uncanny, surfaces through queer spy figures. *Another Country* and *A Question of Attribution* function as plays conspicuously demonstrating this haunting.

It is worth pointing out that the play's printed script accompanies a passage from Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (1938), which argues that male homosexuality constitutes the core of the British ruling class. *Another Country* includes this passage as an epigraph, which suggests that the play itself is a strong criticism of a class characterised by hypocrisy in its treatment of male homosexuality. The passage reads as follows:

There was much truth in this, in fact were I to deduce any system from my feelings on leaving Eton, it might be called *The Theory of Permanent Adolescence*. It is the theory that the experiences undergone by boys at the great public schools, their glories and disappointments, are so intense as to dominate their lives and to arrest their development. From these it results that the greater part of the ruling class remains adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly, sentimental, and in the last analysis homosexual (Connolly 2008, 253).

This paragraph is taken from an autobiographical section of *Enemies of Promise*, which consists of three parts. In this part, named "A Georgian Boyhood", Connolly recounts the youth he spent in Eton, not dissimilar to the life in a boarding school portrayed in *Another Country*. By placing this epigraph at the beginning, Mitchell shows that the Englishness cultivated in public schools is inextricably tied to homosexuality and that the ruling class is "homosexual" (Connolly 2008, 253) to a significant degree. Nevertheless, the presence of homosexuality is erased from its demure public façade, which Guy Bennett then decides to haunt from within.

Just as in *A Question of Attribution*, *Another Country* clarifies – in the manifest words of Guy Bennett – that uncanny queer spies haunt British culture, in contrast to *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* which discreetly keeps queer spies out of the frames and pages.

Determined to avenge this, Guy Bennett further declares: “I’d have the last laugh. I’d be revenged” (Mitchell 1982, 99) and his uncanny laughter will be ringing in British spy fiction, as this thesis demonstrates across its chapters.

Theatre as an Uncanny Medium

This chapter has discussed the apparition of queer spies on stage; I propose that theatre itself is an effective medium for representation of queer spies as the uncanny. The notion of theatre as a haunted medium has a history in scholarship. Scholars such as Alice Rayner, Marvin Carlson, Mary Luckhurst, and Peter Holland have discussed the relation between ghosts and theatre. Carlson suggests that “all plays in general might be called *Ghosts*, since (...) one of the universals of performance, both East and West, is its ghostliness, its sense of return, the uncanny but inescapable impression imposed upon its spectators that ‘*we are seeing what we saw before.*’” (2003, 1). This “sense of return” is strongly felt in the plays discussed in this chapter so far. Queer spies keep returning on stage, first in *A Patriot for Me*, then in Bennett’s spy trilogy, and then in Mitchell’s *Another Country*. These plays are also revived multiple times, which literally adds a “sense of return” (Carlson 2003, 1) for theatregoers. *A Patriot for Me*, first premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 1965 to a limited audience, was revived twice in 1983 and 1995. The Chichester Festival Theatre and Birmingham Repertory Theatre revived *Single Spies* in 2016 (Chichester Festival Theatre, n.d.). *Another Country* returned to London in 2014, this time at Trafalgar Studio (Spencer 2014). All of these plays have, furthermore, received visual adaptations both on television and in the cinema. The screen

reproductions thus add an extra layer to the “sense of return”, which is open to a more diverse audience.

The “sense of return” is also brought about by the recurrent appearance of the actors, who play a crucial role in the genealogy of queer spies. The same actors repeatedly appear in the works featuring queer secret agents. Alec Guinness played Hilary, a defected Soviet secret agent in *the Old Country* in 1977. Two years later he turned up on the television screen as Smiley in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that Guinness had already played a queer secret agent in *Our Man in Havana* (1959), as discussed in Chapter 1. Alan Bates, who played Alfred Redl in a revival of *A Patriot for Me* in 1983, returned as a queer secret agent later in the same year, this time as Guy Burgess in the original television film of *An Englishman Abroad*. In this way, the tragedy of Redl became nullified through the return of the actor as Burgess, who flamboyantly flaunts his homosexuality on the national screen. Colin Firth appeared in the film version of *Another Country* (1982) as Judd (acted by Kenneth Branagh on stage; Colin Firth in the film), the best friend of Guy Bennett and an ardent Marxist who would later die in the Spanish Civil War. Almost thirty years later, Firth played Bill Haydon, a Soviet double agent at the top of the British intelligence service, in the film version of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011). Seen from the intertextual perspective concerning actors, it is as if Judd did not die in the Spanish Civil War but instead managed to undermine the British establishment class from within as Haydon, who inherited Judd’s Marxist ideals from the 1930s. Haydon appears to represent what Judd would be in the Cold War period when the focus is on the actor’s body, which is thirty years older in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* than in *Another Country*.

The recurrent appearance of actors brings an uncanny effect to screen and stage by giving audiences a “sense of return”. However, the bodies of these actors are already a source of the uncanny. Alice Raynor contends that there is something ghostly about acting itself: “the actor is ghosted by an absent text that has already produced the phantom of character, and to inhabit a character fully is to become a ghost who wears a human, living mask” (Rayner 2006, xx) and that, thereby, the bodies of the actors – Guinness, Bates, Firth – are all “ghosted” (Rayner 2006, xx). Similarly, Mary Luckhurst highlights the uncanny aspect of acting: “performance is a birthing of death, an act of incarnation and necromancy” (Luckhurst 2014, 163). She argues that many actors feel that their “body is a haunted house inhabited by others” (Luckhurst 2014, 163) while acting. Based on the testimonies of actors, she writes that acting is akin to “making connections with an otherworldly realm, raising spirits, channelling energy forces and resurrecting the dead” (Luckhurst 2014, 163-164). In this way, the actors, returning to the screen and the stage as queer spies, also undergo this spectral process. Each time they reappear, they are “resurrecting the dead”, namely, the ghosts of the Cambridge spies. When Alan Bennett appeared on the National Theatre stage in 1988 as Blunt – the playwright himself played the leading role – he looked uncannily similar to Blunt who had died five years before this production. His clothes, his facial expression, and his dress all showed a striking similarity to Blunt. Audiences in 1988 must have had a clear memory of the art historian who garnered British media headlines not more than ten years ago. It is likely that the visual similarity was especially required for the performance because all the audience members would have remembered Blunt’s face. One of the scenes in the theatre performance features a slide projection of the Cambridge spy ring.

Maclean, Philby, Burgess, and Blunt are all found together at the back of the stage, and Bennett, under the guise of recently deceased Blunt, gazes at the photo. This scene resembles a séance where the playwright is “making connections with an otherworldly realm” (Luckhurst 2014, 163-164), himself raising the spirit of Blunt by becoming exactly like him. The stage of *A Question of Attribution*, as well as its televised adaptation, made the haunting of the queer spies visible at a glance, highlighting the actor’s body as “a site where ghosts are conjured or seem to visit of their own accord” (Luckhurst 2014, 163). In this way, the medium of theatre, by reincarnating the dead in the body of the actor, acts as a site of haunting.

From Theatre to Television

Before concluding this chapter, I should refer to television in relation to the theatre. Theatre and television are two distinct, yet interrelating media representing queer spies. Although this chapter’s concern lies with the analysis of theatre pieces, the most significant plays discussed here – Bennett’s *An Englishman Abroad* and *A Question of Attribution* – were broadcast as television films. What Bennett and Schlesinger displayed on the national screen needs to be understood in light of the political relevance of television in 1980s Britain. For instance, Paul Giles notes that “the 1980s was the last golden era for public service broadcasting in Britain in the sense that makers of television programmes could be confident of how even their minority products would reach a huge audience” (2006, 59). Bennett’s plays feature sexual minorities, not as caricatured queer villains but as individual characters with their own complex personalities. Such portrayal resists the harsh homophobic atmosphere permeating the mass media under the Thatcher

regime, as the next chapter discusses. Bennett's challenge against societal norms equating homosexuality with being a double agent took place on television, where the creators consciously materialised their ideological opposition to mainstream politics. By proceeding from this chapter on theatre to the next on television, I outline a pattern in which different media work jointly to redraw the representation of homosexuality and secret agency.

Conclusion

This chapter contended that Alan Bennett's spy trilogy effectively dislocates the Cold War association between male homosexuality and secret agency, redrawing the image of queer spies on stage anew. Bennett's queer spies differ significantly from those presented in John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* two decades earlier. Osborne's theatrical queer spy is a product of Cold War homophobia. However, even such a figure is open to transformation because of the specificity of drama, which actively encourages re-configuration of the sexual representation.

The chapter also discussed the continuum of haunting queer spies in British theatre, as well as in novel, film, and television, as the previous chapter demonstrated through *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. British theatre represented queer spies as a haunting force underneath the narratives. However, the plays of Bennett and Mitchell name the haunting as such, eloquently materialising the apparition of queer spies that was suggested only discreetly in previous chapter.

Finally, the chapter argued that the theatre itself is a haunting medium, appropriate for presenting the apparitional queer spies. Within the theatre as a haunted

medium, the actors' bodies play a crucial role. Their uncanny revisitation on-screen materialises the spectral genealogy of queer spies, which has been transmitted in British culture for decades.

Chapter 4. Queer Spies on Television: During and After the Cold War

The Association of Homosexuality and Double Agency in Television

This chapter discusses several different television films and mini-series from the 1980s to the 2000s. It examines how homosexuality and double agency are juxtaposed in each text, exploring how they reflect socio-political views on the association between these identities. The chapter discusses how some adopt the idea prevalent at the time of their broadcast, while others attempt to rearrange it.

The first half of the chapter discusses the one-off television films produced in the 1980s, namely Dennis Potter's *Blade on the Feather* (1980, directed by Richard Loncraine and broadcast on ITV) and Robin Chapman's *Blunt* (1987, directed by John Glenister and broadcast on BBC 2). The chapter also briefly mentions the ITV comedy series *The Piglet Files* (1990-1992, written by Paul Minett and Brian Leveson and directed by Robin Carr). The second half of the chapter discusses Peter Moffat's mini-series *Cambridge Spies* (2003, directed by Tim Fywell, BBC2). These works all recognise the Cold War association between male homosexuality and double agency, which was taken for granted for several decades in the late twentieth century by media, historians, and some artists in the Anglophone world. Several works here adopt this assumption without questioning it, while others attempt to dislocate it, just like Alan Bennett's spy trilogy discussed in the previous chapter.

In the redrawing of this identity association, the medium specificity of television plays a significant role. Paul Giles notes "the psychological and aesthetic power" (Giles 2006, 59) that television has as a medium. He asserts that television has the "ability to

help shape the way people think” (Giles 2006, 59) and attests to its power as a medium that affects people and the society in a massive scale. Giles adds that television was “the focal point of social narratives and popular memory during the 1980s [in Britain]” (Giles 2006, 59). This effect was especially significant in 1980s Britain. Joseph Oldham also highlights the unique role of television, pointing out the utility of “television drama as a site of great transgressive potential at a transformative moment in British culture” (Oldham 2020, 312) in the late Cold War era and after. This political relevance should be taken into consideration when reading the television films and series dealing with the Cambridge spies. In portraying double agents and their sexuality, several television texts show resistance to the way homosexuality and double agency were juxtaposed. By doing so, they function as a critical commentary on the British media, fulfilling the political viability of television discussed by Giles and Oldham.

Three television films and series – *Blade on the Feather*, *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies* – were chosen for the main discussion in this chapter because they all highlight homoeroticism as something relevant to their plot. As this thesis has demonstrated so far, spy fiction has represented male homosexuality in a highly covert way, as if the desire between men was an enigma to hide. Homoeroticism would typically be conveyed through tacit usage of script and novel writing or visual technique, occasionally appearing in the form of ghosts, as the previous chapters have demonstrated. Traditionally in spy fiction, homoeroticism has also been represented through the villains rather than the heroes in spy thrillers.⁴³ However, the television films and series discussed

⁴³ See the Introduction, which discusses the homoerotic depiction of enemy characters in mainstream spy thriller films and novels such as John Buchan’s Richard Hannay series and Ian Fleming’s James Bond series.

in this chapter differ from these strands. Queer spies are presented as the protagonist in these broadcasts, and the homosexuality of the characters is highly relevant to the construction of the narrative itself, unlike the other texts which dismiss them merely as villains who would eventually be defeated, or ephemeral ghosts who quickly leave the frame or page after appearing.

Several television series directly portray the Cambridge Five, featuring homosexual spies such as Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess. *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies* are rather like a history film and biopic, “showing past events or set within a historical period” (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 205) while telling “the story of the life of a real person” (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 32). Both portray those who were in the Cambridge spy ring from the 1930s to the 1950s, although the historical authenticity of the latter often invited criticism (Carter 2003, Lawson 2003). In depicting the Cambridge spy ring members, *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies* “both concentrate enormously on personal relationships between those within the spy ring” (Oldham 2018, 402). In the portrayal of these personal relationships, their homosexuality is portrayed as critical to the drama surrounding the four agents.

Double agents in *Blade on the Feather*, *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies* all question the traditional role assigned to secret agents in fiction while reproducing the image of the Cambridge spy ring on screen. Willmetts and Moran note that “[t]he Cambridge spies thus fundamentally challenged the conventional notion of the British spy as a heroic and patriotic heteronormative agent” (2013, 54-55). Although *Blade on the Feather* does not directly portray the Cambridge spy ring, the narrative makes it clear that its characters are modelled on them. The Cambridge spies reproduced on the small screen confront the

image of a stereotypical hero secret agent. In this aspect, the secret agents on television function similarly to the theatrical spies in Alan Bennett's *An Englishman Abroad* and *A Question of Attribution*. These works each foreground the cultural association between homosexuality and double agency in a different way, treating it as something tangible, rather than an open secret which audiences decode through a myriad of implications, as in *Our Man in Havana*, *the Tailor of Panama*, or *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

When Spies Become Queer on British Television

This thesis strives to capture the moment when spies became queer in Cold War spy fiction across media; television is by no means an exception in this investigation. Several Cold War-related spy fiction texts portrayed spy and homosexual identities as interchangeable, because they were equally positioned outside the heteronormative ideological order of the mid-twentieth century and thereafter. In the context of television, too, there is a moment when homosexuality and secret agency coincide in their clandestine way of living.

By discussing the three television films and series, this chapter investigates the transition in how television creators, writers, and directors have perceived the intersection between these identities over a relatively long timeline from the 1980s to the 2010s. The first two televised films – *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt* – were made during the late Cold War period while the series *Cambridge Spies* was produced long after the Cold War had ended. The former captures the spies becoming queer amid the Cold War, a time when the cultural connection between homosexuality and double agency was active in British culture. The latter retrospectively consider the cultural connection between these

identities from a point in the far future when such an association is clearly perceived as homophobic and thus morally wrong.

The queer spies in 1980s television stand on a continuum of the political challenge taken on by television, film, and theatre artists. Discussing Alan Bennett's spy plays and Julian Mitchell's *Another Country*, Oldham highlights "the prominence of redemptive and/or queer engagements with the Cambridge spies in the 1980s" (2018, 407). He mentions the subversive possibility these agents had in 1980s Britain, where Thatcher's regime reigned according to a "hawkish nationalist politics" (Oldham 2018, 407). Oldham explains that "[s]ympathising with a homosexual spy therefore contributed another subtly subversive theme to these dramas" (2018, 407); playwrights such as Bennett deployed homosexual spy characters to express his anger towards the politicians of his time. Thatcher's Conservative government is known to have exhibited systematic homophobia by introducing Section 28, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Thatcher's Britain made it clear that they were not on the side of the LGBTQ community and the television texts discussed in this chapter defiantly resist this mainstream political ideology on sexuality.

Therefore, broadcasting double agents with an emphasis on their homosexuality in the 1980s was already a subversive act, especially because Blunt was openly accused by Thatcher herself in 1979. In his introduction to his collected plays, Bennett clarifies that his spy characters oppose the then-current politicians: "Were the politicians and civil servants responsible for this [the fact that a nuclear accident at Windscale in 1957 was hidden from the public] less culpable than our Cambridge villains? Because for the spies it can at least be said that they were risking their own skins whereas the politicians were

risking someone else's" (Bennett 1998, xi). *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt* were also produced against such a political background, the former in particular displaying as much raw criticism towards authority as the works of Bennett and Mitchell, as the chapter later discusses. In any case, representing homosexual spies as highly complex human beings rather than caricatured villains had a subversive effect on the political landscape in the 1980s.

Television in the 1980s was a battleground for different ideologies; the writers concerned here – Bennett, Dennis Potter for *Blade on the Feather*, and Robin Chapman for *Blunt* – worked amid the political backlash against homosexuality. Giles explains that 1980s television was a “public arena for fiercely contesting meaning and ideology” for “ambitious writers” (2006, 59). As I will demonstrate later, 1980s television also emitted homophobic messages that confused homosexuality and double agency when talking about fictional works featuring the Cambridge spies. Furthermore, according to Giles, “British television in the 1980s was subjected to political censorship” (2006, 59) under the Thatcher regime. The texts discussed in this chapter are part of this climate of clashing views, in which queer spies on television appeared increasingly complex and subversive.

The Development of Spy Fiction on Television

Before discussing each television series and film any further, the chapter first notes the timeline of the spy genre on television and the political background to its transmission. Alan Burton explains that adventure spy films such as the James Bond series gained huge popularity in the UK in the 1960s. However, throughout the 1970s, the spy genre shifted

into television. Burton writes: “A sprinkling of spy thrillers appeared throughout the 1970s, but few of these caught the eye of reviewers, and to some extent the attraction of the spy drama shifted to the small screen” (Burton 2018a, 351). Along with this shift, the subject matter also changed. From the 1970s, double agents started to appear in the television spy genre, mainly due to the Cambridge spy scandal. Willmetts and Moran note that “British film-makers represented directly the story of the Cambridge spies most commonly through the medium of television” (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 59). They continue: “From the 1970s onwards, some of the country’s most talented dramatists turned to the subject, fascinated by the reasons why a generation of privileged Englishmen should want to betray their country” (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 59). Thus, Cambridge spies are inseparable from television, and their betrayal has been a source of creative productions that have sought to investigate the relationship between politics, class, and sexuality since the 1970s.

According to Willmetts and Moran, this shift of interest towards the Cambridge spies on British spy television was largely influenced by the political background of the time. They explain that this dramatisation of the Cambridge Five began “at precisely the moment when many commentators were lamenting Britain’s loss of status in the world and its economic decline”, in the midst of internal problems such as “strike action, rising inflation and unemployment”. They continue: “For film-makers, the fall from grace of the Cambridge spies matched the trajectory of Britain herself” (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 59). The shows produced in the 1970s and 1980s focusing on double agents look back at the recent past and then re-enact the moment at which the nation declined, contrasting with the James Bond series which “represents a nationalist fantasy, in which Britain’s

decline as a world power did not really take place” (Chapman 2000, 4). By contrast, the television dramas featuring double agents reconstruct the nation’s bitterest moment, utilising the figures of the Cambridge spies.

The subject matter in spy television notably runs counter to history. In a discussion of the 1960s spy adventure television series, which differ substantially from the dramas depicting double agents after the 1970s, James Chapman notes that it “is ironic, indeed, that spy narratives should be such a prominent component of British film and television culture at a time when the reputation of the British intelligence services, still reeling from the Burgess and Maclean affair of 1951, was further undermined by the embarrassing cases of Soviet moles Kim Philby and George Blake” (2002, 12). When the actual betrayal was taking place, the British screen, both big and small, was projecting the adventures of righteous spies working for the nation in programmes such as ITV’s *The Avengers* (1961-1969) and *the Saint* (1962-1969), as well as the James Bond series, which started in 1962.

Double Agents on Television

This chapter now focuses on a thorough history of the double agents on British television from the 1970s. Of these, Dennis Potter’s *Traitor* (1971, BBC 1) is a very early example of a television drama dealing with the Soviet double agent, whose portrayal is probably influenced by the Cambridge spy scandal (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 59). Potter displayed further interest in the subject and wrote *Blade on the Feather* nine years later in 1980, which this chapter discusses later. Gordon Flemyng’s *Philby, Burgess and Maclean* (1977, ITV), produced by Granada Television for ITV, is a well-known example of the

double agent trend on television in the 1970s, although it lies outside the scope of this chapter. BBC's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979) is also one of the earlier notable examples of a television series depicting a Soviet agent, an amalgam of the Cambridge spy ring members.

After the defections of 1951 (Burgess and Maclean) and 1963 (Philby), television began to narrate the spy narratives in a different tone. The television films and series made in the 1970s and 1980s, although they were still produced during the Cold War, revisit a recent past marked by a national security failure. At the same time, television texts in the 1970s – *Traitor* in 1971, *Philby*, *Burgess and Maclean* in 1977 and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in 1979 – are uncanny harbingers of the Blunt scandal that was made public in November 1979, which would heighten further interest in the spy genre in the 1980s. *Blade on the Feather* was released on ITV in 1980, and *Blunt* aired in 1987 on BBC 2, the latter depicting Anthony Blunt's (Ian Richardson) cooperation with Burgess and Maclean's defection in 1951. The 1980s also saw the first showing of one of Alan Bennett's television films, *An Englishman Abroad* (1983), which portrayed Guy Burgess's (Alan Bates) lonely life in Moscow after his defection. This was followed by the television film *A Question of Attribution*, written by the same playwright but with Blunt as its protagonist. It was released on BBC 1 in 1991 under John Schlesinger's direction, three years after its premiere at the National Theatre in 1988 under the title of *Single Spies*, forming part of a double bill with *An Englishman Abroad*.

Double agents once again gathered public attention in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Joseph Oldham explains the media interest in these double agents during the late Cold War period as follows: "The media frenzy over Blunt inspired new productions

exploring the Cambridge spies, with the deaths of Maclean and Blunt in March 1983 stirring up further interest” (Oldham 2018, 405). In November 1979, Thatcher publicly denounced Blunt for having worked as a Soviet agent (Lemoyne and Downie 1979) and this, along with the timely death of Maclean and Blunt, intensified the amount of press attention paid to the spies in the following decade. Maclean died in March 1983 in his Moscow flat where he lived alone (Burns 1983), and Blunt died “at breakfast in his London home” after “a history of heart trouble” (Nordheimer 1983). Blunt’s revelation and the deaths of the agents seems to have inspired those in the television and the theatre industry.

As the memory of the Cold War faded throughout the 1990s, treacherous spies seemed to have withdrawn from media attention. The Cold War itself ceased to be an urgent topic capturing people’s attention on a mass scale, as Konrad H. Jarausch, Christian F. Ostermann, and Andreas Etges note: “It is astounding how rapidly the ideological and political-military confrontation that dominated world politics in the second half of the twentieth century has faded into oblivion, especially in Western Europe” (Jarausch, Ostermann and Etges 2017, 1). There is thus a lacuna in the 1990s in which the history of the Cambridge spy ring almost seems to have been forgotten. Although “it is difficult to think of another Cold War narrative that has been told and retold with such recurring frequency on British cinema and television” (Willmetts and Moran 2013, 51), 1990s British television seemed to ignore the existence of the Cambridge spy ring. The 1990s was therefore “a moribund period for the British television spy series” (Oldham 2017, 162), except for a few television plays and series at the beginning of the decade, such as Alan Bennett’s *A Question of Attribution* (1991) and

the spy comedy series *The Piglet File* (1990-1992, ITV), which this chapter will consider later between discussions of spy television in the 1980s and the 2000s.

However, spies returned to the television screen in the 2000s. David Wolstencroft's *Spooks* on BBC 1 boasted long-term popularity from 2002 to 2011. *Cambridge Spies*, one of the primary texts discussed in this chapter, aired on BBC 2 in 2003. Spy narratives involving conspiracy and double agents seemed to acquire new popularity during the 2010s. Nick Barnett notes a global trend for spy stories on contemporary television and cinema that "evoke Cold War nostalgia": "Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies* (2015) is the most famous example, but others include *The Americans* (FX Network, 2013–), *Deutschland 83* (RTL/UFA Fiction, 2015–) and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011), all of which evoke Cold War nostalgia" (Barnett 2018, 436). Barnett also list BBC 2's *The Game* (2014) along with those titles above. Although not mentioned in Barnett's paper, BBC 2's *The Hour* (2011), set in 1956, also evokes intense Cold War nostalgia with its authentic-looking mid-century modern set design and its topical subject matter of the 1950s, the outbreak of the Suez crisis. These British television dramas and films filled with Cold War nostalgia all concern double agents, just like the television films and series in the 1970s to early 1990s. Secret agents were thus revived on screen after a decade's silence and became even more popular in the 2010s. Thus, fictional double agents demonstrate the trajectory from oblivion to a newly acquired spotlight over the course of three decades.

Queer Spies on Television in the 1980s: Dennis Potter as a Television Auteur

The first text discussed in this chapter is *Blade on the Feather*. Before proceeding with a close reading, I will introduce its writer Dennis Potter as he plays a distinctive role both in British broadcast industry and television spy fiction history. Potter is one of the most prolific and influential television writers in British broadcasting history; Chapman calls him “[u]ndoubtedly the foremost television ‘auteur’ in Britain” (2002, 3-4). Glen Creeber notes that Potter’s “work provided some of the most acclaimed and talked about drama ever to be produced for the small screen anywhere in the world” (1998, 1). This renowned television auteur seems to be fascinated with the theme of double agency and the Cambridge spies. Potter’s first television film featuring a double agent, *Traitor*, aired on BBC 1 as early as 1971 when neither television nor film creators paid much attention to the Cambridge spies as a viable option for narrating a spy story. In this television film, Potter portrays the life of a character who is probably modelled on Philby, Burgess, or Maclean but goes under the name Adrian Harris (John Le Mesurier).⁴⁴ *Blade on the Feather* came nine years after the broadcast of *Traitor*, but this was not his last work featuring double agents: in the Channel 4 series *Lipstick on Your Collar* (1993), starring a young Ewan McGregor, there appears a mysterious character whose name is Philby, although he only calls about the results of the horse races, not any information concerning national security. Although the last appearance of the Cambridge spies in Potter’s oeuvre is rather parodic, his keen interest in them is apparent in his filmography.

⁴⁴ Sergio Angelini suggests that Harris is an amalgam of several Cambridge spies. He describes this as follows: “Although Dennis Potter’s fictional KGB mole Adrian Harris (John Le Mesurier) does resemble Philby, his reduced circumstances in Moscow are closer to what happened to Maclean, while the dependence on drink also recalls Burgess’s well-known alcoholism. The assassination, however, is clearly patterned after Philby’s involvement in the 1945 Volkov affair” (Angelini, n.d.a).

In the way he tackles secret agency, Potter is not dissimilar to Bennett. On portraying spies in *Traitor* and *Blade on the Feather*, Potter comments: “I thought they were detestable people. But it's partly because I detested them so much that I wanted to find some saving grace in them” (Fuller 1994, 43). Similarly, Bennett notes: “Certainly in the spy fever that followed the unmasking of Professor Blunt I felt more sympathy with the hunted than the hunters” (Bennett 1998, ix). Both Potter and Bennett attempted to portray these double agents without vilifying them as caricatured villains, although Bennett probably shows more empathy⁴⁵ as Potter affirms that he detests them. Both tried to depict the double agents as complex characters: Bennett did so from his empathy towards them, Potter from his desire “to find some saving grace in them” (Fuller 1994, 43).

Queer Spies on Television in the 1980s: *Blade on the Feather*

Blade on the Feather aired on ITV on 19th October 1980: it was written by Potter and directed by Richard Loncraine. Although it is not a Cambridge Five biopic like the two other television films and series in this chapter, *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies*, this television film features an “Anthony-Blunt like traitor” (Burton 2018b, 207) as its protagonist. For the viewers, the protagonist’s similarity to other infamous double agents becomes clear as the narrative unfolds. His identity is betrayed as the television film narrates a conspiracy involving the British secret intelligence service and the KGB.

⁴⁵ Although Bennett’s attitude towards the double agents is ambiguous, he once expressed frankly his inability to condemn them, noting: “I find it hard to drum up any patriotic indignation over either Burgess or Blunt, or even Philby” (Bennett 1998, x).

The way *Blade on the Feather* presents male homosexuality merits further examination. It treats the protagonist's own inner thoughts and desires as a significant component of the drama, without marginalising the homosexuality of secret agents merely as an open secret, or as a villainous attribute in the way spy fiction traditionally has done. It does not mention same-sex desire per se, as no character is supposed to be openly homosexual. However, the protagonist's physical and mental intimacy with his long-time friend is visually depicted, as the chapter later explains. Although the homosexuality of the main characters is only implied rather than openly proclaimed, their homoerotic relationship is visually presented in a straightforward manner in the middle of the frame.

Blade on the Feather portrays two old double agents, Jason Cavendish (Donald Pleasence) and Jack Hill (Denholm Elliott) and their intimate relationship. Cavendish, a professor as well as a renowned author, lives a peaceful retired life with his wife Linda (Kika Markham) and daughter Christabel (Phoebe Nicolls) in a country mansion, served by his butler Hill who is, in fact, another Soviet agent who once worked with Cavendish. One day a young man named Daniel Young (Tom Conti) appears in his estate. He claims that he is visiting Cavendish for help with writing his thesis and is heartily welcomed by Cavendish's wife and daughter into their house. Later, it turns out that Young is a Soviet agent sent to kill Cavendish, summoned by Hill on the orders of Soviet intelligence to prevent Cavendish from publishing a memoir of his betrayal. Although Cavendish had always trusted him as a long-time intimate friend and his fellow spy, it is Hill who triggers Cavendish's ultimate death, as he is forced by Young to commit suicide, successfully completing the assassination. This story narrates betrayal in two senses:

Cavendish and Hill betray their nation by working for Soviet intelligence, and Hill betrays Cavendish in spite of their apparently intimate homoerotic bond.

The television film verbally sets up the equation between homosexuality and double agency through the protagonist's words. At the dinner table, Cavendish recounts his memories from his Cambridge days during his professorship. He condemns a specific type of people with whom he held discussions. He comments that "those with the background of personal instability were fatally attracted to scruffy political ideologies which had a vested interest in the decay or on the destruction of the existing order". Young quickly asks: "You mean like Burgess, Philby and Maclean?" The camera turns to Hill, who betrays visible agitation in his expression upon hearing this question. As the drama narrates, both Hill and Cavendish were Soviet double agents who were especially active in their Cambridge days, and it is implied that Cavendish worked as a don who recruited young graduates to the career of double agent. Although he pretends to be a patriot displaying moral disgust at the communists in Cambridge, in reality, he is the one who guided them to the Soviet secret service. Hearing Young's name-dropping, Cavendish replies: "That's an interesting trio of..." and Young interrupts: "Traitors", to which Cavendish adds "junks, queers and leftists" with apparent irritation in his voice. During their conversation, which has an air of interrogation, the connection between queerness and double agency is visibly drawn. Those who were politically active and leftist in Cambridge, including Cavendish and Hill, are called "queer", which was juxtaposed with other identities opposed to the conservatives.

This television film further expands this juxtaposition of homosexuality and double agency by displaying an intimate homoerotic relationship between Hill and

Cavendish. They pretend to be merely master and servant in public; however, when they are alone together in Cavendish's bedroom, it turns out they are in an incredibly intimate relationship. Hill quietly enters his master's bedroom, sits down on the edge of his bed, contemplates Cavendish's sleeping face and caresses his cheek. Viewers hear that they are in fact on first-name terms, even though Hill calls Cavendish "sir" and Cavendish calls him "Mr Hill" in front of the others. Moreover, they have their own nicknames which they use when showing affection to each other: Cavendish is "Dicky-Boo" and Hill is "Cuddles". After Hill checks no one is around through the door, they begin to sing the "Eton Boating Song", putting their arms around each other's shoulder and falling onto the bed together. Cavendish feels Hill's jacket, saying "you've got a gun. I can feel a bulge". Lying down in bed and clinging to each other, Cavendish rubs Hill's gun through his jacket as if they were lovers fondling each other (Fig. 10). Commonly, a gun is utilised as a phallic image along with "trains going into tunnels, cigars raised from the lips" (Dyer 2002b, 90). In *Blade on the Feather*, the homoerotic implication of the scene is thus fortified through the usage of such a metaphorical object.



Figure 10: Cavendish feeling a gun in Hill's jacket.

The gun, the symbolic phallus, then extends the interplay of homoeroticism and double agency onto Young. After this scene, this gun would be exchanged among Hill, Cavendish, and Young. In the later part of the television film, Hill tries to threaten Young with this gun (he does not know that Young is working with him at this point). Young quickly takes this gun; he eventually hands it to Cavendish, encouraging him to use it to kill himself. The way Young guides Cavendish to his death appears homoerotic when a gun is seen as a phallic metaphor. Young urges Cavendish: “open your mouth, I might only want to humiliate you”. Cavendish answers “Oh yes, yes...Yes you humiliate me”, kneeling on the floor. In their exchange, it almost seems as though Cavendish is enjoying the erotic humiliation and submission required by this seductive young man, who has already sexually conquered his wife and daughter. Once again, Young insists: “open your mouth”. Although Cavendish is already kneeling before him, he does not open his mouth because he knows he will be killed in that way. However, from his reaction, he also seems to be fighting against the masochistic temptation to succumb to this young man. In

the end Young manages to insert the gun into Cavendish's mouth, and gently induces him to trigger it in a patronising way: "Up here, up here... There you go. Come on old chap, do the decent". Hill's gun, signifying homoerotic desire, is exchanged among the secret agents and Young is involved in this circulation of desire; none of the spies in the television film are free from the scope of queerness. As in Hepburn's words, the television film captures the moment when "all spies proved to be, in some degree, a bit queer" (2005, 187). *Blade on the Feather* is a visual demonstration of what spies have become in the late Cold War period through the way it displays its spies successively becoming queer amid the conspiracy.

The television film further clarifies the way homoerotic intimacy is placed in the centre of the screen through the final sequence. Hill bemoans Cavendish's death; he cries "poor old Dicky Boo" and staggers towards the barn where Cavendish is probably lying dead, shouting "Cuddles is coming". His hair is all dishevelled, and he looks far removed from the image of a butler usually shown in the heritage genre,⁴⁶ in which the impeccable dress and hair are a set code for their appearance. This last sequence brings back the intimacy shown earlier in the film and concludes the whole show with their homoerotic relationship. At the end, "Dicky Boo" and "Cuddles" return in place of Professor Cavendish and Mr Hill. This conclusion suggests that their relationship is one of the most

⁴⁶ Oldham discusses the relation between *Blade on the Feather* and the 1980s heritage movement: "*Blade [on the Feather]* was shot on film and on location, largely at a real country house on the Isle of Wight in June 1980.⁴⁹ The verisimilitude of this location enabled *Blade* to mount a withering satire of heritage culture and its rhetorical claim of the country house as the 'soul' of Britain, soon to be epitomised by the lavish television adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (ITV, 1981)" (Oldham 2020, 324). This television film is rather a satire of the heritage movement which produced popular films such *The Chariot of Fire* (1981) and the multiple screen adaptations of E.M. Forster's novels in the 1980s. In this sense, Hill's image on the last sequence embodies this satirical attitude towards the heritage movement, with his imperfect butler attire.

critical aspects of this television film. Queer spies never disappear to the edge of representation, as they do in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, but rather come back, in the end, to signify that this entire film is about them.

Although they are double agents modelled on the people Potter “detest”, they are not depicted as caricatured villains but as complex characters with their own lives, thoughts and emotions. After Young comes out of the barn where he handed the gun to Cavendish, he finds Hill, who finally realises that Young was the secret agent he summoned using this secret code: “Blade on the Feather”. Although it was Hill who triggered the death of Cavendish, his dilemma is apparent in his words, which reflect his strong attachment towards Hill: “You see I was very very fond of...”. Hill is so overwhelmed by sadness and confusion that he cannot even finish the sentence. Hill’s behaviour is far from what viewers would expect from a professional double agent who would cold-heartedly conduct a murder operation. Hill does not hide his agitation and sorrow, in contrast to Young who does not care about the murdered, let alone now orphaned, daughter of Cavendish, whom he seduced. Young conducts his task in accordance with the stereotype of a dangerous secret agent, while Hill is only a man who laments his victim’s death.⁴⁷ In this film, an intimate homoerotic relationship elicits a human emotion from a spy, giving profound personality to an otherwise faceless secret agent; a point illustrated by the stark contrast between Hill and Young.

⁴⁷ Although the narrative suggests that Hill loved Cavendish so much, it is after all him who summoned the murderer, Young, to Cavendish’s mansion. It is possible to speculate that Young was called at this moment by Hill because Cavendish was dying anyway; his imminent death is suggested at the beginning of the television film, which shows Cavendish’s increasingly deteriorating health.

Blade on the Feather presents an ambiguous attitude towards homosexuality. Indisputably, the television film foregrounds the homoerotic relationship as a relevant topic, portraying its queer spies as complex human beings. Thus, the homosexuality represented on-screen avoids being merely reduced to the Cold War homophobia criticised by Alan Bennett, which yokes both homosexual men and double agents together, ignoring their individual differences. In *Blade on the Feather*, the homoeroticism is focused on so much it goes far beyond a simple homophobic allusion. However, despite this, the television film is not still totally free of a homophobic strain.

The homoerotic relationship between Hill and Cavendish is closely tied to their privileged education. The representation of male homosexuality in *Blade on the Feather* is thus utilised to criticise the ruling class. As Burton explains, “‘Blade on the feather’ is a line from the famous ‘Eton Boating Song’, crooned homo-erotically in the drama by Cavendish and Hill, and had been chosen by Potter to comment on the traditional status of Eton as the training ground for Britain’s wealthy and privileged elite” (2018b, 208). This song is therefore introduced into the television film when a homoerotic act between Hill and Cavendish takes place, and it returns once more when their intimate relationship is evoked at the end of the television film by Hill staggering towards the barn where Cavendish is lying dead, shouting “Cuddles is coming”.

By combining a song about one of the most privileged schools in the UK with the homoerotic representation of the spies, *Blade on the Feather* draws a clear connection among homosexuality, double agency, and the Establishment class. In this film, the appearance of queer spies is inseparably intertwined with the English ruling class, which Potter condemns outright:

I did that also in *Blade on the Feather* [“find some saving grace in” the Cambridge spies he detests], where the quivering don, Cavendish, when faced with a gun, tries to define the roots of his betrayal. He says that all spies, without exception, are upper-class: ‘I was born into a class that loves what it owns. And we don’t own quite enough of it any more, that is why all, all, not just some but all of the renowned traitors working for Nazi Germany or Stalin’s Russia, all come from my class.’ There is that patrician element in the English upper classes which makes them willing to sell out anything to be the ultra-English, they are – to me anyway – the least English-like of all the English (Fuller 1994, 43).

Although not all the double agents come from the upper-class,⁴⁸ Potter makes Cavendish say that “all spies, without exception, are upper-class”; a daring affirmation. Given his account cited above, Potter probably inserted this line because the show sought to strongly condemn the English ruling class which covered up the betrayal of the Cambridge spy ring.⁴⁹ Thus, the homoerotic characterisation of the secret agents might simply be an attribution of the character belonging to the English establishment class, which is often associated with homosexuality due to their upbringing in public schools.⁵⁰ It is notable that in *Another Country*, discussed in the previous chapter, the ruling class society was depicted as excluding homosexuality, whereas in *Blade on the Feather* it is portrayed as its necessary attribution. This is probably due to the authors’ different perspectives: Mitchell wrote about homosexual agents from within the same class and

⁴⁸ For instance, the Soviet double agent George Blake came from outside of this Establishment class and was born of Dutch-Jewish parentage. Blake himself drew a clear line between himself and the Cambridge spies: “But unlike Kim Philby and the rest of the ‘Cambridge Five’, Blake says he never really felt part of the British establishment” (Walker 2012). Alan Bennett also depicts the class differences within the double agents in his play *The Old Country* (1977), in which a spy from the privileged class gains the right to return to Britain with the help of a family member, while a working-class secret agent is left alone in the Soviet Union.

⁴⁹ For instance, Anthony Blunt was promised immunity in spite of his record of spying for the Soviet Union; this instance shows “an example of how individuals with powerful friends could be protected in British society” (Nordheimer 1983). Although Blunt admitted that he had been a Soviet double agent in 1964, he was offered “immunity from prosecution as long as he made a full confession” (Cobain 2018). There are also records indicating that MI5 and MI6 expended some effort in covering up the Cambridge spy scandal (see Norton-Taylor 2015).

⁵⁰ For the connection between public schools and male homosexuality, see the Introduction and Chapter 2.

Potter, like Bennett, from the outside. In *Blade on the Feather*, homosexual representation is closely tied to the English upper class that Potter harshly condemns. It is not entirely homophobic, yet the television film sheds a negative light on homosexual representation. It utilises homoeroticism to criticise upper-class society, reflecting Potter's condemnation of English elites.

This negative representation of homoeroticism is also apparent from the way the television film captures the physicality of Cavendish, the film's foremost queer spy. When Cavendish talks about "junks, queers and leftists" in the dining sequence, implying the Cambridge spies, the camera captures him greedily devouring his pudding. The soundtrack emphasises the noise he makes while eating. Cavendish talking about the other queer spies is thus filmed in a way that makes viewers feel repulsed by his physicality. His mouth, the source of discomfort, would eventually accept the gun inserted by Young's hands, a metaphor for queer desire in this film. Cavendish's disconcerting physical presence is highlighted throughout the film; this upper-class queer spy is presented as something grotesque and sad.

Overall, the film's presentation of queer spies is not free from a homophobic tone because of its direct connection to the class it criticises and the grotesque figure it films. Nevertheless, *Blade on the Feather* eschews the Cold War homophobia that confuses political allegiance and sexuality, binding all the homosexual men with double agents. In this sense, *Blade on the Feather* certainly raised the curtain of the 1980s. From here, queer spies would appear on screen more often in various forms in works such as *Another Country* in 1981, *An Englishman Abroad* in 1983, *A Question of Attribution* in 1988, and *Blunt* in 1987. *Blade on the Feather* prepares the mode of representation for the late Cold

War queer spies; its queer spies are different from those presented in the previous era because of their complex characterisation and their intensely visible presence filling the frame throughout, in contrast to *Our Man in Havana* and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Queer spies in subsequent works all inherit these features from their predecessors in *Blade on the Feather*.

Queer Spies on Television in the 1980s: *Blunt*

Blunt, a television film directed by John Glenister and written by Robin Chapman, aired on BBC 2 in 1987. It portrays Blunt (Ian Richardson) assisting the defection of Guy Burgess (Anthony Hopkins) and Donald Maclean (Michael McStay) in 1951. The main actor, Richardson, returns to the screen as a double agent for the second time following his role as Bill Haydon in the 1979 mini-series *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. For British television viewers, Richardson's reappearance as a double agent must have felt strangely familiar. Both Haydon and Blunt are portrayed by the same actor who does not look much different despite eight years having passed between the mini-series and television film, and both characters are suave upper-class gentlemen who appreciate art. Because of this similarity, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* appears as an uncanny harbinger, especially in relation to *Blunt*.

Although *Blunt* is less well-known among other spy fiction texts featuring the Cambridge spies, despite the casting of a renowned actor such as Anthony Hopkins, this film precisely captures the inseparability of homosexuality and double agency structured under Cold War politics. It might not be as subversive as Alan Bennett's plays and contemporary spy television after the 2010s such as *London Spy*, which the next chapter

discusses; nevertheless, it is significant in its acute awareness of the construction of queer spy identity amid the Cold War, demonstrated through its dialogue and its visual representation.

An early sequence in *Blunt* guides viewers into a secret world of queer spies where their double agency intertwines with homosexuality. At the beginning, Blunt and his Soviet agent Vasily walk into a separate cubicle in a public toilet in central London. Blunt, sitting in a cubicle, addresses Vasily across the toilet wall: “I refuse to speak to you here”. Vasily answers “it is very central, very clean, dare I say convenient, yes?” Blunt retorts “it’s too dangerous”, recognising that exchanging their secret information in this public bathroom is not a good idea. Upon hearing this, Vasily answers “oh, you mean because of the English vice? Yes, I know but that makes everywhere dangerous, does it not?” Here he implies the habit of cottaging, which Vasily views as something specifically British. Blunt walks out of the cubicle and sees a policeman standing at the urinal, who is most likely standing there to arrest homosexual men. Vasily then follows Blunt outside, walking up the staircase leading to the London street from this underground public urinal. Finally coming face to face with each other, Blunt reprimands Vasily for having chosen such a place for their rendezvous. The narrative suggests that Vasily has only recently taken up his current position from his predecessor, whose name is not shown in the film. Blunt tells him: “in future take more care. Should you doubt me, look behind you”. Simultaneously, a policeman comes up the stairs and walks past a perplexed Vasily, crossing the frame.

The intersection of homosexuality and secret agency is displayed by both Vasily and Blunt, albeit from different perspectives. When Vasily mentions “English vice”, he

recognises that both homosexual men and spies use public toilets. In this way, he refers to this double usage of urinals as a light joke. Blunt, however, considers that a public men's room is too dangerous for spies to exchange secrets precisely because of this duality. The policeman standing in the urinal seems to be after homosexuals but, for Blunt, the real danger is that no one can tell whether the policeman is after spies or homosexual men (Fig. 11). Although he might be wearing the cover of a local policeman arresting cottaging homosexuals, he might in fact be a member of the secret service trying to capture double agents. Thus, in *Blunt*, this inseparability of homosexuality and secret agency is demonstrated in the uncertainty Blunt faces in a sphere that for him is both public and private. *Blunt* precisely captures this ambiguity under the Cold War culture, in which one might or might not be a spy and a homosexual man; no one involved in the situation can ever really know.



Figure 11: Blunt passing behind a policeman standing at the urinal.

The politics of the Cold War positions both spies and homosexual men outside of heteronormativity, and both are equally queer under this regime; a toilet is a place that

summarises this structure. Just as the 1979 mini-series *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* depicts unnamed men roaming around frames and pages, whose ambiguous presence guides readers and audiences into indeterminacy regarding their identity as homosexuals and/or spies, *Blunt* displays public toilets as a space that addresses this ambiguity. In this way, *Blunt* exactly captures the zeitgeist of pre-1967 Britain and the Cold War Anglophone culture, in which the flâneurs of London's streets saunter in the ambiguity between secret agents and homosexuals.

This film also verbally constructs the equation of double agency and homosexuality through Burgess's words, whose final days in England *Blunt* portrays. In the scene where Burgess meets Goronwy Rees (Michael Williams)⁵¹ and his family, he remarks: "thanks to Joe Bloody McCarthy, it is now universally accepted that if you are queer you are Commie and vice versa." One of Rees' daughters asks Burgess: "What's queer, Guy?" Burgess answers: "Oh dear, it means homosexuals, which means..." and is then interrupted by Rees's wife (Rosie Kerslake), who does not want him to provide her daughters with knowledge she deems inappropriate for her children. In this short line of Burgess, the television film briefly summarises the Anglo-American Cold War association between homosexuality and double agency. Under the Cold War American culture "[h]omosexuality was perceived as a lurking subversive threat at a time when the country was coping with tremendous social change as well as rising anxiety about another lurking subversive threat: Communism" (Adkins 2016). This attitude was

⁵¹ Goronwy Rees was a renowned academic and journalist from Wales. Being an intimate friend of Guy Burgess, he was a relevant figure in the history of the Cambridge spy ring and makes his appearance in *Blunt*.

politically encapsulated by Senator Joe McCarthy, “whose rhetoric explicitly associated Communists and gay people” (Adkins 2016).

Blunt thus withdraws the definition of “queer” by aborting Burgess’s line. This interruption is suggestive; because of this fraction of silence, the sequence gives its viewers a margin in which they can imagine the rest of Burgess’s speech. Indeed, the term “queer” was mainly used in a pejorative way in mid-twentieth century Britain; therefore, the first definition given by Burgess is correct. However, its meaning is not limited to such usage, especially in the modern days. Burgess’s disrupted answer sounds as if he was implying the ambiguous yet rich history the word will contain in the late twentieth century.

Thus, the television play captures the moment in which homosexuality and secret agency are entangled amid the Cold War. It portrays the 1950s double agents retrospectively from a 1980s perspective, while visually and verbally demonstrating the construction of the umbrella of queerness under which homosexual men and spies are bound. However, just because *Blunt* captures such a moment does not mean that it avoids the homophobia prevalent at the time of its production.

Several critics and scholars focus on the portrayal of Blunt’s intimate relationship with Burgess in *Blunt*. Sergio Angelini felt that the “touching love story” of Burgess and Blunt “becomes the film’s dramatic and emotional core” (Angelini, n.d.b). Indeed, this film can be interpreted as their tragic love story, in which Blunt helps Burgess to defect, after which they would never see each other again. Burton also notes that the show demonstrates that “[t]he men [Blunt and Burgess] are former lovers and still retain a strong bond of affection” (Burton 2018b, 282). Such long-term intimacy is portrayed in a

sequence where Blunt explains to Burgess the thorough procedure involved his defection, in which he is supposed to have played a key role. Burgess and Blunt bid farewell at the door; a parting scene that establishes their intimate relationship. Realising that they will not be able to meet again, they look at each other and Burgess mutters: “dear old Ant. Kiss?” They casually kiss each other on the mouth and Burgess adds: “I’m always faithful in my own fashion, you know”. Oldham notes that “[t]he film takes the most obvious liberty when focusing on the two openly homosexual Cambridge spies, implying a long-term love affair between them” (Oldham 2018, 411). This exchange confirms that *Blunt* presumes these men are in a long-term relationship.

However, their relationship as narrated here is not historically accurate, and this inaccuracy is what connects *Blunt* to a crude generalisation of homosexual men as double agents. John J. O’Connor notes that “they probably never went to bed with each other” (1987). Burton also mentions a review published by the *Morning Star* on 10th January 1987, which criticises *Blunt* for putting “Blunt on much closer terms with Guy Burgess than ever admitted” (Burton 2018b, 283). In terms of official historical records, Carlston notes that “investigators publicly speculated about whether Blunt had seduced Burgess into homosexuality and treason, or vice versa” (2013, 180). However, as she goes on to explain, “there is no good evidence that the two friends were ever sexually involved” (2013, 180). *Blunt* thus invents an intimacy between the two men that likely never existed.

This historical inaccuracy is what makes *Blunt* problematic in the way Alan Bennett criticised. As the previous chapter mentioned, his diary entry on 4th December 2005 reads: “Whether they [Jeremy Wolfenden and Guy Burgess] had an affair I doubt.

The same assumption was made about Burgess and Blunt, less on the actual evidence than on the algebraic principle of getting everybody of the same sexuality on the same side of the equation and in one bracket” (Bennett 2016, 42). *Blunt* portrays Blunt and Burgess as if they were a couple, but there is only scarce evidence that this was the case. This kind of assumption was, most likely, not unique to *Blunt* and may have been widely shared, as is clear from Bennett’s criticism. In any case, such a portrayal stems from the desire to classify homosexual men altogether in a single category, pushing them aside from the heteronormative structure as the other. While Bennett’s spy plays are inspired by the need to refute this desire, *Blunt* adopts it in its narrative unquestioningly.

The Homophobic Atmosphere in the 1980s

Considering the overall cultural atmosphere in the 1980s, it is perhaps no wonder that the representation in *Blunt* relies on the coarse equalisation of homosexual men and double agents. The late 1970s and the 1980s saw a spy revival on screen and stage. Several historians also published books on the Cambridge spies, such as Andrew Boyle’s *The Climate of Treason: Five Who Spied for Russia* (1979) and John Costello’s *Mask of Treachery* (1988), and media interest in the Cambridge spies was renewed in this period, prompted by Blunt’s exposure and Burgess and Maclean’s deaths. Most importantly, the 1980s was also a period when the association between homosexuality and secret agency was publicly underlined in a homophobic tone. In the 1980s, it was often assumed that homosexuality and double agency were somehow intrinsically connected. Carlston notes that “[i]n 1979 the speculation that homosexuality had in some way caused the Cambridge spies’ Communism, and consequently their treachery, intensified again when

Andrew Boyle precipitated Anthony Blunt's exposure by publishing *The Climate of Treason*, his book about the other three spies" (2013, 180). Shortly after the publication of Boyle's book, Thatcher exposed Blunt in Parliament (Carlston 2013, 180), and "the press reports of the scandal relentlessly reiterated both the theme of political and sexual recruitment and the idea that Communism and sexual deviance are mutually constitutive aberrations that dispose men to treachery" (Carlston 2013, 180). 1979 was a crucial year in which the association between homosexuality and double agency was firmly established. A series of events – from the publication of Boyle's book to Blunt's exposure – solidified this erroneous assumption.

Boyle's book was widely accepted in the mass media, although Bennett harshly criticised Boyle's attitude in one of his diary entries. On the BBC's transmission of *Newsnight* on 2nd March 1982, a presenter first mentions Boyle's book while introducing Julian Mitchell's then-new play *Another Country* (1981), which features a homosexual double agent based on Guy Burgess. The presenter's speech was as follows:

in recent years, several books have tried to unravel the complexity of the most notorious British spy scandal of the post-war era, involving Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blunt. The fourth name, Anthony Blunt was added to the list only in late 1979, as a direct result of publication of Andrew Boyle's book, *the Climate of Treason*. Now there comes the new literary investigation into the affair, concentrating rather on the psychology of treason. This one [*Another Country*] takes the form of a play which had its opening in London tonight. (Newsnight 2015)

Boyle's book is mentioned as the first and foremost source of literature when introducing a play about the upbringing of a queer spy modelled on Burgess. The presenter utilises the phrase "the psychology of treason", mentioning the protagonist of *Another Country* who displayed a hostile attitude towards the ruling class. As discussed in the previous chapter, Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett) promises to take revenge on his own class which

excluded him because of his homosexuality. While *Another Country* is “the new literary investigation into the affair”, Boyle’s book is the primary historical investigation into the Cambridge spy scandal.

Boyle’s book therefore has such a significant presence that it is mentioned on the national broadcast. However, as is clear from Bennett’s criticism, Boyle’s work tends to treat homosexuality itself as “a bond” (Bennett 2005a, 255). Especially when discussing Burgess and Maclean, the author contends there must be some secret bond among men who desire other men in the establishment class. He writes that Burgess’s “invisible links with the Comintern tended to lead back to those close intimates of Cambridge days who remained bound to him intellectually, emotionally and sometimes physically as active members of what has since been aptly nicknamed the ‘Homintern’” (Boyle 1979, 154). Boyle conjures an image of a closely knit community of homosexual men, an enigmatic “Homintern”, conspiring to bring about the collapse of the western world. Here, it seems that the historian accepts this mystical notion “Homintern” at face value, while regarding the sexual connection between Burgess and the other men as a significant component of their betrayal.

Furthermore, the author’s homophobic views are occasionally identifiable in his writing through his choice of words. He writes that Burgess introduced Maclean to “the sad pleasures of sodomy” (Boyle 1979, 107) during their Cambridge years. From his description, it seems that the historian believes in a certain stereotype of homosexuality where sexual intercourse is treated as an esoteric ritual taught from elder to younger in a closed community. Moreover, he presumes that Burgess and Maclean were physically intimate just because they both happen to share same-sex desire. These sentences suggest

that Boyle regards homosexuality and double agency as connected, and that these identities form an immoral nexus. It is not surprising that Bennett expressed his indignation at the historian's description of homosexuality. Undoubtedly, this book is significant as a historical witness of the Cambridge spy scandal. However, it contains a problematic understanding of homosexuality. The fact that this book was so famous suggests that Boyle's view was also broadly influential in British culture back in the 1980s.

Newsnight is not the only programme to fall under the influence of a publication that wrongfully assumes homosexuality is somehow intrinsically connected to double agency. As the previous chapter mentioned, in the BBC Radio programme *Meridian* on 16th August 1983, a presenter refers to "the link between homosexuality and treachery", arguing that it has "come up in all kinds of other areas, for instance, the Blunt scandal, the final revelation of Burgess and Maclean" (Eyre 1983). The presenter poses these words when introducing the revival of John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me* (1965) to his listeners. Here he is interviewing a stage director, Ronald Eyre, who worked on the 1983 revival of the play with Chichester Festival Theatre. However, contrary to the presenter, Eyre rejects this cultural equation by asserting "I hate it to be thought that generally homosexuals are more likely to be spies" (Eyre 1983). Although he says that the audience members "didn't find that connection [between homosexuality and treachery] such an oddity", admitting this equation prevailed in 1980s Britain, he defiantly rejects it by saying that such an association "is deeply questionable" (Eyre 1983).⁵²

⁵² The full citation of Eyre's words can be found in the previous chapter.

The contesting views posed by the presenter and Eyre illustrate that the 1980s was a conflicted era in terms of homosexuality and double agency. Some artists, like Bennett and Eyre, defiantly resisted the view proposed by the historian Boyle, while others, such as Chapman (who wrote *Blunt*) instead adopt the ubiquitous view on the association between homosexuality and double agency, irrespective of any individual differences. In this regard, Potter's *Blade on the Feather* is a prime example that illustrates this conflict in 1980s media. In this film, the interconnection between homosexuality and double agency is certainly inscribed, but its attitude towards the association is ambiguous. Like *Blunt*, it is not free from the homophobia present at the time of its production, especially in the way it represents homosexual double agents with a repulsive physicality and the corrupt character of upper-class society, which Potter harshly criticises. However, sincere characterisation gives its queer spies an individual character with distinct inner thoughts, and as a result, the characters do not straightforwardly adhere to Cold War homophobic stereotypes.

In spite of these conflicting ideas, during the 1990s the mass media gradually lost interest in the issue. Shortly after *Blunt*'s broadcast, the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. As the Cold War lost its political relevance, spy fiction seemed to have faded from the British screen. Oldham notes that "the 1990s proved something of a moribund period for the British television spy series" and mainstream success of spy adventures would not re-occur until 2002, with the broadcast of *Spooks* (BBC 1, 2002-2011) (Oldham 2017, 162). Although spy-themed television films and series gained huge popularity from the 1960s to the 1980s, in the 1990s audiences gradually lost interest. Burton notes that "[t]he period of Perestroika and Glasnost in the

1980s, and shortly thereafter the end of the Cold War in 1989-91, seemed to remove a fundamental rationale of the modern spy story” (Burton 2018b, xxv). As the memory of the conflict between two superpowers faded, spy television lost its glamour. However, spies were not entirely absent from mainstream British television, especially at the start of the decade. For instance, a televised version of Alan Bennett’s *A Question of Attribution* aired in 1991, as well as the comedy series *The Piglet Files* (1990-1992), produced by London Weekend Television and distributed by ITV, which this chapter will discuss as a television text that bridges the 1980s to the 2000s. After *The Piglet Files*, this chapter will consider Peter Moffat’s *Cambridge Spies* (2003), which is “the first version of the story [of the Cambridge spy ring] to be written since the end of the cold war” (Lawson 2003). In doing so, this chapter will show how renewed interest in spy fiction followed after a lull in the genre

***The Piglet Files* and Cold War Memory**

This chapter will briefly cover *The Piglet Files* because, like *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt*, it conspicuously points to the association between homosexuality and double agency, but in a highly satirical manner that was only possible in the early 1990s,⁵³ when the Cold War had just ended, but was still in recent memory. The sitcom depicts a notable feature regarding the representational history of male homosexuality in spy fiction. Its protagonist is a polytechnic lecturer, Peter Chapman (Nicholas Lyndhurst), who is

⁵³ Satirical parodies of the spy genre were not a new phenomenon in the 1990s. Indeed, Burton notes “the turn to parody in the 1960s, indicative of increasing levels of cultural irony” in the spy film genre (Burton 2018a, 339). An early example is *Carry On Spying* (1964) (Burton 2018a, 340), the ninth film from the famous *Carry On* series, which is part of a long-term British cinema tradition.

recruited to the British intelligence service. The title refers to a codename, “Piglet”, which Chapman is given despite his reluctance to accept it. The series uses the cultural association between homosexuality and secret agency for comic effect and is accompanied by a loud laugh track. The series stands out in this thesis for its use of humour and satire in the context of queer spies.

During his first meeting with the upper echelons of the secret service, Maurice Drummond (Clive Francis) and Andrew Maxwell (John Ringham), Chapman is asked “are you now or have you ever been a practicing homosexual?” The camera shows a close-up of Chapman, falling into an awkward silence, apparently confused by this abrupt question about his own sexuality. The laugh track played at this moment suggests that the association between homosexuality and secret agency was then so prevalent that it sounded like a standard joke to mainstream television viewers. After this awkward moment, Chapman answers: “no but I’m willing to learn if the job depends on it” to even louder extradiegetic laughter.⁵⁴

The joke could still be presented as funny because audience members, so shortly after the Cold War period, were aware of the cultural association. Simon Critchley explains that “joking is a specific and meaningful practice that the audience and the joke-teller recognize as such” (Critchley 2002, 3-4). He argues that humour requires “a sort of tacit consensus or implicit shared understanding as to what constitutes joking ‘for us’, as to which linguistic or visual routines are recognized as joking” (Critchley 2002, 4). The

⁵⁴ The exchange between upper-class spies and the recruit from a less privileged background (Maxwell does not hide his disappointment upon hearing that Chapman is a college lecturer in a local polytechnic, not Oxbridge as he expected) reminds the viewers of Graham Greene’s *The Human Factor* (1978), in which MI6 staff member Davis, also from an engineering and non-Oxbridge background, is accused of treachery by his upper-class bosses and quietly assassinated. However, in this comedy Chapman defiantly survives.

association of homosexuality with double agency was recognised “as such” by both creators and the viewers; it was included in an “implicit shared understanding” as to what is funny for them in 1990s Britain.

However, the viewers were simultaneously expecting a new era to arrive in which queer spies would be thrown into the category of cliché and then forgotten. Here in 1990, the link between identities became so apparent to mainstream viewers that it induces loud laughter, due to the accumulated media attention paid to the link over the last few decades. Simultaneously, it would soon be ignored because the mass audience would become jaded with it. *The Piglet Files* records the moment when the recognition of queer spies, albeit implicitly, reaches its peak. The queer presence of spies became something of a cliché to be laughed at after the 1980s. As the 1990s went on, it would slip into oblivion.

Although the sitcom is not highly significant in British broadcasting history, it is important to underline the topicality of the series, which captures the fleeting moment when the Cold War was still part of a tangible past for every viewer. Burton summarises the series as follows: “The show, coming so soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, made only perfunctory reference to the epic changes taking place in Eastern Europe and continued to pit the Security Service against the machinations of the Communist regimes” (Burton 2018b, 375). Burton is right that the show is superficial in how it refers to the recent Cold War past. The episodes are studded with fragmentary mentions in a then-current situation: “the situation is completely different since the walls have come down” or “we’re all friends now, aren’t we”.⁵⁵ As Burton notes, these references remain

⁵⁵ These lines are cited from episode three of *The Piglet Files*, during a discussion of a mission among the intelligence office members.

perfunctory in the narrative. Nevertheless, at least in terms of its treatment of queer spies, the sitcom captures the highly transient moment when the juxtaposition between homosexuality and secret agency still makes sense for the public, even though it would soon be forgotten.

Queer Spies on Television in the 2000s: *Cambridge Spies*

After a decade in which spy television remained largely absent, a new kind of representation of queer spies emerged in 2003 in the form of Peter Moffat's *Cambridge Spies*, which heralds the return of stories about double agents on the television screen. The series, written by Moffat and directed by Tim Fywell, narrates the story of the four spies, Guy Burgess (Tom Hollander), Anthony Blunt (Samuel West), Kim Philby (Toby Stephens), and Donald Maclean (Rupert Penry-Jones). This historical drama portrays how the most infamous spies met at Cambridge University, went into the heart of the British and American secret service, and then ultimately failed in their careers in the secret intelligence services. At the end, the series portrays Burgess and Maclean defecting to the Soviet Union and Philby losing the trust of his American colleagues.

In this series, the juxtaposition of homosexuality and secret agency is presented in an obvious manner. Although the juxtaposition was visible in *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt*, *Cambridge Spies* is even more conscious of the association between these two identities and its political resonance. Most importantly, the series tries to attach a new meaning to this intersection of identities through its intentional demonstration of the spies' homosexuality. The series is also highly conscious of the representational history of homosexual secret agents, including those seen in Bennett's *An Englishman Abroad*, A

Question of Attribution, *Blunt*, *Blade on the Feather*, and *Another Country*. By referring to the representational history of homosexuality and secret agency in previous decades, both visually and verbally, *Cambridge Spies* attempts to reconstruct the identity of queer spies for a modern audience, freeing both identities from homophobic implications under the Cold War. This section investigates how the representation of queer spies in *Cambridge Spies* differs from previous spy dramas and liberates queer identity from the negative stigma it had acquired outside as the Other of Cold War heteronormativity.

Unlike the other works discussed in this chapter, when BBC 2 aired *Cambridge Spies*, the memory of the Cold War, which had ended a decade earlier, had already faded outside of recent memory. The commonly accepted view on the association between homosexuality and double agency, which culminated in the mass media representation in the 1980s, had also probably been weakened because this equation only had power under Cold War culture. *Cambridge Spies* initially makes this link between homosexuality and secret agency highly discernible in its narrative, appearing to revive the Cold War myth of homosexuality and double agency on the 2000s screen. However, the series then reconstructs the juxtaposition of these identities anew, free from the Cold War stigma. In this series, spies are shown to be queer but not in a clandestine or homophobic way, as in the spy fiction of previous decades, nor in the highly satirical manner of *The Piglet Files*.

Cambridge Spies re-enacts the queer becoming of spies amid the Cold War, following the history of the Cambridge spy ring from 1934 to 1951⁵⁶ across four episodes. During this process, the homophobia attached to the link between

⁵⁶ Burton's work refers to the precise periodisation of the series; the series starts when the double agents meet in Cambridge in 1934 and ends in 1951, at the point when two of them defect to the Soviet Union (Burton 2018b, 291).

homosexuality and secret agency is re-written and transformed. Through this reconstruction of queer spies' identity, *Cambridge Spies* paves the way for future queer spies who once again become the focus of contemporary spy fiction after the 2010s, as this thesis discusses in the next chapter by examining *London Spy* (2015).

Historical Inaccuracies in *Cambridge Spies*

Although this chapter views *Cambridge Spies* in a relatively positive light due to its careful depiction of homosexuality and double agency, the series itself has been harshly criticised, especially for its historical inaccuracy. In her review, Miranda Carter criticises the series for changing “pretty much every single event that actually took place” (Carter 2003). Carter lists several historical inaccuracies found in the first episode, from an incorrect timeline of the Cambridge spies to the fact that they did not live together. She ponders that “one can’t help wondering why, since he changed so much, Peter Moffat [*sic*], its writer, bothered to use the names of real people”, concluding that *Cambridge Spies* is “just an expensive soap” (Carter 2003). Mark Lawson notes that Moffat, the writer of the show, has admitted that some parts of the show are “an invention” (Lawson 2003). In the first episode, Burgess and Philby fight for a Jewish girl harassed by an anti-Semitic “rugger-bugger” and Burgess “organises a strike of the underpaid college porters” (Lawson 2003). Both these sequences are complete fiction according to Moffat and Lawson. Lawson discusses what lies beneath this invention as follows: “The fact that young British idealists in the 1930s became communists as a counter-balance to emerging European fascism has little impact on a modern audience, so Moffat has constructed an alternative justification by making the characters pro-semitic heroes of organised labour”

(Lawson 2003). This alteration of history, which is “Moffat’s strategy for winning viewer sympathy for his notorious protagonists” (Lawson 2003) idealises double agents in the eyes of post-2000s viewers.

By altering history in this way, the series idealises the double agents as heroes fighting for the rights of the working class and Jewish people. However, the alteration occasionally goes too far. The drama excuses Philby from his grave responsibility for the lives lost in the Albanian Subversion. From 1949 onwards, the UK and the US sent parachute armies to Albania; whenever an operation took place, Philby handed their landing detail to the Soviet Union. Consequently, many lives were lost. Ben Macintyre writes: “The precise death toll will never be known: somewhere between 100 and 200 Albanian guerrillas perished; if their families and other reprisal victims are taken into account, the figure rises into the thousands” (2014, 138). For this leak and the subsequent deaths, John le Carré harshly criticises Philby: “and remember, he was responsible for sending countless British agents to their deaths, to be killed — 40 or more in Albania” (Baker 2008).⁵⁷

Cambridge Spies demonstrates somewhat inappropriate handling of the history surrounding the failed Albanian operation. In the fictional portrayal of the series, Burgess takes the blame for the leak, rather than Philby. The third episode captures Burgess reluctantly giving away information on the details of the Albanian mission. His reluctance, probably stemming from his guilt over the field agents’ imminent death, is suggested by Burgess’s clumsiness and incompetency in dealing with the communication

⁵⁷ Le Carré has also expressed his contempt for Philby on other occasions. Oliver Buckton presents the words of le Carré as follows: “I’d been betrayed by Philby, I actually refused to meet Philby in Moscow in 1988, I think it was. For me, Philby was a thoroughly bad lot, just a naturally bent man” (Buckton 2016, 199).

with a Soviet correspondent. The truth is far from this; not only was the perpetrator's name changed but the reluctance shown by the character is a total fabrication. Macintyre writes that Philby even "gloried in what he had done" (2014, 138), commenting that he had "no regrets" (2014, 138) in his leak about Albania. *Cambridge Spies* effaces Philby's ethical responsibility. Thus, the gap between historical fact and fabrication in *Cambridge Spies* runs into potential ethical problems by partially absolving Philby from the consequences of his actions. Although this chapter argues that *Cambridge Spies* formulated a new way to represent queer spies on British television, it by no means condones the way the series altered the historical facts to attribute respectability to its characters.⁵⁸

Homosexuality and Double Agency in *Cambridge Spies*: Re-enactment of a Cold War Equation

In *Cambridge Spies*, the juxtaposition of homosexuality and double agency is demonstrated in multiple ways across all four episodes, foremost among these are the scenes taking place in a public toilet. The visual usage of a toilet is identical to *Blunt*, in that the toilet functions as a space where homosexuality and secret agency intertwine in mid-twentieth century Britain. In the second episode Burgess wanders into a public toilet in central London, walking down the staircase leading to the basement. The underground bathroom – identical to the one shown in *Blunt* both visually and geographically – is situated underneath a bustling street in central London. Sitting in a cubicle, Burgess

⁵⁸ The incongruity between fiction and reality in *Cambridge Spies* also makes us think that the history surrounding the Cambridge spy ring has a lot to do with fiction. The series, by offering an entirely fictionalised adaptation, thus reveals the fictional character of the original historical narrative surrounding the Cambridge spy ring.

observes an adjacent cubicle through a little hole on the wall. The camera, in synch with Burgess's view, captures a man's hand unzipping his pants. Burgess scribbles something on a page of his book, tears it out, and slides it under the adjoining door. The very next moment he hears knocking on his door, then sees a police officer standing in front of him. The viewers understand that the officer is arresting Burgess for his same-sex desire; the next shot captures Burgess talking about his obligation to go to court with reference to Oscar Wilde. A later sequence shows Burgess in the magistrates' court, standing in the dock, asserting his innocence of gross indecency. This sequence sets up the public bathroom as a meeting place for gay men. However, the next episode uses this space differently; the third episode shows secret agents meeting in a toilet to conduct their secret operation. Thus, the series demonstrates the dual usage of the toilet for both gay men and spies, and, in this space, same-sex desire and covert agency merge.

The toilet is a spatial manifestation of queer spies where politics and sexuality intertwine clandestinely. Hepburn notes that there is a spy fiction tradition in which secret agents gather around bathrooms (2005, 191) in numerous texts, including Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* (1943, adapted into a film in 1944) and the modern Hollywood films *No Way Out* (1987) and *True Lies* (1994). Spy fiction has utilised the toilet as a secret meeting place for spies, and, as shown in this chapter and Chapter 1, public bathrooms both in *Blunt* and the film version of *Our Man in Havana* construct the toilet as a queer space in which both homosexual and spy identities are ambiguously portrayed in the Cold War atmosphere. *Cambridge Spies* follows the traditional usage of the toilet as a space signalling the intersection between politics and sexuality in spy fiction and makes this overtly visible through explicit visual cues such as a condom

containing secret information regarding national security hidden in the cubicle of a public bathroom.

The third episode also depicts the intermingling of homosexuality and secret agency through the way a double agent conducts his clandestine operation. Burgess is found in the toilet, this time clearly as a secret agent hiding secret information. However, the way he performs his mission is inseparable from the homoerotic desire already demonstrated in the previous episode. Burgess rolls up a piece of paper containing information on a parachute army landing in Albania (this sequence is discussed above in terms of the narrative's historical inaccuracy). He wraps up the paper with a condom, puts it into his mouth, and carries it into a toilet cubicle, which functions as an overt visual presentation of the juxtaposition of homosexuality and secret agency (Fig. 12). The secret is inserted into Burgess's mouth and carried into a toilet cubicle where clandestine same-sex intercourse often took place in mid-twentieth century Britain. Swiftly walking up to the toilet bowl, Burgess manages to hide the secret information in the toilet tank. Closing the lid, he spectacularly falls on the floor from the toilet bowl, creating a loud noise as he has been drunk throughout this operation. The camera pans up from Burgess lying on the floor to capture an older man standing beside him. The man was not there in the previous shots, but the camera captures him for the first time, following Burgess's eye as he looks up to find him. The old man turns out to be a Soviet agent as Burgess calls out: "what's the matter with you Boris? Don't you Soviets understand English anymore?" Ignoring Burgess, the man retrieves the piece of paper Burgess has just hidden.



Figure 12: Burgess wrapping a scroll containing top secret information in a condom.

Viewers are left uncertain about the identity of this mysterious man until Burgess calls out his Russian name, signalling his identity as a Soviet correspondent. However, until then, he could be just another man using the public bathroom, an agent looking for a mole, a plainclothes police officer looking for homosexual men, or a man looking for his sexual partner. This episode prepares the moment in which uncertain identities – unnamed passers-by, spies, police, and homosexual men – meet. Just as in *Blunt* and the televised *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1979) discussed in chapter 2, queer spies are portrayed with an uncertainty pregnant with multiple identities. Secret agency and homosexuality – two disparate identities with no other connection – merge in this uncertainty, which belongs specifically to the Cold War moment.

Cambridge Spies also demonstrates the juxtaposition of secret agency and homosexuality verbally, through conversations among its characters. For instance, the third episode shows Blunt and his working-class lover and servant Jack (Stuart Laing) lying in bed. Blunt mutters: “it used to be so exciting”. Blunt’s words are so ambiguous

that Jack has to consider what “it” indicates. Jack asks him: “Sex?” However, after a second, Jack eventually manages to guess what Blunt means, and he quickly adds “...spying?”, an answer which Blunt does not deny. Being from a less privileged background, Jack acutely perceives the double life Blunt is living in a conflation of politics and sexuality.

Similarly, Blunt’s dual status is perceived by the upper crust of society. The second episode shows Blunt invited for a cup of tea by Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother (Imelda Staunton). The Queen Mother rather abruptly asks Blunt: “Homosexualists never have moustaches. Have you noticed?” The scene is probably set at some point in the late 1930s because the same episode shows Blunt and Philby astonished to read about the Hitler-Stalin Pact (which happened in 1939) shortly afterwards. The Queen Mother’s inaccurate usage of the word “homosexualist” demonstrates that the term “homosexual” was still novel back then.⁵⁹ Thus, she decides to paraphrase this word into something more understandable to her and her contemporaries: “ponces and spies. Anthony. The people with most to hide never have moustaches. So which are you, Anthony? Ponce? Or spy?” To this question, Blunt answers: “a little of both” and then, rather challengingly asks his superior: “aren’t we all?” The Queen Mother only smiles in response. This sequence captures the most critical moment in the juxtaposition of homosexuality and secret agency in *Cambridge Spies*. It forms the core of the series in its reconstruction of the Cold War moment where these identities meet.

This scene strongly resembles Bennett’s *A Question of Attribution*, in which Queen Elizabeth talks with Blunt in a playful manner while investigating his identity. In

⁵⁹ George Chauncey indicates that the term “homosexualist” was used in a document from early 1910s America (Chauncey 1994, 236).

his discussion of *A Question of Attribution*, Richard Scarr describes the conversation between Blunt and the Queen as follows: “The Queen asks Blunt about fakes and forgeries in art, yet each question is phrased to extract maximum information about the man's own duplicity. She is shown as manipulative, crafty, and domineering, single-mindedly working to a strictly concealed agenda. In short, she behaves just like a spy” (Scarr 1996, 316). This notion of the Queen as a spy is not only adopted in the depiction of the Queen Mother in *Cambridge Spies*, but it is more exaggerated. In the fourth episode, Blunt returns to the Queen Mother’s parlour, where she re-confirms Blunt’s identity, thoroughly recognising his two-facedness both as a spy and homosexual man: “So, you’re a homosexualist, a lapsed Marxist.” Blunt quickly answers: “and I’m related to you”, reminding her of their shared ancestry. The Queen Mother tells him: “You and me, Anthony. Two queens in a pod.” Blunt playfully replies: “You and I, ma’am.” The Queen Mother herself affirms that she is in the same “pod” as Blunt, suggesting that she is a kind of accomplice. However, Lawson criticises the way the series represents the Queen Mother by noting that her knowledge of Blunt’s betrayal was an “implausible prescience” (2003).⁶⁰ *Cambridge Spies* is even more daring than Bennett’s play in exaggerating Blunt’s conspicuous relationship with a royal family member.

⁶⁰ This depiction of the royal family in *Cambridge Spies* stands in contrast to Peter Morgan’s *The Crown* (Netflix, 2016-). *The Crown* portrays Blunt by using the same actor, Samuel West, as in *Cambridge Spies*. In contrast to her mother in *Cambridge Spies*, Queen Elizabeth is shown to be indignant over Blunt’s betrayal and the drama suggests she never exchanged a word with him since his betrayal became known in 1965.

Reconstruction of the Cold War Association of Homosexuality and Secret Agency

There is an apparent difference in the portrayal of Blunt and Burgess between *Blunt* and *Cambridge Spies*. Unlike *Blunt*, which presumes a romantic relationship between Blunt and Burgess, *Cambridge Spies* demonstrates that their relationship is supported solely by their firm friendship, not by sexual desire. When homosexual men bond, their relationship need not always be homoerotic, a point which was also raised by Alan Bennett.⁶¹ The fourth episode of *Cambridge Spies* re-enacts the scene in *Blunt*, where Burgess and Blunt bid farewell before the defection of the former. This scene shows two men parting while carefully restraining their emotions. Instead of exchanging kisses as they did in *Blunt*, Burgess requests a copy of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) that Blunt owns. Blunt, taking the book out of his bookshelf, hands it to Burgess, whose close-up face straightforwardly gazes at Blunt. The next shot shows the two men firmly holding each other. Nothing in this scene suggests a sexual relationship like in *Blunt*. Throughout this series, Burgess and Blunt are depicted as men united solely by

⁶¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, Bennett criticised the late twentieth century historians and media for conflating homosexual identity with double agency. Such conflation has been so common in media, that its influence is still seen in multiple publications. One such instance is Mark Lawson's review of *Cambridge Spies* on *The Guardian* in 2003. Lawson writes: "this country's most famous gay communists initially present themselves as vigorously heterosexual liberals. Kim Philby (Toby Stephens) is a Cambridge Don Juan, bundling a post-orgasmic woman down the college stairs as the bowler-hatted porter bangs on the door" (Lawson 2003). Here, Lawson writes as if Philby was also one of the "gay communists" and the series transformed him into a "vigorously heterosexual liberal". However, Philby differed from homosexual Blunt and Burgess and bi-sexual Maclean in terms of sexuality. He was rather known for his "notorious womanising" (Wells 2003) and "heterosexual philandering" (Kelly 2016). Paying attention to the sexual difference within members of the Cambridge spy ring, John Banville writes: "Burgess was as adept at identifying likely candidates for agents as he was at getting boys into bed, but not all the undergraduates who joined the Comintern were also members of the Homintern. Kim Philby was a notorious, energetic and extremely successful womaniser" (Banville 2003). Lawson's article reveals how the media remains bound by the image of queer spies regulated by the conflation of homosexuality and double agency; Bennett's criticism continued to be valid long after the Cold War ended.

friendship. It seems as though the portrayal of Burgess and Blunt is specifically in accordance with Bennett's criticism of the casual assumption that Burgess and Blunt were sexually intimate just because they were both homosexual. In its portrayal of these double agents, *Cambridge Spies* attempts to avoid locating them "on the same side of the equation and in one bracket" (Bennett 2016, 41-42), refusing to depict them as lovers just because they both happen to share same-sex desire.

In this way, *Cambridge Spies* manages to avoid categorising homosexual spies as part of the same group, regardless of their individual relationships and history. More importantly, by re-enacting the same scene from *Blunt* but with a different degree of intimacy between two double agents, the series demonstrates that homoeroticism and friendship coexist in the same pair of men across two different works, thus intertextually visualising a "continuum" of male bonding. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick proposes the existence of a "radically disrupted continuum, in our society, between sexual and nonsexual male bonds, as against the relatively smooth and palpable continuum of female homosocial desire" (Sedgwick 2016, 23). Relationships that are "homosocial", which refers to "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (Sedgwick 2016, 1) are distinguished from "homosexual" bonds, according to common belief. However, there exists a "potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (Sedgwick 2016, 1), which is rendered invisible in modern society. *Cambridge Spies* visualises such a continuum by controlling the degree of intimacy between Blunt and Burgess during the re-enactment of their parting moment.

Burgess and Blunt are shown to be friends, not lovers. However, there are moments when their friendship fluctuates, and homoerotic desire almost seeps into the

frame. This is where Blunt and Burgess hold each other to bid farewell; Blunt is shown almost breaking down in tears and then pats Burgess's slightly dishevelled hair as they part from each other's embrace. As Blunt and Burgess embrace each other, Burgess is not able to see the emotional expression on Blunt's face, while the viewers can see it from their perspective. As they part, Blunt quickly recovers his stiff upper lip, instantly hiding his emotion from Burgess. This sequence exhibits the moment in which their embrace almost shifts into homoerotic intimacy. However, Blunt controls his emotions so that their physical contact does not go beyond the line over which their friendship may seem to be a homoerotic bond.

In *Cambridge Spies*, Blunt controls the degree of intimacy at will with his facial expression, delivery of speech, and gesticulation, intentionally lowering the intimacy level from that seen in *Blunt*. In this way, the degree of intimacy is something a character can manipulate at will, from friendship through to homoerotic bond. Because of the character's intentional control, the homoerotic relationship in *Blunt* shifts into a homosocial friendship in *Cambridge Spies*. This manoeuvre makes the continuum of male bonds palpable on screen, at least when these works are seen in an intertextual light. It enables us to imagine a smooth continuum, where both homosocial friendship and homoerotic desire coexist on a spectrum of male bonds.

A similar kind of operation is at work in the second episode, where Burgess and Philby are found in 1930s Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Philby is given a chance to meet General Franco in person while working as a correspondent for *The Times*. Soviet intelligence orders him to assassinate the General and sacrifice his own life, as multiple armed guards securely protect the target. In passing this information to Philby, Burgess

describes the mission as follows: “kill Franco and be killed in the act of doing it. You have to decide between your friends, your own death and a good idea.” However, Philby fails to complete the mission. Returning home, he finds Burgess waiting for him. Burgess quickly hugs him and cites the well-known phrase written by E.M Forster: “If I had to betray my country or betray my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country”, and then expresses gratitude to Philby for not sacrificing his life for the mission, this time using his own words: “friendship, Kim. Friendship above everything.” Burgess continues: “England, Russia, it doesn’t matter. Friendship first”, telling Philby that their friendship is more important than any kind of authority. Burgess sincerely appreciates that Philby ultimately chose “himself” and his “friends” over “a good idea”, which is the political ideal of the Soviet Union.

In this sequence, the degree of intimacy between Burgess and Philby fluctuates. Burgess finds Philby walking into a flat room, haggard due to the excessive stress of his failed mission. The two men directly stare at each other; during this moment, the viewers feel emotional tension building up between them through Burgess’s expression, which is visible to the audience, while Philby’s face is not shown because he turns his back to the camera. In the next moment, a close-up of Philby appears, shaking his head in his disappointment due to his failure in the mission. Burgess quickly walks up to firmly hold him. During this embrace, there comes a moment in which Burgess intently gazes at Philby, who stares back at him. After this brief moment of intense gaze exchange in proximity, Burgess lets go of Philby, giving him a slight pat on his shoulder as if he was gently pushing him away. This moment of their silent gaze exchange is impregnated with emotional tension so that it looks as if it was suspended between homoerotic desire and

firm friendship; their close gaze suspended in silence induces an almost homoerotic tension (Fig. 13). However, Burgess pushes Philby away gently yet decisively, then they part. It seems as though Burgess intentionally signals to stop their intimacy before their bond went beyond a certain point in the continuum of male bonds. Their heightened emotion could take them to either side of the continuum, but Burgess, the foremost queer spy, retains their relationship at the point of friendship.



Figure 13: Burgess and Philby gazing at each other in silence.

By controlling the degree of their intimacy in this way, Burgess attempts to detach the sexuality of queer spies from Forster's famous citation. Bennett once criticised this line in his play *The Old Country* (1977) through the mouth of his protagonist, the old, retired spy Hilary, who calls this diction "[n]ancy rubbish" (Bennett 1998, 251). By criticising the phrase, "Bennett dissects the sexual sentimentality lurking behind Forster's famous remark" (Billington 2006). *Cambridge Spies* also detaches this citation from the sexual context by making Burgess repeat it while he firmly holds Philby in a non-

romantic way, devoid of the sexual desire he expresses to other men, but not to his fellow spies.

By their intentional manipulation of degree of male intimacy, both Blunt and Burgess nullify the “disproportionate leverage over the channels of bonding between all pairs of men” (Sedgwick 2016, 88). Sedgwick explains that “nineteenth- and twentieth-century European culture has used homophobia to divide and manipulate the male-homosocial spectrum” (Sedgwick 2016, 90). The spectrum of male bonds is disrupted by homophobia, which means that there must be a certain point where men are considered homosexual if they cross it; however, this point cannot be precisely identified. According to Sedgwick, “[f]or a man to be a man’s man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being ‘interested in men’” (Sedgwick 2016, 89). The fact that this line cannot be clearly identified enables the “mechanisms, the ideological tentacles into their own lives, by which nonhomosexual-identified men were subject to control through homophobic blackmailability” (Sedgwick 2016, 90). However, Blunt and Burgess in *Cambridge Spies* invalidate and undermine such mechanisms by being mobile, willingly travelling along this continuum. By depicting spies flexibly hovering along the male homosocial continuum, *Cambridge Spies* create spies who are queer, in the sense that they are free from heteronormative constraints. By their gestures, queer spies dissolve “the social pressure of homophobic blackmail” (Sedgwick 2016, 89), and by the same token, *Cambridge Spies* seeks a new way to represent queer spies, free from the homophobia accumulated in British culture up until the early 1990s.

Cambridge Spies first establishes the juxtaposition of homosexuality and double agency both visually and verbally, in the sequences in the public bathroom, Blunt’s

bedroom, and the Queer Mother's parlour. However, it simultaneously seeks the possibility of a representation of queer spies that averts the homophobic conflation of these identities. Thus, the series attempts to represent homosexual spies desiring each other, free from the homophobic association with double agency that has long existed in Cold War culture. BBC 2 aired this series long after the Cold War ended when the homophobic grouping of homosexuality and double agency had lost its efficacy, yet many viewers retained a vague memory of it (after all it had only been a decade and most adult viewers must have remembered the period as their lived experience). Aired against such a temporal background, *Cambridge Spies* laid the groundwork for a new type of queer spies, detaching homophobia from their queerness. The serious reconstruction of the identity of queer spies' is then continued in the 2015 BBC television series *London Spy*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Thus, *Cambridge Spies* paved the way for the next spy boom which would come after the 2010s.

Queer spies in *Cambridge Spies* consciously remain queer; in the second episode, Burgess proclaims his identity by defiantly declaring "I am queer" when he talks to Philby in the court during his prosecution for gross indecency. Burgess may declare that he is queer, but not in the clandestine way imposed on men under the Cold War culture. After a decade long void in their representational history, queer spies appear on the 2000s screen with a different meaning. Their queerness is somewhat close to "[t]he concept of queer as a more inclusive and empowering word", which "emerged in the early 1990s" (Meyer 2019, 47), free from the pejorative implications imposed on them throughout the twentieth century.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed two one-off television films from the 1980s, *Blade on the Feather* (1980) and *Blunt* (1987), and the early 2000s television mini-series *Cambridge Spies* (2003) with an interlude about the comedy series *The Piglet Files* (1990-1992). The chapter examined the representational history of homosexual spies from the 1980s to the early 2000s in the context of British television. The juxtaposition of homosexuality and double agency was evident in all four television films and series. By closely analysing this juxtaposition in each television film and series, the chapter investigated how this changed on television in the late-Cold War period and after, observing the shifting shape of queer spies in each text.

Given that previous spy fiction texts pushed homosexuality to the edge of representation as an embedded secret code, ephemeral ghost, or caricatured villain, the two television films from the 1980s – *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt* – are clearly aiming at something new. They first foreground the cultural association between homosexuality and double agency, not as an open secret that the viewers decode, but in a manner clearly visible in their narratives. They also create complicated characters with their own inner thoughts and psychology. The queer becoming of 1980s spies manifests itself both visually and verbally with substantial characters occupying the centre of the narratives. However, the 1980s broadcast culture in the UK continued to be permeated with the homophobic association of homosexuality and double agency under the Cold War. Consequently, queer spies in 1980s television films remain somewhat ambiguous figures, partially overcoming the clandestine pejorative queerness imposed on spies in the previous decades, but remaining under the influence of the late-Cold War homophobia

which strongly associates homosexuality with double agency. In some sense, *Blade on the Feather* and *Blunt* are rearranging the homophobic cultural association, but such a rearrangement is not yet sufficient.

There is a representational void in the history of queer spies in British media in the 1990s. The fictional secret agents themselves lost their glamour as the memory of the Cold War faded, and queer spies are almost absent in this decade. The comedy series *The Piglet Files* demonstrates the transitory nature of this period by using the juxtaposition of homosexuality and double agency as a source of humour. At the beginning of the 1990s, the association was so common that it became a banal joke in the mainstream television. The sitcom captured a moment when the visibility of this cultural association reached its peak before it gradually disappeared throughout the 1990s as the memory of the Cold War faded away.

After ten years' silence, queer spies returned to the screen in 2003 with *Cambridge Spies*. The series differs from the television films and series this chapter has discussed so far. The juxtaposition between homosexuality and double agency is illustrated here, but is conducted differently from *Blade on the Feather*, *Blunt*, and *The Piglet Files*. The series tries to present queer spies anew, free from the Cold War homophobia that pushes both spies and homosexuals into the category of queer in a pejorative sense. The series is conscious of the representational history of homosexual spies, picking up what has been done in the past and re-enacting it. The secret agents in *Cambridge Spies* also demonstrate “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual” (Sedgwick 2016, 1) through their intentional control over the degree of male intimacy from friendship to homoerotic desire, unmasking the fiction

of heteronormativity. By doing so, the series dislocates the homophobia in the Cold War equation of homosexuality and secret agency from the 21st century perspective.

Chapter 5. Contemporary Reformulations: *London Spy* (2015) and Queer Spies in the 2010s

London Spy (2015) and the Secret Agents on British Television After the 2010s

In the second episode of *London Spy* (2015, BBC 2), created and written by Tom Rob Smith and directed by Jakob Verbruggen, an old spy mutters: “Her Majesty’s Secret Service had had its finger burnt by one too many queer spies.” He recounts his memories of working for the British secret service in the 1960s, illustrating how the authorities back then attempted to drag their employees out of the closet. Desperate to seek out double agents, they confused homosexual tendencies with double agency. The introduction to this thesis discussed how the defection of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean in 1951 fortified unnecessary doubt against homosexual men in British national security. The old spy in *London Spy*, Scottie (Jim Broadbent) – a victim of a round-up operation to find homosexual men in the intelligent service – further summarises the way the Cold War politics treated homosexuality: “I’m not a homosexual, and I’m not a traitor. Hard for them to believe the second statement when they knew that the first was a lie.” Thus, *London Spy* recounts the memory of the mid-twentieth century queer spy from the perspective of 2015, reminiscing about the moment in which spies become queer along with the progression of the Cold War in the Anglophone world.

As this thesis has demonstrated thus far, spy fiction has portrayed homosexuality in accordance with mid-twentieth century homophobia, in which homosexuality and secret agency intersect within stigma and secrecy. Queer has been a term describing homosexual men in a pejorative way. However, spies were also included within the scope of the term in the Cold War period when “queerness was defined by subterfuge”

(Hepburn 2005, 192). Both spies and homosexual men were confined in such clandestine queerness, positioned outside of Cold War heteronormativity. The previous chapters demonstrated that the spy genre adopted this clandestine queerness in depicting homosexual secret agents, as evanescent yet persistently returning figures on the edge of its pages and frames. However, modern spy television, such as Peter Moffat's *Cambridge Spies* (2003, BBC 1), attempted to re-draw the figure of queer spies, liberating them from Cold War homophobia. *London Spy*, the primary focus of this chapter, sets off from the point where 2000s spy television abandoned its long-standing tendency to portray queer spies as deviant outsiders within the nexus of homosexuality and double agency.

London Spy thus inherits this project of *Cambridge Spies* by depicting the relation of homosexuality and secret agency anew. *London Spy* reformulates the representational history of homosexuality and secret agency from a 2010s perspective, and as such, it is the latest outcome in terms of what has become of queer spies after multiple decades. Although the spy genre, at first, carefully hid them as a tangible undercurrent, queer spies have been persistently appearing in texts like a ghost, haunting the genre. However, their haunting occupies the screen beyond the margin of the frame in *London Spy*, fully visualising the long-restrained undercurrent. Before moving into a close discussion of *London Spy*, it is important to consider a brief history of spy television after the 2010s.

Developments in Spy Television after the 2000s

Alan Burton points out that the contemporary spy genre tends to revisit the Cold War past. He writes that “[a]nother characteristic of the recent spy genre has been a stepping back from the global war on terror, and, perhaps, a surprising retreat into a familiar,

reassuring framework of Cold War certainty and nostalgia” (Burton 2018, 421). As the memory of the Cold War and the Soviet Union fades, the spy genre has come to look upon the period with nostalgia. Nick Barnett writes that Cold War nostalgia appeared on both television and film on a global scale (Barnett 2018, 436). This new trend in spy drama marks a significant turn in the representational history of queer spies, once again bringing the Cold War into the centre of the mainstream spy genre. Several series – *The Hour* (2011-2012, BBC 2), *The Game* (2014, BBC 2) and *London Spy* – do not forget to look back on Cold War sexual politics when they portray the secret agents concealing same-sex desire. By re-enacting the espionage world in the mid-twentieth century, the secret agents in recent television series reformulate the Cold War association of these identities. In its reformulation in the 2010s, when the term “queer” has an entirely different implication, it reminisces, rewrites, and subverts the sexual politics of the Cold War.

The Hour and *The Game* narrate the Cold War past by accurately realising the historical background. They belong to the category of period drama, which “is dependent on the ensemble of details associated with a particular historical period” (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 97-98). *The Hour*’s first series is precisely set in 1956 and the second series in 1957, narrating the upheaval surrounding the Suez crisis and the cultural tension brought about by the increasing visibility of diverse ethnicities and sexualities in post-war Britain. *The Game* is set in 1972 when Cold War tension heightened between the two superpowers. In these series, the past is carefully re-drawn, and male homosexuality appears as something concealed yet crucial for the narratives; queer spies are not pushed onto the periphery of representation.

For the main plot in the first series of *The Hour*, the hidden homosexuality of a character plays a critical role in unveiling the mystery. In the second series, the publication of the Wolfenden Report, which recommended legalisation of male homosexual intercourse between adult men, is featured. The series depicts the commotion this caused in British society in 1957. *The Hour* first treats male homosexuality as a secret, involved in a political conspiracy, and later as a human rights issue requiring public attention. By explicitly naming secret homosexuality as such in the first series and then unfolding the clandestine status of male homosexuality in the second, *The Hour* visualises Cold War homophobia and societal change as successive events to the contemporary audience in the early 2010s.

In *The Game*, it seems, at first, that same-sex desire is another covert decoration for a plot resonating with the clandestine life of secret agents. However, as the series unfolds, one of the main characters' personal life becomes foregrounded as an essential aspect of the series. The series sheds light on this homosexual secret agent – MI5's Bobby Waterhouse (Paul Ritter) – in later episodes. He is depicted as a complicated character with his inner thoughts, desires, and fear of being outed, which would be fatal for his career because being homosexual was considered a threat to national security in Cold War politics. *The Hour* and *The Game* both show Cold War homophobia and the predicament of the men with same-sex desire during such a time in a way that ensures a modern audience will feel sympathy for them.

There seems to be a conscious updating of how the cultural association between homosexuality and secret agency in 2010s British spy television is represented. The previous chapter explained how *Cambridge Spies* changed the representation of

homosexuality by re-drawing the infamous double agents in a new light in the early 2000s, shaking off the Cold War homophobia from their portrayal. 2010s spy television now seems to be adopting this project, further working on the dislocation of spy and homosexual identity. *London Spy* in particular demonstrates the updating of homosexual representation, taking the complexity of modern queer identity into account. By revisiting the Cold War past and re-drawing the intersection of political and sexual identity anew, *London Spy* re-enacts the process in which “espionage creates identities” (Hepburn 2005, xiii). This series attempts to free the spy genre from the long-standing homophobia originating from the conflation of homosexuality and double agency.

The Painful Queer Becoming in *London Spy*

London Spy utilises the term “queer” in multiple ways, encompassing the term’s complex history. This series follows an investigation by the protagonist Danny (Ben Whishaw), whose lover Alex (Edward Holcroft) mysteriously died. The old spy Scottie – mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – helps Danny to discover the truth about Alex’s death and his real identity. Scottie uses the term “queer” in a mostly degrading way; he bitterly proclaims his identity as “an old queer like me” in the first episode. When he mutters “her Majesty’s Secret Service had had its finger burnt, by one too many queer spies”, his usage of the term “queer spies” reflects the Cold War sexual politics that demonise “queers”, which he had to endure and survive. The term “queer” is also used in a strongly derogatory address to homosexual men in *London Spy* within Scottie’s narrative in the 1960s, recounted from 2015.

In contrast to Scottie, the young protagonist seems free from pejorative connotations regarding his queer identity. The series depicts his hedonistic lifestyle involving drugs and sexual intercourse with multiple people before he met Alex, which he seems to engage in without worrying about social stigma. When Scottie tells Danny about the hard time he had because of his homosexuality – Scottie was blackmailed by a Soviet agent – Danny innocently asks Scottie: “you told your bosses you were gay?” Scottie answers: “that’s a wonderful wrong answer. However, the option did not yet exist.” Through the dialogue between two characters from different generations, the series depicts how the world that they both inhabit has changed over time. Danny, born in the post-Stonewall Western society, seems to be enjoying his own gay life. In his time, the term “queer” is stripped of its pejorative implication and Danny is free from the disgrace that Scottie had to withstand.

However, the narrative of *London Spy* shows that Danny’s life as a queer man is, in fact, far from easy. The series indicates that the trajectory of homosexual lives in the twentieth and twenty-first century does not necessarily follow the simple process of gay liberation. Through Danny’s narrative involving his quest for the truth, *London Spy* reveals how hostile the world is towards the protagonist due to his homosexuality. Emily McAvan notes that Danny is the prime suspect in Alex’s murder “in part because of his sexuality” (2016). In the third episode, a female police officer subjects Danny to an interrogation, during which she highlights Danny’s sexual behaviour. She highlights the casual way in which he has enjoyed his sex life in a non-heteronormative way and “[h]is protests of loving Alex, of having had a relationship with him, are not taken seriously” (McAvan 2016). It is doubtful whether this interrogation would have followed the same

course had Danny been in a heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, in the same episode, Danny realises that he was injected with HIV during the police interrogation. At the beginning of the interrogation, some medical staff collect Danny's saliva and blood. It appeared as if this was a necessary procedure before the investigation, but in fact the medical staff were secretly injecting HIV into Danny's body. Later, when Danny confides this to Scottie, Scottie speculates on the authorities' motive for doing such a thing as follows: "they did it to discredit you. They'll say you took risks with your own health. You were reckless and irresponsible. Perhaps they'll even say that you infected Alex." Scottie sees through the authorities' intention to discredit Danny by using the familiar stigma towards HIV-positive patients in contemporary society, which is closely intertwined with collective homophobia.

This is further confirmed in the series in the form of press coverage. The press gives unwanted attention to Alex's murder and suspect Danny, revealing how hostile the public media can be to gay men even today. One morning Scottie and Danny find a newspaper with Danny's photo accompanying a headline, which reads "ATTIC SPY SEX PARTNER SECRETS" (Fig. 14). From this headline, it is evident that Alex's murder is sensationalised and consumed as vulgar entertainment by general readers. This press treatment reminds us of the British media and the mass reaction in 1950s London. Houlbrook writes that the public "were angered and shocked" but "were curious amused" by the men they deemed "the queer" who were "constructed as beyond the boundaries of national citizenship and therefore a fitting subject for social exclusion" (2006, 240). Danny and Alex are treated just like "the queer" in 1950s London. They are deemed as others whose behaviour is demonised yet observed and enjoyed.



Figure 14: The newspaper headline with Danny's photo.

London Spy's narrative illustrates that the mechanism demonising those deemed queer in the 1950s is still at work in 2015. Jeffrey Weeks notes that "much of the press acted as 'magnifiers of deviance', asserting what it took to be the proper values of its readership" (2016, 161) in the 1950s, amid the heightened tension of the Cold War. He also notes the conspicuous relationship between the authority and media: "the state was aided by the popular press" in sustaining "a stereotype of male homosexuals as decadent, corrupt, effete and effeminate" (Weeks 2016, 161). Thus, both the state and the press have sustained the negative stereotype of gay men. By demonising gay men through their sensational headlines, they have contributed to the expansion of homophobic stereotypes. *London Spy* narrates the way in which this mechanism erodes Danny and Alex's lives even though the story takes place in the mid-2010s.

The media treatment of Danny and Alex in *London Spy* also resonates with the press attention paid to the Cambridge spies in 1951, after Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean's defection to the Soviet Union was made public. Carlston notes that "almost as

soon as the story broke that Burgess and Maclean had disappeared, some newspapers raised the spectre of rampant sexual perversion in the Foreign Office and hinted that the two men had run away to have an affair” (2013, 179). The newspaper headline “ATTIC SPY SEX PARTNER SECRETS” – describing the case of Danny and Alex – signals the continuing association between sexual deviancy and secret agency that has persisted in British culture since the Cambridge spy scandal. Criminality, double agency, and sexual perversion were combined to create an image of devious queer spies. Thus, the series portrays the overwhelming process engulfing the characters’ lives.

London Spy thus re-enacts the creation of devious queer spies in the Cold War era by the state and press, showing the process by which Danny gradually becomes a professional secret agent. The viewers see Danny’s painful trajectory in becoming a queer spy while witnessing multiple layers of his degradation. The series narrates the process by which the authorities and media marginalise the protagonist, othering him as queer. Simultaneously, he becomes a first-rate spy who will eventually expose the conspiracy that took the life of his lover. *London Spy* initially sets out as a story about three gay men, two of whom, Alex and Scottie, are spies by profession, as they worked for MI6 as secret agents while Danny is only a civilian. However, Danny maintains an intimate relationship with both spies, as a boyfriend for the former, and best friend to the latter. Although Danny is not a professional spy, the narrative depicts the protagonist practically working as a spy, investigating Alex’s identity and death by employing various covert activities. Even at the beginning of the series, the viewers glimpse Danny’s potential to become a spy. He detects a lie in the first encounter with Alex, realising that the pseudonym Alex used, Joe, was not his real name. After finding Alex’s

body in his flat, Danny quickly obtains the external storage from Alex's laptop containing his research, for which he was murdered. At this point, Danny does not know anything about Alex's research. He takes the storage purely out of instinct. Although Danny is not a trained spy, he is already a talented agent. His secret operational skill and efficacy as a secret agent is further developed during his investigation, as the story unfolds. In the end, he is an independent spy standing against a hostile world that eliminated both spies he loved (Scottie is also killed by the authorities later in the series).

Thus, *London Spy* represents the creation of a queer spy; Danny manages to become an agent, and through his becoming a spy, the world marginalises him as a queer man. The more brilliant a spy he becomes, the more hostile the world becomes towards Danny, marginalising him from mainstream society and rejecting him as a queer.

The viewers watch this process taking place in contemporary London, where the term "queer" is not supposed to be as degrading as it used to be. However, a marginalising effect of the term remains active today. Bennett and Royle note that: "As far as the normative values of straight society are concerned, queerness is devastatingly and catastrophically *queer*" (2004, 190). The series demonstrates that contemporary London is, after all, where "the normative values of straight society" (Bennett and Royle 2004, 190) reign, however gay-friendly it may seem. Through the trajectory of Danny becoming a queer spy, *London Spy* depicts this very dynamic, ever-present in the 1950s as well as in 2015, by which gay men are systematically dismissed as queer others.

The series presents a modern world where violent dynamics that confuse homosexuality with deviancy are still active. Although Danny's professional life is not threatened like Scottie's was in the 1960s, he is also obliged to survive in a hostile

environment due to his sexuality. By capturing Danny following the same trajectory as Scottie – the original queer spy of the series – the audience sees that the predicament of Scottie lies on the same continuum of the life of a contemporary gay man.

Although it seems that the association of homosexuality with secret agency faded into the distant past in the long-gone Cold War era, the very mechanism governing the association is still at work, even in a society deemed permissive with respect to diverse sexual practices and identities. In this way, the criticism of Bennett, discussed in chapter 3, is still valid in modern London. *London Spy* shows that the mechanism which equates gay men with double agents continued long after the Soviet Union collapsed, by capturing the protagonist enduring the dynamics that structured clandestine queer spy identities in Cold War Britain.

Beyond the Queer Spy

The series ultimately rejects the systematic mechanism that creates queer spies, supported by state and media; its final sequence makes this point clear. The last episode concludes with Danny and Francis (Charlotte Rampling), Alex's mother, driving away to avenge Alex's death by telling the world the truth. They would expose the conspiracy which killed Alex due to his invention of a software program that detects lies. The authority deemed his software a threat as it could detect any lie produced by international leaders and politicians. Upon finding out the details of Alex's secret project, Scottie speculates that Alex tried to "end all lies", as his past life has been covered with falsehood, primarily imposed by his upbringing at the hands of his deceitful mother. Thus, the final episode

concludes with Danny and Francis departing to “end all lies”, taking over Alex’s unfinished project. It is this sequence that demonstrates the series’ political relevance.

Carlston states that there exists “a discursive tradition” that has related homosexuality with double agency “as iconic threats to national security” throughout the centuries (2013, 1), and the media treatment of the Cambridge spy ring is included in this tradition. This final scene can therefore be interpreted as a definitive challenge to this “discursive tradition”. In *London Spy*, the authorities, due to Alex’s invention and Danny’s subsequent investigation, consider the two gay men to be a political threat. Being both homosexual and spies, they are both queer spies threatening the heteronormative order, and therefore targeted for elimination. It is worth noting that Alex’s mother Francis is also taking part in this challenge. She, too, was marginalised by the male-dominated British secret service in the Cold War era because of her gender, yet despite this she is proud of her superior intelligence to her male colleagues. Because of this systematic sexism, she became obsessed with raising Alex into her genius secret agent, by imposing on him the ideal she could not fulfil. Thus, both marginalised outside of the Cold War heteronormativity, Danny and Francis stand up against the authorities; their resolution is summarised in Francis’s words: “Let’s burn them down for real.”

Francis does not specify who “they” are, but their identity is hinted at by Scottie in the fourth and penultimate episode. Sitting in a church with Danny, Scottie narrates how an individual faces a threat posed by the organisation. He recounts “how the Kremlin guarantees the loyalty of its most important citizens” by spiking an individual so that he wakes up to find he is sleeping beside a “terrified naked child” in his bed, planted there to discredit and criminalise a political opponent. Scottie continues:

But those systems of oppression...as ruthless as they appear, as unbeatable as they seem, never hold, never last, never survive, for we will not live in fear. I would like to finish this particular adventure with you, Daniel Edward Holt. If you'll have me.

This scene expresses Scottie's resolution to fight against "them" alongside Danny to the end, although Scottie is eventually assassinated at the end of the same episode. Although Scottie specifically mentions Russian Federal Security Service as the perpetrator, what he considers his enemy is the "systems of oppression" itself, regardless of whether they are English or Russian. Scottie, who had to survive the disgrace poured on him by the British secret service in the 1960s, finally decides to redeem his past by helping Danny. Thus, he definitively confronts the political mechanism that oppresses individuals due to their sexuality. As such, *London Spy* captures two generations of queer spies and a woman working together to confront a marginalising system based on sexual identities.

London Spy portrays the imposition of identities by the dominant ideology and the struggle an individual faces in resisting such pressure. Although the series captures Danny becoming a queer spy, it also clearly indicates that this identity is never essential but imposed by the outer world surrounding him. Simultaneously, Danny confronts the world that assigns him an identity. The conflicted formation of Danny's identity resonates with the structure of homosexual identity in the heteronormative order, described by Sinfield using the citation of Sedgwick. He argues that questions such as "who are we?" are "question[s] about history, society and politics". According to Sinfield, "[w]e are partly who the dominant ideology says we are; partly who we, subculturally, say we are" (Sinfield 1994, 180). Given this situation, the task is "not so much to redefine 'the homosexual', but to assume or resume some control over the uses and consequences of historically residual definitions" (Sedgwick 2016, 90). *London Spy*

depicts the way the protagonist tries to answer these questions regarding his identity. Danny struggles between his identity as defined by others on the one hand, and the one he decides for himself on the other. Scottie once addresses Danny: “you must tell the world [who you are]” during their joint investigation into Alex’s murder. In the fourth episode, leafing through Danny’s old diary, Scottie analyses young Danny’s psychology as follows: “ambition, but no conviction. You skip from the short stories to lyrics, from poems to sketches, hoping the world will tell you who you are. You must tell the world.” Danny needs to tell the world who he is, as opposed to what “the dominant ideology” (Sinfield 1994, 180), the state and press in *London Spy*, says he is. As part of this struggle for identity, Danny confronts the dominant structure, which remains actual, and which assumes that there is an inherent connection between homosexuality and secret agency. By showing every moment of Danny’s involuntary transformation into a queer spy and his resistance, the series attempts to separate homosexuality from deviancy.

Ultimately, Danny’s confrontation is directed at the dislocation of this association, which confuses one’s sexual identity with deviancy. Danny’s fight eventually guides viewers to the point raised by Hepburn: “the simple but un-Cold War understanding that no two spies, and no two homosexual men, are alike” (2005, 227). Danny’s quest eventually opens the spy fiction genre to an “un-Cold War understanding” by definitively separating homosexual and spy identity. Although secret agency and homosexuality have been associated for a long time, it is necessary to state that spy identity and homosexual identity have nothing essential to do with each other. Homosexual men are by no means innate spies, nor vice versa, as Hepburn notes: “Gay men are not *inherently* treacherous nor *inherently* lacking in morality” (2005, 227). This is a straightforward statement;

however, making it requires an effort as this discursive tradition has become so entrenched in culture. This difficulty is expressed in the complicated, painful trajectory each character takes throughout the series.

In terms of dislocating Cold War homophobia, *London Spy* is akin to Bennett's spy plays and *Cambridge Spies*, although the series makes a more decisive attempt at ending the genre's association between homosexuality and secret agency. As mentioned in the Introduction, the spy genre convention to represent gay men as "protean, effeminate, deviant, enigmatic, unstable, *leaky*" (Hepburn 2005, 187) first emerged around 1945. *London Spy* can thus be read as an attempt to put a period on this historical continuity of the genre from 1945, transcending the queer spy tradition in the genre.

London Spy compresses the trajectory of queer spies after 1945 by portraying Danny, Alex and Scottie becoming and then being queer due to external pressures. These episodes demonstrate that the cultural tendency linking homosexuality with being a secret agent in the Cold War era is active in contemporary London. What tormented Scottie remains in culture, distressing Danny and Alex. Simultaneously, the series conveys the definitive resolution of the characters to terminate such a tendency by capturing Danny and Francis driving away to challenge the world. In this way, *London Spy* points to the final stage in the representational history of male homosexuality in spy fiction. Queer spies have been inherited, adapted, re-written and occasionally dislocated for several decades in multiple novels, films, television series, and plays; *London Spy* points to the culmination of this trend. The departure of Danny and Francis is expected to be full of upheaval, as anticipated by Francis's words: "you understand we don't stand a chance." What awaits Danny and Francis at the end of their journey is not shown in the series

because it ends abruptly with them driving away to a destination unknown. No one knows what form the next queer spies will take, or even whether they will appear again in the spy genre. What is certain is that *London Spy* is a daring attempt to definitively end the entire genre's long-term tradition of being intertwined with socio-political homophobia.

Ghost, Mourning, and Secrecy in *London Spy*

London Spy follows Danny's quest for the truth surrounding Alex's murder and his identity; this process simultaneously constitutes an act of mourning. Danny's persistent challenge against a hostile world has its roots in his desire to redeem the lost lives of Alex and Scottie. Danny's investigation starts because of Alex's death, and acquires further impetus due to Scottie's murder, who encouraged Danny to find out the truth. Hepburn notes that "ghosts stand as figures of obstructed mourning" (2005, 81); Danny's mourning is obstructed unless his quest for truth is fulfilled. Therefore, the episodes are suffused with the ghostly images of the queer spies. The series is dedicated to mourning their lost lives, not yet redeemed; therefore, they haunt the entire series.

The entire synopsis of *London Spy* is driven by Danny's resolution to do something about the queer spies' deaths. Alex's haunting drives the narrative thread of Danny's investigation into his enigmatic life and death. In the later stages Scottie is also killed, and Danny's strife gains new impetus due to the creation of another ghost for whom justice has to be done. Avery F. Gordon defines haunting as "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (2008, xvi). She goes on to assert that "specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and

symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view” and most importantly, haunting “is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done” (Gordon 2008, xvi). *London Spy* captures this aspect of haunting especially through the fragmented appearances of Alex, who was eliminated by “social violence” (Gordon 2008, xvi).

The series visualises haunting as defined by Gordon. Alex’s final moments are occasionally inserted on the screen, breaking the linear timeline of the plot. Confined to a trunk in his attic in the dark, Alex moans and struggles for air; sweat covers his naked body which is unnaturally bent due to being contained in a little space (Fig. 15). The disturbing image of his final moments resonates Gordon’s descriptions of the fates of people who disappeared during the Argentinian Dirty War, whom she refers to as ghosts: “When the disappeared make their presence known outside their own netherworld of darkened rooms, mournful moans, terrifying agony, and stolen moments of tenderness and solidarity with their fellow *desaparecidos* [disappeared], they must perforce appear as ghosts” (2008, 112). What breaks the linear timeline of the narrative is not only Alex’s agonising moment but also the blissful moments Alex and Danny shared as lovers. Fragmentary projections disrupting an otherwise straightforward plot come in the form of what seem to be either Danny’s flashbacks or imagined scenes haunting his traumatised psyche. Projected on a television screen, this reflects the “terrifying agony” Alex was made to experience, and their “moments of tenderness” that were stolen by social violence. Through these images, *London Spy* demonstrates that Alex is a ghost haunting the series, depicting state-sponsored violence with his shocking image; Danny has to do something about it. Although his investigation is interrupted by various schemes

threatening his own life, Danny never ceases his project to mourn Alex properly, even though he does not “stand a chance”, as predicted by Francis in the final scene. Thus, Danny embarks on his journey to do something about the “obstructed mourning” (Hepburn 2005, 81) of Alex, who will remain a haunting ghost until Danny’s project is complete.



Figure 15: An agonising image of Alex confined in a dark space.

However, the ghost *London Spy* focuses on is not only an individual character. The series deals with the motif of a ghost in a larger sense, in that confronts those lives lost during past decades in the twentieth century, as narrated by Scottie. Upon finding out that Danny has been injected with HIV due to the conspiracy to discredit him, Scottie tells Danny about his lover who died of AIDS in the 1980s. Scottie also relates his own experience in which he seriously considered taking his own life due to the blackmail he faced because of his homosexuality while he was a Cold War spy. In this series, Scottie functions as a narrator of gay history from the 1960s to today; he has seen everything. Through Scottie, the viewers catch a glimpse of the traumatic history of British gay

culture. Danny's narrative – his stigma and subsequent challenge against the hostile world – opens the narrative to the redemption of such lost lives, although his personal mission seems to be dedicated only to Scottie and Alex. Sinfield notes: "secrecy about the concerns of gay men makes their early and painful deaths more likely; openness makes a difference" (1994, 16). By intertwining Scottie's history with Danny's redemption of queer spies' lives, the series also tries to mourn the death of numerous men, including those who took their own lives and those who perished amid the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. As Gordon says, "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life" (Gordon 2008, xvi). Gay men's lives were lost in the past, but it is in the present that ghosts appear. Gordon argues that haunting reminds us of these structures of power "especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security)" (Gordon 2008, xvi). While it may seem that the predicament of gay men is over today, the present remains haunted by past injustices. Haunting "registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present" (Gordon 2008, xvi). Through Danny's painful journey, the series shows how the past haunts the present, and how the subject in the present might confront the haunting.

Homosexuality and Ghosts

As shown above, *London Spy* utilises the motif of the ghost just as previous spy fiction texts have done. However, the series seems to be putting a period on this uncanny representational tradition. By completing the mourning of queer spies, the series ends the

long-standing apparition of queer spies, preserved intact through generations as an unspeakable secret. Moreover, the series confronts the mechanism that renders homosexuality an uncanny phantom in the heteronormative order. In so doing, the series transcends the homophobia of the spy genre.

To interpret some of the scenes in *London Spy*, we return to Diana Fuss's theory in which she explains the mechanism by which heterosexuality and homosexuality haunt each other in their inside/outside relationship. As I explained in Chapter 3, it is only homosexuality that is made to look ghostly, as "specter and phantom" because homosexuality is understood only "through the incorporation of a negative image" to those who reside in heteronormative order (Fuss 1991, 3). Fuss calls this a "process of negative interiorization"; it turns "homosexuality inside out, exposing not the homosexual's abjected insides but the homosexual as the abject" (1991, 3). Homosexuality is made to appear as the abject in this inside/outside relationship with heterosexuality, a mechanism that *London Spy* then visualises.

In the series, Danny's trajectory illuminates the dynamics that incessantly push him towards deviancy, through the power of police interrogation and media coverage. The narrative demonstrates that he is treated as the abject of this inside/outside, heterosexual/ homosexual order. However, Danny challenges such a structure by defiantly standing against the authorities. The horrific image of Alex's rotten body also illustrates the inside/outside structure in which homosexuality is treated as abject. His decayed body confined in a little trunk is reduced to a "spectacular [image] of the abject" (Hanson 1991, 324). Again, Danny resists the gravity pulling Alex towards the "abjected space that gay men are obliged to inhabit; that space unspeakable or unnameable, itself

defined as orifice, as a ‘dark continent’ men dare not penetrate” (Hanson 1991, 325) by not giving up on his investigation to find out the truth.

The protagonist’s challenge against the inside/outside mechanism is visualised in the opening credits of *London Spy*. The title sequence shows two naked men swimming in dark water. They are supposedly Danny and Alex, one of whom, probably Alex, is sinking in the water while the other, Danny, is trying to help him swim up. Danny grabs Alex by the wrists, but the water pressure pulling Alex down is too immense and the two are separated. Danny then swims up, finding an image shining above water; it is a mirror image showing a reversed image of London. The screen shows what seems to be the left bank of the Thames around Southwark, including the skyscrapers and buildings similar to London City Hall and the Shard. The title sequence metaphorically expresses Alex falling into the bottom of dark water (Fig. 16), to the “abjected space” (Hanson 1991, 325); he eventually disappears off-screen. Danny recognises that it is impossible to help him, and instead tries to reach upwards to let the world know about the injustice done to Alex. The water pressure figuratively expresses the inside/outside mechanism pushing homosexuality outside. This opening sequence functions as a visual metaphor of the series’ narrative structure, predicting how Danny will resist this mechanism.



Figure 16: Alex sinking into a body of dark water.

Danny's resistance eventually leads the narrative to the negation of heteronormativity as such. Hanson defines abject as "that which must be thrown out or expelled from the body in order to preserve the illusion of purity, identity, and order" (1991, 338). Both the title sequence and the narrative illustrate how Alex's body is "thrown out" and "expelled" from the world precisely to maintain this kind of illusion. The illusion of purity in this case is hegemonic heteronormativity which the state and media try to maintain by disturbing Danny's investigation. Alex's invention aims to expose all of these lies; his software program is designed to expose this hegemonic sense of purity as an illusion. Danny attempts to redeem that which was deemed to be abject by solving the mysteries surrounding the murder of Alex.

Danny's struggle through the series is visually compressed in this short opening sequence. By trying to reach for Alex, Danny tries to make "*contact with the disappeared*" which, according to Gordon, "*means encountering the specter of what the state has tried to repress*" (Gordon 2008, 127). Ultimately, Danny struggles against

various adversaries “[o]ut of a concern for justice” (Gordon 2008, 64). His trajectory to help Alex and let the world know about the injustice done to him is to “[d]o something about the wavering present the haunting is creating” (Gordon 2008, 179). *London Spy* is significant because it is the most recent in a long lineage of spy fiction juxtaposing homosexuality and secret agency, which leads us to face the continuing presence of homophobia, and which undermines the view of secret agency as quintessentially homosexual.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the television mini-series *London Spy* attempts to transcend the spy genre in two senses. Firstly, it daringly challenges the representational tradition associating homosexuality and double agency. The final sequence of the series visualises its transcendence of the genre by ending the homophobic Cold War association that has been a staple of the genre. Secondly, the series also challenges the ghostly presentation of queer spies, which has long been present in the genre. The series exorcises the spy genre by completing the mourning of queer spies. By narrating the British gay history of the late twentieth century, the series also conducts mourning on a larger scale, including those who perished in disgrace due to incidents such as blackmail and the AIDS pandemic.

By capturing the protagonist becoming a secret agent, the series enacts the becoming of the queer spy. Through the protagonist’s trajectory, it describes how media and state create queer spies by demonising homosexual men. Queer spy identity is not naturally born; it is a construct of Cold War culture. Simultaneously, the series portrays

the protagonist standing against that mechanism that aims to label him as deviant. He is made to become a queer spy, but at the same time shows how to transcend such an identity by his own activity. This trajectory addresses the transcendence of the Cold War association between homosexuality and secret agency, which is still active in culture as a force shaping homosexual men.

London Spy features ghostly presentations when depicting its queer spies; however, it also shows a clear intention to exorcise them. The series first visualises the inside/outside mechanism, explained by Fuss, at work in culture. It then portrays the protagonist transcending this mechanism by exposing the truth to the world. Eventually, *London Spy* reveals that heteronormativity itself is a significant lie; it is a fiction maintained by deception. The queer spies in *London Spy* function as agents who attempt to destroy this fiction, although the ending does not clarify whether they ultimately succeed in doing so.

Conclusion: Queer Spies and Beyond

Fluid Identities of Queer Spies

This thesis has discussed how spy identity became intertwined with homosexuality in spy fiction, and how this connection changes its form as a result of time and socio-cultural circumstances. Hepburn asks whether identities associated with espionage “come into being as historical phenomena or whether they exist prior to history and merely find expression within a culture of espionage” (2005, xiii). He argues in favour of the former by demonstrating that the identities of spies in fiction develop within specific historical contexts; they are clearly “historical phenomena”. This thesis has also discussed the historical contingency underpinning the association between homosexuality and being a secret agent. Multiple artists have posed various ideas about the association, continually transforming its meaning. Founded in the Cold War, this association has taken different forms through the latter part of the twentieth century to the 2010s through the spy fiction texts discussed in this thesis.

The previous chapters have illustrated that spy fiction is an appropriate genre in which to investigate this transition. Hepburn confirms that “espionage creates identities; identities are historically contingent, not essential categories” (2005, xiii). Identities are not innately given but socially constructed, and spies make this point clear by flexibly changing their form “through social interaction and specific circumstances” (Hepburn 2005, xiii); they resist the fixation of identities. The spies discussed in this thesis have shown that the identity link between homosexuality and secret agency is not absolute, but is itself homophobic in associating gay men with political deviancy. However, the spy

fiction texts discussed here have illustrated that even this homophobic association is prone to change when combined with spies' flexibility in transforming their identities.

The pliancy of spies also defies the polarisation imposed on them by Cold War politics. Jarausch, Ostermann and Etges highlight “a polarization that forced contemporaries to choose sides and a policing of boundaries that treated dissidents as heretics” (2017, 16) in Cold War politics. Indeed, Cold War culture is characterised by a rigid binary; incessant categorisation always took place in this political atmosphere, grouping people on one side or the other. Homosexuality happened to be categorised along with secret agency amid this harsh polarising structure. However, as Hepburn indicates, spies escape this binary through their flexibility in terms of identity. This is especially the case with respect to queer spies; the adjective “queer” points to a possibility that defies any identity labelling.

By defining some categories of identity and positioning them as others to the mainstream culture, the Cold War political structure excludes certain groups of people as dissidents. According to Jarausch, Ostermann and Etges, “Othering” was “central to the ideological competition of the Cold War” (2017, 16). This thesis has shown how the press, bureaucracies, politicians, and historians conducted this exclusion process both in fiction and history, categorising gay men and double agents as criminal others. Homosexuals have always been excluded as “dissidents” (Jarausch, Ostermann and Etges 2017, 16) from the heteronormative order, a structure on which Cold War politics heavily depended.

However, queer spies nullify this “Othering” (Jarausch, Ostermann and Etges 2017, 16) procedure, especially in *London Spy*, where they challenge the long-term

process that has pushed homosexuality outside of mainstream culture. Queer spies re-draw the inside/outside structure that locates heterosexuality inside and homosexuality outside. Other texts, too, portray queer spies as playing with their complex identities, flexibly moving back and forth between politics and sexuality. Queer spies, in their transmutation through generations, have managed to disqualify these “Othering” dynamics. They indefinitely shift the boundaries that Cold War polarisation has tried to police.

Certainly, some texts – especially Greene’s *Our Man in Havana* in Chapter 1 and le Carré’s *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in Chapter 2 – rather fortify the view that homosexuality and secret agency are linked. In these texts, homosexuality is an uncanny cypher coded in clandestine spies presented in either a criminal or spectral light. However, these texts are significant in the way they serve as templates of queer spies. Based on this model later artists adapt the image of queer spies, re-drawing their shape against a different historical background. Overall, the representation of queer spies is a field where different ideas on sexuality and politics contest each other. Through this contestation, the meaning of treacherous queer spies shifts continuously.

Queer Spies, Queer History

This contested trajectory of queer spies in spy fiction resonates with the tumultuous history surrounding homosexuality in Britain. The thesis began with *Our Man in Havana* and ended with *London Spy*, following a queer spy timeline from 1958 to 2015. Twentieth-century Britain has been a field where different views on homosexuality were contested, especially in the later half when the espionage texts discussed were produced.

The Sexual Offences Act 1967 marks a critical watershed in British gay history. As the visibility of homosexuality increased in the media, it became an issue to be discussed extensively, as chapter 1 argued. The spy fiction texts examined in this thesis are products emanating from before and after this period, and the transition of fictional queer spies reflects these tumultuous decades, albeit not straightforwardly.

By considering espionage fiction with a focus on queer spies, this thesis has shown that the genre resonates with the complicated history regarding the lives of gay men. The way these works present their queer spies reflects how homosexuality was perceived in each period. However, this does not mean that they simply reflect society as a mirror. Some texts adopt and fortify the mainstream idea, while others resist it; occasionally, these two actions take place in a single work. This thesis focused first on the late 1950s, which was when homosexuality became visible and received unprecedented press attention. *Our Man in Havana* reflects this time through its half-seen encrypted queer spies. The thesis then shifted focus to the 1960s and 1970s (Chapters 2 and 3). The films produced in these periods gradually began to display tolerant, sympathetic or progressive views towards homosexuality. However, the original novel and the television adaptation of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974, 1979) do not reflect any tendency towards the liberation of homosexuality, in contrast to its contemporaries such as John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1971) and Jack Gold's *The Naked Civil Servants* (1975). Instead, homosexuality in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* remains a cypher encrypted in the text, intertwined with a clandestine status and ghostly aura. *A Patriot for Me* (1965), discussed in chapter 3, depicts the demonisation of homosexuality intertwined with double agency through the portrayal of its characters. Novels, films, television

series, and plays from the 1950s to 1970s closely associate clandestine homosexuality with being a double agent. In these works, mid-twentieth century British homophobia merges with the Cold War stereotype characterised by the association of homosexuality with double agency. The shadow of the Cambridge spy ring, as archetypes of this association, hangs over these works. Queer spies in the mid-twentieth century fiction are queer in the way they were hidden, criminal, and spectral, ruled out from the mainstream culture both sexually and politically.

However, the texts from the 1980s present a different view, reflecting society's rapidly changing attitudes towards homosexuality. The queer spies discussed in Chapters 3 to 5 resist the clandestine queerness defined in the mid-twentieth century. Alan Bennett's spy trilogy functions as a theatrical counterattack to Osborne's homophobia, in which the playwright consciously separates homosexuality from double agency, defying the assumption that these identities are inherently connected. The one-off television films in Chapter 4 also exhibit some resistance against this association, albeit in an ambiguous way. The queer spies in Dennis Potter's *Blade on the Feather* (1980) are half free of the stereotype, but not entirely so. Incidentally, the 1980s marks the culmination of a tumultuous gay history. As Chapter 4 discussed, a collective nationwide backlash emerged, which was visible in the media as well as government policy. 1980s spy fiction thus reflects a period characterised by "the marginalisation of sexual minorities" (Weeks 2016, xxv). Some of these works actively function as a counterattack to homophobia backed by media and the state, while others exhibit an ambiguous attitude, reflecting a time full of ongoing debates during which the texts themselves were not sure which side they should take.

Chapters 4 and 5 discussed contemporary spy fiction works after the 2000s, which mark a significant difference from previous texts in that they narrate from a 21st-century perspective. This is a time when homosexuality is no longer a “vice” and homophobia is publicly condemned. The contemporary works of this period – *Cambridge Spies* in 2003 and *London Spy* in 2015 – actively shake off homophobia, reflecting the post-Stonewall era in which the term “queer” has become politically viable. *Cambridge Spies* consciously presents the word “queer” as a defiant declaration of identity by one of the characters. However, contemporary spy fiction also shows the difficulty of gay men’s lives. For instance, *London Spy* takes place in the modern Western world where their rights appear to be solid on the surface; however, as the narrative unfolds, the audience sees that the world is still full of bias against them.

Looking back at the thesis from the perspective of British queer history, we see a timeline where sexual freedom has progressed, been thwarted, and is occasionally compromised. From the perspective of sexual liberation, the representation of homosexuality in British spy fiction over this period traces, at best, a winding path towards greater acceptance and freedom. In discussing London’s history as a queer space, Matt Houlbrook writes the following: “London was never simply a space of affirmation and citizenship, of love and sociability, of rich and unproblematic lives. Men cried in the city. Men were afraid, lonely, guilty, and isolated. Men were arrested and imprisoned, attacked and blackmailed. Men took their own lives in the city. Queer lives were braced by these common and contradictory experiences, taking shape within a persistent tension between pleasure and danger” (2006, 265). Although the gay rights movement, within the context of the emerging dominance of liberal democracy in Britain and the West, made

significant progress towards decriminalisation and acceptance, this overall trend glosses over the actual casualties and tragedies occurring within “[q]ueer lives” (Houlbrook 2006, 265). In this sense, *London Spy* offers a stark reminder of this ongoing struggle at both the individual and social level, rebuking the overly optimistic narrative of the post-1990 era. Spy fiction reflects a queer history that does not necessarily follow a linear line towards the liberation. Through the trajectory of queer spies, we see spy fiction adopting or resisting the homophobic coalition of politics and sexuality while reflecting the tumultuous legal and cultural transition surrounding male homosexuality in Britain.

The Interrelation of Different Media

This thesis has also examined the way in which the medium specificity of novel, film, theatre and television echo each other. The interconnection of these different media encouraged the re-drawing of queer spy identity within recurrent adaptations. Because spy fiction is a genre developed through adaptation, queer spies have transmuted in the interrelation of diverse media throughout the decades. At this point it is instructive to briefly look back on what each chapter discussed in terms of media specificity and sexuality shifting with adaptation.

Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated that novels and their visual adaptations in film and television weave a pattern in which covert queer spies become more obvious in later adaptations. Transition from a written text into visual media increased the visibility of male homoerotic desire, which was initially concealed in the original text. Hidden desire becomes tangible along with the usage of filming techniques and the actors’ performance. This is the basic model of adaptation proposed in this thesis. Covert desire hidden

between texts became visible due to the visualisation of the novels, as if clandestine gay men from before 1967 had come out on screen. Other media, such as theatre and television, also facilitate the transition of sexual representation via adaptation, but in a more complicated sense, as I will explain later.

However, although covert sexuality becomes more noticeable through adaptation, this process is not necessarily liberating. As Chapter 1 argued, the adaptation from *Our Man in Havana* to *The Tailor of Panama* reveals that the spies' queering is also problematic. When the spies in *Our Man in Havana* are revised in *The Tailor of Panama*, the secret agents in the latter become queerer such that the homophobic aspect of the term "queer" becomes more acute. Within the adaptation trajectory from *Havana* to *Panama*, the queerness of gay spies is inherited and preserved through generations, and the pejorative status of the term "queer" in later adaptations is kept intact.

The queer becoming of spies is also problematic in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, as discussed in Chapter 2. The 2011 film version increases the visibility of male homosexuality on screen, as a result of which the covert homoeroticism encoded in the original novel (1974) and television version (1979) becomes more apparent. However, this queer becoming is not liberating, because queer spies remain a spectral presence throughout all the texts of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Although the 2011 film attempts to visualise male homosexuality more intensely than in the other versions, it eventually slips out of the frame. In the novel, television mini-series, and film, queer spies hover on the margins of the narrative without appearing on the surface of the main plot. This ghostly status of queer spies is preserved and transmitted across adaptations.

The revision of queer spies presented in Chapters 1 and 2 is not enough to shift the Cold War homophobia that associates homosexuality with double agency. The clandestine status of queer spies is kept intact as far as these chapters are concerned. However, when other media are involved, such as theatre and television after the 1980s, spy fiction texts begin to revise Cold War homophobia. As Chapters 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate, theatre and television in this period are highly effective media for dislocating the Cold War homophobia that has characterized spy fiction.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe how theatre and television echo each other in updating the representation of homosexuality in spy fiction. Chapter 3 demonstrated that some plays, such as those of Osborne and Bennett, illustrate this point. The queer spies created by these playwrights transform through time on stage, and their change always extended beyond the playwright's intentions. Theatre is a multi-dimensional medium that attributes new meanings to a particular set of identities through the collaboration of different artists (Schildcrout 2014, 4). Therefore, theatre is an ideal media for updating sexual representation. This updating effect is further enhanced in television; the adaptation of Bennett's plays to and from television illustrates this point as they challenge the association between homosexuality and secret agency. Moreover, through Bennett's collaboration with John Schlesinger, they acquire more significant momentum to defy Cold War homophobia through their adaptation onto television.

Chapter 4 focused on the political possibilities of television after the 1980s. Queer spies on the national broadcast from the 1980s to the early 2000s shifted the boundaries of sexual representation policed by Cold War politics, subverting the treacherous homosexual stereotype. This transition in the image of queer spies on television led to

Chapter 5, where the association between homosexuality and secret agency is defiantly rejected in *London Spy*, which dislocates the identity nexus of gay men and spies. Moreover, this series challenges the cultural mechanism that excludes homosexuality and forces it to the edge of representation, as an outsider to mainstream culture. This mini-series is thus a bold attempt to change queer representation. In a way, *London Spy* is the result of the long-standing representation of queer spies in culture, of what queer spies have become in 2015. Chapter 4 also demonstrated that television was a politically viable media before *London Spy*. The series builds on an existing legacy, which started in the 1980s and which includes attempts by Bennett, Schlesinger, and other artists to dislocate the homosexuality-spy nexus.

The political possibilities of television came into effect in conjunction with theatre in 1980s Britain. Theatre is, as Schildcrout puts it, is “a site of many potential meanings” (2014, 4). In the genealogy of queer spies in the latter half twentieth century, this function of theatre is intensified in combination with television. The sheer number of possible audience members for television is overwhelming in comparison with theatre. Giles compares the number of theatregoers and television audiences as follows: “A conservative figure of eight million roughly equates to filling an average-sized theatre in London every night for six years” (2006, 59). Given the mass influence television exerts on people, the re-drawing of queer spies’ identity was inevitably more effective on television. However, the opposing view, namely that homosexuality and double agency are related, was also prevalent on television, as Chapter 4 demonstrated. Television itself was a field of fierce debate involving an overwhelming number of conflicting views. Overall, theatre presented a significant template for re-drawing queer spies’ identity. This

template was transferred from stage to television, gaining a huge number of viewers. Thus, multiple media echo each other in the trajectory of queer spies, fortifying each other's attempt to shift the meaning of homosexuality and secret agency.

Queer Spies as an Uncanny Repetition in British Culture

This thesis showed how the motif of the ghost is a staple of the genre. Before concluding, it is important to return to the issue of why spies tend to be accompanied by uncanny imagery. The foremost instance of this is *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, which is discussed in Chapter 2. In three versions of this story – novel, television and film – queer spies were portrayed as fleeting phantoms haunting the edges of the narrative. Chapter 3 demonstrated that the theatre itself was considered a haunted media (Carlson 2003, 2). There, queer spies appear as phantoms hovering on stage; Bennett's spy plays and Mitchell's *Another Country* are replete with lines and performances haunted by the ghosts of the Cambridge spies. Chapter 5 demonstrated that *London Spy* was dedicated to mourning the ghosts visualised with abhorrent imagery.

This spectral imagery results from repression; homosexuality, “the love that dare not speak its name”, has had a long tradition of secrecy in British culture. The unspeakable status of homosexuality is related to the uncanny appearance of queer spies in spy fiction. Spy fiction is inseparably associated with secrecy through the conventions of the genre. It is also haunted by the secrecy imposed upon homosexuality in British culture. In this way, the spy genre has underlined, focused, and transmitted homosexuality as an unspeakable secret from one text to another.

The transmission of this secret haunts the genre itself, and this haunting makes its appearance through the imagery of queer spies. Esther Rashkin identified the presence of “a phantomatic haunting” (2008, 179) in multiple fictional works. She explains that “conflicted, shameful, and unspeakable sagas” are “hidden or repressed in texts” and are “incorporated, encrypted, or transmitted transgenerationally” (Rashkin 2008, 205-206). What is repressed can be “preserve[d] intact” and inherited by future generations. The haunting imagery of queer spies constitute such “phantomatic transmissions” (Rashkin 2008, 205), which covertly convey that which is repressed from one text to another.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy demonstrates this point superbly. The clandestine shapes of queer spies are transmitted from novel to television and film. During this process, male homosexuality remains unspeakable within the texts, pushed to the periphery of the representation. *Our Man in Havana* and *The Tailor of Panama*, discussed in Chapter 1, are similar in this regard. The clandestine queer spies in Greene’s text are secretly smuggled into its film version; le Carré’s novel takes up this concealed queerness in his text, and the film *The Tailor of Panama* then conjures a queer spy who is “humanly (morally, medically, socially) problematic” (Dyer 2002a, 1), as the meaning of the word “queer” traditionally alluded to. Across these four texts, male homosexuality remains an unspeakable, abject trait, which never appears on the surface of the narrative.

These “phantomatic transmissions” (Rashkin 2008, 205) also take place on stage. Queer spies are preserved intact and passed on from Osborne’s *A Patriot for Me* to Bennett’s spy trilogy and Mitchell’s *Another Country*, as discussed in Chapter 3. Bennett and Mitchell do not portray their queer spies as a criminally abject. Nevertheless, their spies are accompanied by ghostly images. When Bennett himself appears as the recently

deceased Blunt in *A Question of Attribution*, and the double agent Guy Bennett shouts, “I’ll haunt the whole bloody lot of them!” (Mitchell 1983, 98) in *Another Country*, the plays visualise “phantomatic transmissions” (Rashkin 2008, 205) on stage.

Finally, *London Spy* is an attempt to exorcise the ghosts of queer spies, shaking off this continuous haunting for good. *London Spy* is a work which confronts “something-to-be-done” (Gordon 2008, xvi). The series shows the protagonist Danny trying to reveal the secret of his lover Alex, the series’ foremost queer spy, so that he can successfully mourn him, dragging him up from the bottom of the dark water, an unspeakable “abjected space” (Hanson 1991, 325) where homosexuality is confined. This attempt by Danny is part of the project of re-drawing queer spies, which was taken on by the television films and series discussed in Chapter 4.

What is repressed as something unspeakable in these texts across the chapters is the derogative history of the word “queer”. As Bennett and Royle explain, there is an ineffaceable history in which the term “was combined with ‘bashing’ to denote (and doubtless to help legitimize) verbal and physical violence against those who were, or who were perceived to be, homosexual” (2004, 188). Spy fiction texts conceal a history in which the term has denoted and legitimised homophobic violence. The haunting by queer spies makes this repression visible. The covert transmission of queer spies indicates that what is repressed in spy fiction is this very violence, which the term “queer” always conjured up in the previous century. As discussed in the Introduction, the term “queer” has had two aspects, “its (re)appropriation as a device for the social and political empowerment” (Bennett and Royle 2004, 188) and as a pejorative insult conjuring homophobic violence. However empowering the term may have become in the current

century, the history of violence is not erasable; spy fiction preserves and transmits the cultural memory of homophobic violence. The genre is not a monument that commemorates victims of homophobic violence, but is rather a repository containing the memory of “a repressed or unresolved social violence” (Gordon 2008, xvi) conjured by the pejorative status of being “queer” over many decades.

Oscar Wilde’s ghost stands at this violent tradition’s point of origin, as his trial played a crucial role in the development of the notion “queer” in the British context (Sinfield 2004, 138). Penny Farfan describes Wilde after the trial as an “exiled artist” who “haunts the streets of Paris like an abject shadow of his former self” (2017, 83). The ghost of the disgraced writer stands at the source of the genealogy of queer spies, quietly observing the violence inflicted on those deemed queers. As E.M. Forster’s *Maurice* (1971) describes, gay men were traditionally called “unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (Forster 2005, 138). Spy fiction traces the unspeakable status stemming from Wilde’s history. The first chapter showed that *Our Man in Havana* illustrated the moment when Wilde’s secret quietly entered the spy genre through the presence of Noël Coward. The apparitions of queer spies flicker on the verge of visibility in espionage narratives; this stems from the unspeakable tradition of Wilde’s homosexuality.

Behind these apparitions lies Wilde as an original ghost; this is also shown by the intertextuality beyond time, woven by the actor Rupert Everett who played the main role in *Another Country*. As Chapter 3 discussed, Guy Bennett (Everett) concludes the play (1981) and film (1984) by pronouncing his grudge: “I’ll haunt you.”⁶² Bennett-Everett ends the play and the film with an uncanny reverberation, cursing the English upper-

⁶² In the original play, this line goes: “I’ll haunt the whole bloody lot of them!” (Mitchell 1983, 98)

middle class society that rejected him due to his open homosexuality. As shown in his declaration to “haunt” them, the actor returns to the screen almost four decades later, this time as Wilde in *Happy Prince* (2018), directed by Everett himself. *Happy Prince* portrays Wilde’s final days while he perishes in poverty and disgrace, summoning Wilde’s ghost for the late-2010s. Due to the appearance of the same actor, the uncanny image of Wilde in 2018 reverberates the homosexual spy who promised to haunt the world in the 1980s. Everett’s appearance signifies the continuity from Wilde to spy fiction, adding a new layer to the palimpsest of queer spies haunting British culture.

Queer Spies and Collective British Trauma

Associating the realist spy novels in the 1970s with the decline of the British Empire, Michael Denning notes: “The narrative of Kim Philby is one of the betrayal of the service and the idea of service; it is the riddle and cover-up of the question ‘who killed Great Britain?’” (2014, 121). Denning thus figuratively describes the decline of the British Empire, via the traumatic moment of the Cambridge spies’ betrayal, as a murder case.

Multiple scholars point out that the defection of the Cambridge spies’ left a collective trauma on British society. Mark Fisher writes that it “both traumatized and titillated British society in the 1960s” (2011, 37). Explaining Margret Boveri’s *Treason in the Twentieth Century* (1963), Eva Horn notes that “each nation is processing its own trauma” and in the case of Britain it is “the slew of Cambridge spies” (Horn 2013, 68). Toby Manning notes that “[t]he case of Cambridge spy, Harold ‘Kim’ Philby—gentleman and traitor—haunted the British national unconscious” (2018, 103). He proposes that “this national haunting of the national unconscious by Philby” and “the cultural tracing and

retracing of the Philby tale” occurred partly because “the Cambridge spies—Philby, Burgess and Maclean—were a national humiliation that enduringly damaged Britain’s geopolitical standing” (Manning 2018, 103). The queer spies’ haunting of the texts shows that the trauma of the Cambridge spy scandal, “a national psychic wound” (Manning 2018, 104), remains unresolved, which is why their recurrent appearances haunt British culture many decades after the decline of its empire. The apparitions of queer spies stem from this traumatic moment of symbolic murder and the novelists, playwrights, television and film creators continue to return to it, as if “the destructive repetition of the trauma” (Caruth 1996, 63) dominates the lives of those who are psychologically tormented.

The traumatised status of British culture resonates with the definition of the uncanny offered by Nicholas Royle. He writes that the uncanny “would appear to be indissociably bound up with a sense of repetition or ‘coming back’-the return of the repressed, the constant or eternal recurrence of the same thing, a compulsion to repeat” (2003, 2). The narratives on these agents keep “coming back” to the British screen as if the spies represent something repressed in society. Royle continues: “At some level the feeling of the uncanny may be bound up with the most extreme nostalgia” (2003, 2). It is, then, no coincidence that the narratives on the Cambridge spies all have a nostalgic quality. Most of the texts discussed in this thesis revisit particular moments in history from the 1950s to the 1970s, when the Cambridge spies’ betrayal became known, and Cold War-themed nostalgic television and films are staples of European and American television in the 2000s, as discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, uncanny queer spies serve to express the national trauma inflicted by the Cambridge spy ring.

Queer spies are an uncanny nostalgic repetition, and their recurrent apparition on screen confirms that British culture is still bound to the Cold War past. Cyril Connolly reacts to the witnesses' story that they found Maclean and Burgess – Connolly's personal friends disappeared in 1951– showing up here and there in Europe after their disappearance. Connolly figures that they are the ghosts of Maclean and Burgess, and he notes: "And so for many years they will materialise until the mystery is solved, if it ever is, haunting the Old World's pleasure-traps" (1952, 50). The ghost of Burgess and Maclean, the templates of queer spies, haunt not only "the Old World's pleasure-traps" (Connolly 1952, 50) but also the screen.

Intertextuality and Ghostly Adaptation

Finally, this conclusion returns to the issue of adaptation. Several texts discussed in this thesis, *Our Man in Havana*, *The Tailor of Panama*, and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, concern the direct adaptation of previous texts; namely, adaptation as "a *formal entity or product*" which involves "a shift of medium" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 7). However, some texts are not the product of such a direct adaptation. Nevertheless, they should be considered adaptations in so far as intertextuality is one form of adaptation, as was discussed in the introduction of this thesis by referring to Hutcheon's adaptation theory (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 2013, 8). Even *London Spy* is a type of adaptation in a broad sense, since, although there is no original novel or previous film from which it was remade, it is clearly located within the intertextuality of the spy genre, evoking memories from previous spy fiction texts through the re-enactment of the Cold War queer spy becoming. All the texts discussed in this thesis concern adaptation in this sense of intertextuality, standing on the "palimpsests" of the audiences' "memory of other works"

(Hutcheon and O’Flynn 2013, 8). Bennett’s spy trilogy and John Osborne’s *A Patriot for Me* (1965) in Chapter 3 are connected in this sense, while *Cambridge Spies* (2003) illustrates a palimpsest through which the memory of 1980s television films featuring the Cambridge spies – *Blade on the Feather* (1980) and *Blunt* (1987) – returns. Furthermore, all of these texts together constitute a palimpsest of queer spies: secret agents in *London Spy* are superimposed onto the image of spies in *Our Man in Havana*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, Bennett’s spy plays, and the television films and series featuring the Cambridge spy ring.

Theatre is a medium that expresses the multiple layers of palimpsest, and in this way the characteristics of the medium are important for this thesis. Marvin Carlson notes that “[a]ll theatrical cultures have recognized, in some form or another, this ghostly quality, this sense of something coming back in the theatre” (2003, 2). He suggests this is because what the audiences see on stage is something they have seen before, something they remember from their “cultural memory” repeated but with a different variation. Carlson notes: “The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and association while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection” (2003, 2). What Carlson is suggesting about theatre performance and its ghostliness is relevant to Hutcheon’s explanation concerning the process of adaptation. Both theatre and the act of adaptation rely on palimpsests in the way Hutcheon describes: “palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (2013, 8). The spy fiction texts discussed in this thesis also exist in this context. The spy genre, developed within the recursive adaptations, is a vehicle where a ghost constantly evokes “its sense of return, the uncanny but inescapable

impression imposed upon its spectators that ‘*we are seeing what we saw before*’” (Carlson 2003, 1). The intertextuality of queer spies rests on the characteristics of theatre proposed by Carlson. However, intertextuality affects every different medium – novel, film and television – thereby enlarging this specific aspect of theatre.

This conclusion started out by discussing the flexibility of queer spies’ identity and their capability to transcend the kind of binary thinking which excludes homosexuality. It then moved on to the topic of spy fiction in terms of queer history, and the specificity of multiple media which presented queer spies. The latter half discussed queer spies as a haunting force in British culture, as well as the ghostly characteristics of adaptation. The thread that runs between these two parts is the uncanniness that accompanies spies’ flexible identities. For queer spies, the pliancy of their identity is connected to their uncanny spectral status, which is amplified through adaptation and intertextuality. In discussing “theatre as a repository and living museums of cultural memory” (Carlson 2003, 165), Carlson says that these productions are weaving a “ghostly tapestry” (2003, 165). Queer spies are collectively weaving just such a tapestry. Queer spies thereby not only engage in subterfuge against the politics of the Cold War, but against the hegemony of heteronormativity, haunting it from its shadowy fringes, as Royle says: “The uncanny is queer. And the queer is uncanny” (2003, 43). Their presence attests to the extent to which the uncanny is related to being queer. These two notions merge together in ghostly queer spies, who collectively update the “ghostly tapestry” (Carlson 2003, 165). In doing so, they demonstrate how spy fiction, a genre which may appear homophobic, can be emancipated and updated from within, through the act of adaptation.

Chapter 5 mentioned *London Spy* as the final stage in the representation of male homosexuality and secret agency because the series makes a conscious attempt to shake off this cultural association for good. However, this is by no means an ultimate end to the representational history of queer spies. For instance, it is expected that the television adaptation of le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (1963) might soon be released, and some media report that the actor Aidan Gillen might take up the role of the protagonist, Alec Leamas (Gove 2016). As discussed in the Introduction, this was one of the first spy fiction texts which explicitly featured spies' queer becoming during the Cold War. Moreover, Leamas' lines will be uttered by the actor who appeared in Russel T Davies's *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000), which narrated "complicated gay narratives in the spotlight and gave so many people a much-needed dose of hope, highlighting the importance of queer spaces and friendships" (Staples 2019). This will certainly add something new to the genealogy of queer spies, by revisiting le Carré's ghostly characters, in an ongoing process of adaptation. As long as spy fiction remains haunted by the memory of the Cold War era, queer spies will remain a feature of the genre.

Recently, the MI6 head Richard Moore publicly apologised for the organisation's discriminatory treatment of its LGBT staff in the past decades. In a short video released online, he states: "Being LGBT+ did not make these people a national security threat. Of course not" (Sabbagh and Topping, 2021). This thesis has seen how intensely the wrongful belief that homosexuals are double agents and therefore constitute a threat to national security pervaded in culture for decades. Here, Moore publicly denounces this long-standing assumption. This news illustrates that the negative association of homosexuality with double agency did not entirely disappear in 2021, in so far as the MI6

chief had to publicly make such a statement. What this public apology shows is that this negative association has lingered over time and most likely persists as part of a continuous line of association from the Cold War past to 2021. Therefore, now is an interesting time to see how the next queer spies will be represented. The world is changing while the ghosts of the past era yet lingers, waiting to be put to rest.

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An Englishman Abroad (tx 1983) BBC 1, prod. Innes Lloyd, dir. John Schlesinger, UK.

Another Country (1984) dir. Marek Kanievski, UK.

A Tailor of Panama (2001) dir. John Boorman, USA | Ireland.

A Taste of Honey (1961) dir. Tony Richardson, UK.

A Question of Attribution (tx 1991) BBC 1, prod. Innes Lloyd, dir. John Schlesinger, UK.

Blade on the Feather (tx 1980) ITV, prod. Kenneth Trodd, dir. Richard Loncraine, UK.

Blunt (tx 1987) BBC 2, prod. Martin Thompson, dir. John Glenister, UK | USA.

Bridge of Spies (2015) dir. Steven Spielberg, USA | Germany | India.

Brief Encounter (1945) dir. David Lean, UK.

Cambridge Spies (tx 2003: 1 series) BBC 2, prod. Mark Shivas, dir. Tim Fywell, UK.

Casino Royale (2006) dir. Martin Campbell, UK | Czech Republic | USA | Germany | Bahamas.

Deutschland 83 (tx 2015: 1 series) RTL/UFA Fiction, prod. Nico Hofmann, Henriette Lippold, et al., Germany.

Happy Prince (2018) dir. Rupert Everett, UK | Belgium | Italy | Germany.

Lipstick on Your Collar (tx 1993: 1 series) Channel 4, prod. Dennis Potter, dir. Renny Rye, UK.

London Spy (tx 2015: 1 series) BBC 2, prod. Guy Heeley, dir. Jakob Verbruggen, UK.

Ministry of Fear (1944) dir. Fritz Lang, USA.

No Way Out (1987) dir. Roger Donaldson, USA.

Our Man in Havana (1959) dir. Carol Reed, UK.

Philby, Burgess and Maclean (tx 1977) ITV, dir. Gordon Flemyng, UK.

Queer as Folk (tx 1999-2000: 2 series) Channel 4, prod. Nicola Shindler, UK.

Sunday Bloody Sunday (1971) dir. John Schlesinger, UK.

Spooks (tx 2002-2011: 10 series) BBC 1, prod. Simon Crawford Collins, Andrew Woodhead, UK.

The Americans (tx 2013-2018: 6 series) FX, prod. Mary Rae Thewlis, USA.

The Avengers (tx 1961-1969: 7 series) ITV, prod. Brian Clemens, Albert Fennell, et al., UK.

The Crown (tx 2016-: 4 series) Netflix, prod. Peter Morgan, UK.

The Game (tx 2014: 1 series) BBC 2, prod. Radford Neville, UK.

The Hour (tx 2011-2012: 2 series) BBC 2, prod. Ruth Kenley-Letts, UK.

The Italian Job (1969) dir. Peter Collinson, UK | USA.

The Naked Civil Servant (tx 1975) ITV, prod. Barry Hanson, dir. Jack Gold, UK.

The Piglet Files (tx 1990-1992: 3 series) ITV, prod. Robin Carr, dir. Robin Carr, UK.

The Saint (tx 1962-1969: 6 series) ITV, prod. Robert S. Baker, Monty Berman, et al., UK.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (tx 1979: 1 series) BBC 2, prod. Jonathan Powell, dir. John Irvin, UK.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (2011) dir. Tomas Alfredson, UK | France | Germany.

Traitor (tx 1971) BBC 1, prod. Graeme McDonald, dir. Alan Bridges, UK.

True Lies (1994) dir. James Cameron, USA.

Victim (1961) dir. Basil Dearden, UK.