

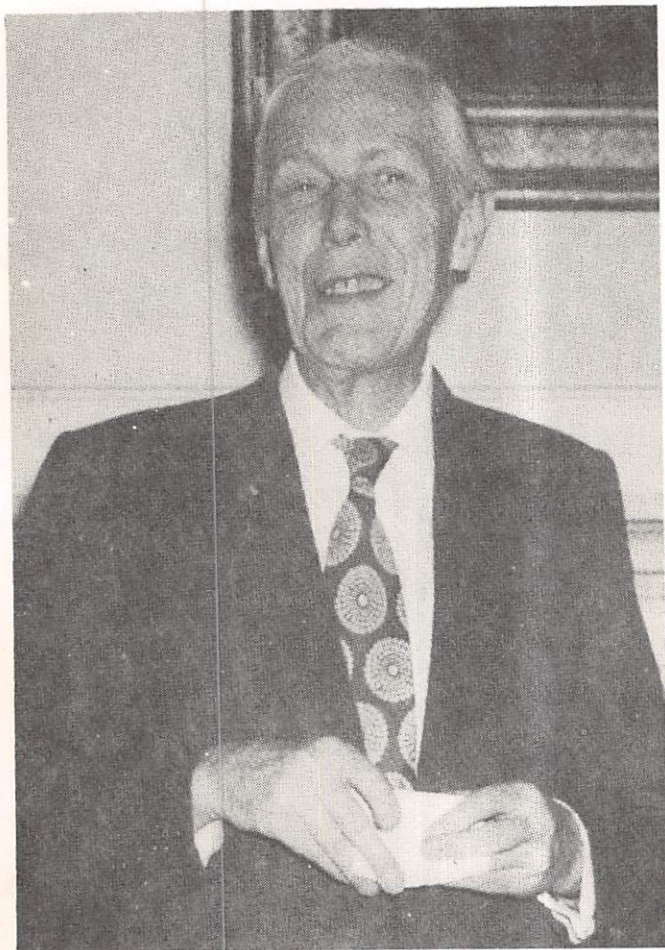
FIDELITY

\$2.00 (U.S.)

Vol. 7, No. 6

May, 1988

HOMOSEXUAL AS SUBVERSIVE:



The Double Life of Sir Anthony Blunt

Homosexual as Subversive: The Double Life of Sir Anthony Blunt

by E. Michael Jones

On Thursday November 15, 1979 Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced to a hushed House of Commons that Sir Anthony Blunt, then Surveyor of the Queen's pictures, former director of the Courtauld Art Institute, Knight Commander of the Victorian Order, widely-acclaimed expert on Poussin, and during World War II member of the British intelligence agency MI5, was a Soviet spy. According to the statement read by Thatcher, Blunt "had acted as a talent spotter for Russian intelligence before the war, when he was a don at Cambridge, and had passed information regularly to the Russians while he was a member of the Security Service between 1940 and 1945." In 1964 when confronted with an enclosing net of evidence against him, Blunt confessed to British intelligence agents in exchange for immunity from prosecution. According to Thatcher, the Queen's Private Secretary was informed of Blunt's confession in April of 1964; however, Blunt was not required to resign from his position in the Royal Household, "since it carried with it no access to classified information and no risk to security, and the security authorities thought it desirable not to put at risk his cooperation." In addition to passing valuable but unspecified information on to the Russians during World War II, Blunt also used his connections with the Soviets to arrange for the defection of fellow spies Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess in 1951. Thatcher did not say whether he cooperated in the defection of the so-called "Third Man," Kim Philby, in 1963 but claimed to Commons that "the exposure and defection of Philby in January 1963 produced nothing which implicated Blunt." At the close of her statement she reiterated the claim that the British government had been making since 1964 when Blunt confessed; the confession "has always been and still is the only evidence against Blunt, there are no grounds on which criminal proceedings could be instituted."

"TRAITOR AT THE QUEEN'S RIGHT HAND"

The announcement, as might be expected, caused a sensation. Blunt was almost immediately stripped of his knighthood. The newspapers, who had been on the

case for almost 30 years, discovered one more chapter in a story whose ever-widening ramifications were implicating one English institution after another. "TRAITOR AT THE QUEEN'S RIGHT HAND" screamed the *Daily Mail* the next day. Part of the outrage was attributable to the protection that the traitor got from many in obviously high places, not excluding the Queen herself, who spoke glowingly of him when Blunt retired from his royal appointment in 1978. Part of it was attributable to the fact that other less well-placed traitors had gone to jail over espionage that had been equally bad for the country. Part of it was due to the fact that the story of espionage had continued for so long, but part as well was due to the fact that the Thatcher statement raised as many questions as it answered. In their recent book, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1987) Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman, both writers at *The Sunday Times* raise just a few:

How had Blunt been recruited as a Soviet spy? What damage had he inflicted? Were there others who had been offered immunity from prosecution in return for a confession? Why, indeed, had immunity been offered to Blunt when other spies, who had not been educated at public school and Oxbridge and who did not hold positions at the palace, had been sent to prison for several decades? How much had the Queen been told? It was obvious, even to those who thought that too much time had already been devoted to the Cambridge spies, that this was not an issue that would easily be forgotten. Certainly it was true that the Blunt scandal was a classic diversion from humdrum politics but it did, too, raise serious issues about the relationship between the intelligence services and government, and between government and the monarch.

THE ENGLISH INTELLECTUAL ESTABLISHMENT

The questions are undoubtedly important, but given Blunt's connections they are not the most important questions. When looked at from a distance the real shock resulting from the revelations about Blunt comes not from the fact that treason sprang from someone in the Queen's household, although that is from an Englishman's point of view shocking enough, but that it sprang from the heart of the English intellectual establishment. Blunt was not a foreign agent; he was, if

E. Michael Jones is editor of *Fidelity* magazine.

not impeccably, then quintessentially British. He had gone from an elite public school (Marlborough) to one of England's two elite universities (Cambridge) and from there had moved just as naturally into the elite of the wartime civil service (MI5) where he was accepted as part of the establishment and given positions of trust which he betrayed. It was his position securely in the middle of the English Establishment which allowed him to inflict maximal damage on his country.

Part of the shock had to do with the enigma surrounding Blunt and the incongruity of the Establishment being involved in espionage. Malcolm Muggeridge, who knew the whole spy ring because of his work with MI6 during the war, finds the Blunt case particularly perplexing:

Even... all those years after the war I still couldn't believe that this rather aesthetic, snobbish character should really have wanted to promote the Soviet Union. The thing that he was most concerned about was art and yet the art of the Soviet Union is, to put it mildly, the most appalling that ever existed. I still don't understand as a matter of fact.



"CRAZILY IN LOVE WITH BURGESS"

Then almost as an afterthought Muggeridge puts forth the only explanation that makes any sense to him: "My own opinion is that the real motive is that [Blunt] was madly, crazily in love with Burgess." According to Muggeridge the fact that Blunt was a homosexual is the key to resolving the paradox of the snobbish employee of the Royal Household whose real life is dedicated to the proletarian masses and the aesthete whose real allegiance was to communism.

Upon closer examination the contradictions in Blunt's life resolve themselves one by one through a series of interlocking propositions. The key to understanding Blunt's life was his education, not simply the where of it—Marlborough and Cambridge—but the when of it as well: his was the generation that spanned the '20s and the '30s. The key to understanding his education is what has come to be known as modernity—the great rebellion against fixed moral norms and religious beliefs that began before the First World War and reached its high tide—at least in certain circles—in the 1920s. In England modernity has become synonymous with a group of writers and artists loosely known as Bloomsbury. By the 1920s, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, Clive Bell—to name just the core of the group—had virtually reformed English taste by the time Blunt arrived at Cambridge.

The connections are even closer than that. Virtually

all of the Bloomsberries were associated with a secret society at Cambridge known variously as the Cambridge Conversazione Society or more simply the Apostles. Shortly after Blunt returned to Cambridge in 1928 he was asked to join that secret society, which because of its constitution and the fact the former members—known as "angels"—still kept up contact with the current Apostles—allowed him direct contact with people like E. M. Forster and the Bloomsbury ethos.

The final connection can now be made as a result of the breakthrough in contemporary biography that is probably the only good coming out of the sexual revolution. Now we get to know about the sex lives of the famous. When Sir Roy Harrod wrote what was then considered the definitive biography of John Maynard Keynes in 1951 he did not mention the fact that Keynes was a homosexual; Lionel Trilling's study of Forster, which appeared in the '40s, was like Harrod's biography in that it failed to mention Forster's homosexuality; unlike it in that the information was probably not deliberately withheld.

Beginning with Michael Holroyd's biography of Lytton Strachey, which appeared in the late '60s, the cat gradually began to emerge out of the bag. In 1983 Robert Skidelsky devotes a good deal of time in his biography to explaining how knowledge of Keynes's homosexuality is essential to understanding him as a man and thinker. The cat emerging from the bag (or the closet) gives us our third clue in understanding Blunt.

"LOVE THE BELOVED REPUBLIC"

The key to understanding modernity (in England, at least) is sodomy. "Love the Beloved Republic," writes Gertrude Himmelfarb (*Commentary*, "From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals, February 1985) citing a maxim of E. M. Forster,

—that motto is a cruel parody of Bloomsbury. Only recently have we discovered how large a part love played among its members and what form it took. . . . It is now apparent that what was being suppressed was not the fact of homosexuality itself; that was far too commonplace to qualify as a revelation, let alone to warrant suppression. The true revelation, which first emerged in Michael Holroyd's two volume biography of Lytton Strachey's in 1967-68 and which has since been confirmed in a host of memoirs and biographies. . . . is the compulsive and promiscuous nature of that homosexuality.

Himmelfarb goes on to give a fairly detailed analysis of who was doing what and to whom, a scenario which takes up the better part of a page: "In 1907, for example, Strachey discovered that his lover (and cousin) Duncan Grant was also having an affair with Arthur Hobhouse, who, in turn, was having an affair with Keynes. The following year Strachey was even more distressed to learn that Grant was now having an affair with Keynes." Then the permutations become really complicated.

"THE HIGHER SODOMY"

For Bloomsbury, and therefore for Blunt as well, homosexuality and modernism were inextricably intertwined. If the river of modernity began with the loss of faith and ended in the fen of treason, it got there by flowing through the peculiar idealization of sodomy that characterized English public school and university education in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In retrospect one could say that Blunt's treason was a natural consequence of his education. If he found it easy to be a traitor it was because modernity in England, or Bloomsbury, was bound up with living a number of double lives. There was the double life of the homosexual, the double life of the member of a secret society like the Apostles whose "talk would be spiced with blasphemy and sexual innuendo, much as it had been at school" (Skidelsky, p. 116), and the double life of the Soviet agent. These worlds nested inside each other like Chinese boxes. In retrospect and with the acuter hindsight provided by the recent spate of revisionist biography, modernity turns out to have been just what Bloomsbury had been claiming it was (privately albeit) all along. It was "the Higher Sodomy." "It's madness of us," Lytton Strachey wrote to John Maynard Keynes in a moment of candor which characterized his letters but not his public writings, "to dream of making dowagers understand that feelings are good when we say in the same breath that the best ones are sodomitical." Modernity was the exoteric version of Bloomsbury biography; it was a radically homosexual vision of the world and therefore of its very nature subversive; treason was its logical outcome.

Blunt himself provides the connection. In his memoir *A Chapter of Accidents*, published in 1972, Goronwy Rees describes a meeting with Blunt in 1951 shortly after Maclean and Burgess had disappeared from England. (It was only after five years absence that they surfaced publicly in Moscow.) According to Rees, Blunt epitomized "the Cambridge liberal conscience at its very best, reasonable, sensible and firm in the faith that personal relations are the highest of all human values." In arguing against Rees informing the authorities of Burgess's Soviet connections, Blunt cited E. M. Forster's famous aphorism: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." It was a line that Blunt had learned at Cambridge; it bespoke a line of reasoning that Blunt was to use for the rest of his life. In his statement to the *Times* on November 20, 1979, Blunt claimed that his work for the Soviets was a case of "political conscience against loyalty to country." "I chose conscience," he said sanctimoniously. "When I later realized the true facts about Russia I was prevented from taking any action by personal loyalty; I could not denounce my friends."



CONSCIENCE: THE LAST REFUGE OF A SCOUNDREL

It was clear that England had come a long way since the days when Samuel Johnson described patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel. It was equally clear, for those who took the time to learn, that Blunt was speaking from the heart of the Bloomsbury tradition in claiming friendship and "conscience" as his justification for treason. In a memoir written in 1938 entitled "My Early Beliefs," John Maynard Keynes described the influence G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, which appeared in 1903, one year after Keynes entered Cambridge, had on his fellow Apostles:

The influence was not only overwhelming; but it was the exact opposite of what Strachey used to call *funeste*; it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven on a new earth, we were the forerunners of a new dispensation, we were not afraid of anything. . . . We accepted Moore's religion, so to speak, and discarded his morals. Indeed, in our opinion, one of the greatest advantages of his religion, was that it made morals unnecessary. . . . Nothing mattered except states of mind, our own and other people's of course, but chiefly our own. . . . The appropriate subjects of passionate contemplation and communion were a beloved person, beauty and truth and one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge. Of these love came a long way first.

Keynes was referring specifically to the chapter in Moore's *Principia* entitled "The Ideal," in which he wrote:

By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects.

IMMORALISTS

Moore, who was not a homosexual, seems to have understood "the pleasures of human intercourse" in a different sense than his disciples did, a fact admitted by Keynes in his memoir. "Concentration on moments of communion," according to Keynes, "between a pair of lovers got thoroughly mixed up with the, once rejected, pleasure. The pattern of life would sometimes become no better than a succession of permutations of short sharp superficial 'intrigues,' as we called them." In fact Moore's value to Bloomsbury generation seems to have been little more than that of providing a bridge from the Victorian world of social duty cut off from religious dogma to the Edwardian world of self-indulgence thinly veiled as aesthetic experience. Describing his own beliefs and those of the Bloomsbury clique, Keynes continues:

We entirely repudiated a personal liability on us to obey general rules. We claimed the right to judge every individual case on its merits, and the wisdom, experience and self-control to do so successfully. This was a very important part of our faith, violently and aggressively held, and for the outer world it was our most obvious

and dangerous characteristic. We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions and traditional wisdom. We were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term, immoralists. . . . In short, we repudiated all versions of the doctrine of original sin, of there being insane and irrational springs of wickedness in most men.

Moore's "religion," at least as interpreted by his disciples, was simply an elaborate rationalization of doing what one wanted to do, most specifically in the realm of sexual (most specifically homosexual) behavior by constructing those "sodomitical" feelings, to use Strachey's term, as some sort of aesthetic—and, therefore, good—experience.

Himmelfarb makes much the same point, claiming that "Bloomsbury. [.] provided no ground, either in utility or in religion, for doing anything save what one wanted to do." Himmelfarb is especially acute in sketching out the trajectory of this intellectual, spiritual and moral decay, from Evangelical Christianity, specifically the Clapham sect, whose main claim to distinction is the role they played in the abolition of slavery, to Victorian respectability masking loss of faith, to Bloomsbury immoralism. The decline goes further, as the career of Anthony Blunt will show, but Himmelfarb confines herself to Bloomsbury and its immediate antecedents:

James Stephen, a passionate Evangelical and dedicated abolitionist, moved to Clapham to be close to the sect and married into it when he took as his second wife Wilberforce's widowed sister. Like the Macaulays, each generation of Stephens witnessed a successive diminution of religious faith. Leslie Stephen, the grandson of James and the father of four of the charter members of Bloomsbury [including Virginia Woolf], was so far gone in disbelief as to call himself an agnostic. But like most agnostics of that late Victorian generation, he believed irreligion to be entirely compatible with the most rigorous and conventional morality. His credo was simple: "I now believe in nothing, but I do not the less believe in morality, etc. etc. I mean to live and die like a gentleman if possible."

LIKE A GENTLEMAN

Leslie Stephen lost his faith in the 1860s as a direct result of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which appeared in 1859. His solution to the problems that loss entailed was to turn religion into an ethos. The Christian who had become the Christian gentleman was henceforth to behave as simply the gentleman, making up in propriety what he had lost in dogma. It was a solution which many Victorians adopted. It was also a solution that was unable to live beyond the generation which engendered it. If the divine sanctions had been removed from human behavior, why should one behave as if they were still there, especially if the forces the Victorian ethos sought to suppress, specifically sexual feelings, were so insistent.

That denial of the truths one can know about God should lead to sodomy is in some sense a mystery; however, it is a mystery that can be fairly well documented, from Paul's epistle to the Romans to any objective view

of modern British history. Robert Graves mentions what might be called the homoerotic ethos of the English public school in *Good-bye to All That* from the point of view of one who was involved in it and later escaped from it. Malcolm Muggeridge writing about his own experience with the Cambridge educated during the war claimed that homosexuality was "an accepted practice that was caught up with the ethos of having been to a boarding school."

Public schoolboys, whatever their particular school—from the most famous like Eton, to the most obscure—had a language of their own which I scarcely understood, games they played which I could neither play nor interest myself in, ways and attitudes which they took for granted but which were foreign to me—for instance, their acceptance of sodomy as more or less normal behaviour. . . . The University, when I was there, was very largely a projection of public school life and mores, and a similiar atmosphere of homosexuality tended to prevail. There was also a hangover from Wildean decadence, with aesthetes who dressed in velvet, painted their rooms in strange colours, hung Aubrey Beardsley prints on their walls and read *Les Fleurs du Mal*. The nearest I came to being personally involved in these was when a High Church ordinand after dinner read to me from Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* in a darkened room faintly smelling of incense. I emerged unscathed.

LIFE-LONG HOMOSEXUALS

A reading of the biographies of many eminent Edwardians, however, will show that many did not emerge unscathed. Forster and Strachey were life-long homosexuals; Keynes was one for the greater part of his life, until he married the ballerina Lydia Lopokova. The practice of homosexuality had its effect on all of them, an effect which is only now being appreciated. In his recent biography of Keynes, Robert Skidelsky takes the position that "no 'life' of Keynes which left out such central emotional episodes as his love affair with the painter Duncan Grant could seriously claim to be such." "It was obvious," Skidelsky continued, "that this would be to hand ammunition to critics of Keynesian economics. I took the view that Keynesian economics were robust enough to survive revelations about Keynes's private life."

HOMOSEXUAL ECONOMICS

The fact that Skidelsky feels that revelations about Keynes's private life may be damaging to his stature as an economist is itself indicative of a revolution in scholarly attitude. But beyond that there is also the fact that in the age of crushing government deficits, the economics which mortgages the future to pay for present consumption may bespeak a vision that is radically flawed. That this vision is characteristically homosexual is now coming to be better appreciated. The real revelation of the revisionist biographies is that human nature does not allow itself to be so neatly sealed off in mutually

exclusive compartments. A man confirmed in homosexual behavior will have a radically different view of the world than someone, say, who tries to follow the Christian view of sexuality as being inextricably bound with procreation and limited in expression to a partner in marriage. Economics, like sexuality, is based upon human nature. In the classical scheme of things it was the intermediary science between ethics and politics, all of which were part of practical wisdom, the way to achieve not the true but the good in human affairs. In fact economics taken etymologically has its root in the Greek word *oikos*, meaning household, so the classical tradition was wiser than it seemed in expressing the connection between sexual and economic behavior whose traditional nexus was the household or family. The homosexual vision has a peculiar view of human sexuality and the family, and therefore it should come as no surprise that its view of economic exchange should bespeak a similar type of ipsation.

"OUTSIDER VALUES AND OUTSIDER LOYALTIES"

Skidelsky mentions the view of Sir William Rees-Mogg, who "argued that Keynes's rejection of 'general rules,' which his homosexuality reinforced, led him to reject the 'gold standard which provided an automatic control of monetary inflation.'" Similarly, "Ramsay MacDonald felt that the 'homosexual culture' in which Keynes lived his early life explained his ambivalent attitude to authority: 'Keynes. . . was not a true member of the Establishment after all. He merely took its shilling and wore its coat. Emotionally he was always an outsider, with outsider values and outsider loyalties.'"

Himmelfarb makes much the same point in her essay. "There is a discernible connection," she writes,

between the Bloomsbury ethos, which put a premium on immediate and present satisfactions, and Keynesian economics, which is based entirely on the shortrun and precludes any long-term judgments. (Keynes's famous remark, "In the long run we are all dead," also has an obvious connection with his homosexuality—what Schumpeter delicately spoke of as his "childless vision.") The ethos was reflected as well in the Keynesian doctrine that consumption rather than saving is the source of economic growth—indeed that thrift is economically and socially harmful.

Himmelfarb then cites a passage from Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, in which he attacks the idea of saving as a remnant of Puritanism:

There grew around the non-consumption of the cake all those instincts of puritanism which in other ages has withdrawn itself from the world and has neglected the arts of production as well as those of enjoyment. And so the cake increased; but to what end was not clearly contemplated. Individuals would be exhorted not so much to abstain as to defer and to cultivate the pleasures of security and anticipation. Saving was for old age or for you children; but this was only in theory—the virtue of the cake was that it was never to be consumed, neither by you nor by your children after you.

"DOWN WITH PONTIFFS AND TARIFFS"

Keynes, of course, made the connection between his economic theories and his attitude toward religion and morals himself, even while an undergraduate. "Sir," he wrote to his friend Bernard Swithinbank on 15 December 1903, "I hate all priests and protectionists. . . . Free Trade and free thought! Down with pontiffs and tariffs. Down with those who declare we are dumped and damned. Away with all schemes of redemption or retaliation."

Joseph Schumpeter in an especially acute essay on Keynes published in 1951 adverted delicately to "*the kind of Englishman*" [his emphasis] Keynes was and how this helped explain his economic theories and their shortcomings. Schumpeter, whose psychology is as acute as his economics, describes Keynes as

the English intellectual, a little *deraciné* and beholding a most uncomfortable situation. He was childless and his philosophy of life was essentially a short-run philosophy. So he turned resolutely to the only "parameter of action" that seemed left to him, both as an Englishman and the kind of Englishman he was—monetary management. Perhaps he thought that it might heal. He knew for certain that it would soothe—and the return to a gold system at pre-war parity was more than *his* England could stand.

Later in the same essay, Schumpeter explains what he means when he refers to "his" England:

Many of the men who entered the field of teaching or research in the twenties and thirties had renounced allegiance to the bourgeois scheme of life, the bourgeois scheme of values. Many of them sneered at the profit motive and at the element of personal performance in the capitalist process. But so far as they did not embrace straight socialism, they still had to pay respect to saving—under penalty of losing caste in their own eyes and ranging themselves with what Keynes so tellingly called the economist's "underworld." But Keynes broke their fetters: here, at last, was theoretical doctrine that not only obliterated the personal element and was, if not mechanistic itself, at least mechanizable, but also smashed the pillar into dust; a doctrine that may not actually say but can easily be made to say both that "who tries to save destroys capital" and that *via* saving, "the unequal distribution of income is the ultimate cause of unemployment." *This* is what the Keynesian Revolution amounts to.

A NEO-GNOSTIC SECT

The Apostles were essentially a neo-Gnostic sect, from their penchant for secrecy and their view that homosexuality was a superior form of sexuality to their view that the world broke down into those who were in the society and therefore "real" and those who were outside the society, whose existence was therefore "phenomenal." They were also gnostic in their belief that knowledge could be divided up into esoteric and exoteric doctrines.

In a letter to his then lover Arthur Hobhouse, Keynes

wrote: "I don't think one realizes how very discrete (in the mathematical sense) one's existence is. My doings at school don't seem to have the remotest connection with my doing up here: nor my life in one term with my life in any other." Keynes's life, however, took on a consistency which was as yet unapparent to the undergraduate. It was however the consistency of the double life. Necessary to the homosexual vision is a duality that neatly parallels the distinction between esoteric and exoteric knowledge so congenial—nay, necessary—to the gnostic view of things. The Bloomsberries' public writings—Keynes's economic theories, Strachey's best selling *Eminent Victorians*, etc.—were the sodomitical vision for public consumption. Their letters, comprise the true esoteric literature of Bloomsbury, a fact which Skidelsky understands well in his biography of Keynes. Sodomy, wrote Lytton Strachey in a letter to John Sheppard in 1903, "is what all of Us—the terribly intelligent, the unhappy, the artistic, the divided, the overwhelmed—most intimately worship, and most passionately, most vainly love."

Commenting on that letter, Skidelsky writes:

It was easy to build on an inaptitude for ordinary human contact an ideology of a higher form of love. Keynes and Strachey had been brought up to believe that women were inferior—in mind and body. Love of young men, they believed, was better than love of women. They built an ethical position—the "Higher Sodomy" they called it—on a sexual preference. Keynes was fully alive to the dangers of his choice. Oscar Wilde's conviction and disgrace were recent memories. "So long as no one has anything to do with the lower classes or people off the streets," he wrote to Strachey on 20 June 1906, "and there is some discretion in letters to neutrals, there's not a scrap of risk—or hardly a scrap." In their letters to each other there was less need for discretion. Keynes and Strachey felt that later generations would regard them as pioneers, not criminals. They carefully preserved their correspondence and expected that one day its contents would become public knowledge.

A CRIMINAL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT

The fact is though that Keynes and Strachey and Forster were criminals and to a certain extent adopted a criminal's attitude toward what they came to see as the overwhelmingly heterosexual "Establishment," which had become a shorthand way of describing society itself. Skidelsky claims that the election of Arthur Hobhouse, over whose affections Strachey and Keynes had a falling out, to the Apostles in 18 February 1903 began a whole new phase for that society. Now the criterion for election became good looks rather than mental or spiritual qualities. Bertrand Russell disputes the assertion, but the fact remains that by the 1920s, when Blunt was "born" into the Apostles, it had become a predominantly homosexual organization. As a result it was also an illegal organization, and the society's secrecy and its members' mutual loyalty to each

other took on a new meaning in light of the punishment that awaited them if the authorities found out what they were doing. By virtue of their sexual activities alone, members of the Apostles had become a conspiracy of outlaws whose activities required the utmost circumspection, a lesson not lost on Anthony Blunt.

SUBVERSION OF SOCIETY

However, the subversion that homosexuality entails goes deeper than simply breaking the law. It entails a subversion of society that goes deeper than that of say the person who cheats on his income tax because it is that much more personal. Perhaps the one Bloomsbury creation that goes farthest in bridging the gap between their exoteric and their esoteric writings is the long-suppressed novel by E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, which according to the blurb on the latest edition is "Now a Major Motion Picture." *Maurice*, unlike the exoteric works of Strachey, Keynes, Woolf, and the rest of Forster, tells about the homosexual conflict with society from the inside, so to speak, from the homosexual point of view. What is surprising about it is how shot through it is with ambivalence.

APHRODISIAC EFFECT

Maurice begins with the protagonist, whose father is dead and whose life at home is dominated by mother and two sisters, leaving public school and going to Cambridge where he meets another undergraduate, Clive Durham. Gradually friendship grows into a full-blown homosexual relationship. In the world of this novel it's hard to tell whether declining belief fosters homosexuality or whether homosexuality kills belief. At any rate Forster sees a connection. Discussions of the inadequacy of Christianity seem to have an aphrodisiac effect on the undergraduates Hall and Durham; they become a—necessary, perhaps?—preliminary to sexual activity.

They talked theology again, Maurice defending the Redemption. He lost. He realized that he had no sense of Christ's existence or of his goodness, and should be positively sorry if there was such a person. His dislike of Christianity grew and became profound. In ten days he gave up communicating, in three weeks he cut out all the chapels he dared. Durham was puzzled by the rapidity. They were both puzzled, and Maurice, although he had lost and yielded all his opinions, had a queer feeling that he was really winning and carrying on a campaign that he had begun last term. . . . Was there not something else behind his new manner and furious iconoclasm? Maurice thought there was. Outwardly in retreat, he thought that his Faith was a pawn well lost; for in capturing it Durham had exposed his heart.

As their involvement in sodomy increases, so also does their opposition to Christianity. Describing Clive Durham, the narrator tells us that "He was obliged. . . to throw over Christianity. Those who base their conduct upon what they are rather than upon what they

ought to be, must always throw it over in the end, and besides, between Clive's temperament and that religion there is a secular feud." However, as the rebellion grows and succeeds, the attack on Christianity is transmuted into an attack on Victorian society, which calls itself Christian but really believes only in propriety. Home on vacation, Maurice proclaims his atheism and then is disappointed that his attack on God isn't taken more seriously:

Maurice's atheism was forgotten. He did not communicate on Easter Sunday, and supposed the row would come then, as in Durham's case. But no one took any notice, for the suburbs no longer exact Christianity. This disgusted him; it made him look at society with new eyes. Did society, while professing to be so moral and sensitive, really mind anything?

"HOME EMASCULATED EVERYTHING"

Because religion has provided such ineffectual resistance, society will now bear the brunt of homosexual aggression. Society becomes responsible for the sense of isolation that ensues from the practice of sodomy. At first Maurice lashes out at his family. After trying to talk about Durham with his mother only to have her confuse Clive with a don named Cumberland, "a profound irritation against his womenkind set in. His relations with them hitherto had been trivial but stable, but it seemed iniquitous that anyone should mispronounce the name of the man who was more to him than all the world. Home emasculated everything."

As the involvement in sodomy increases, so also does the threat of aggression against society, which is to say against women, family, Church, and country. Forster in a "Terminal Note" to the book claims to have created in Maurice "a character who was completely unlike myself or what I supposed myself to be." However, in spite of superficial dissimilarities, the more Forster talks the more the note of aggression creeps from the voice of the narrator to that of the author. It is clear that they both hold the same grudge based on the same homosexual vision, which longs to perpetrate the same type of aggression against society. "His surroundings," Forster writes of Maurice, "exasperate him by their very normality: mother, two sisters, a comfortable home, a respectable job gradually turn out to be Hell; he must either smash them or be smashed, there is no third course."

"A BIT OF AN OUTLAW"

After a while the alienation becomes both more deeply internalized and more readily projected. Society is responsible for their condition, and they identify with their condition to the point of seeing themselves as being at war with society. As Clive says to Maurice:

"I'm a bit of an outlaw, I grant, but it serves these people right. As long as they talk of the unspeakable vice of the Greeks they can't expect fair play. It served my mother

right when I slipped up to kiss you before dinner. She would have no mercy if she knew, she wouldn't attempt, wouldn't want to attempt to understand that I feel to you as Pippa to her fiance, only far more nobly, far more deeply, body and soul, no starved medievalism of course, only a—a particular harmony of body and soul that I don't think women have even guessed. But you know."



THE GRUDGE IS WITH NATURE

The law proscribing homosexual behavior (eventually removed at the recommendation of the Wolfenden Report) takes the brunt of homosexual aggression in Forster's terminal note; however, a close reading of the text itself shows that the grudge against society goes much deeper than that. It goes to the heart of that which makes society as an ongoing entity possible, namely sexuality, the fact that male and female uniting are the *sine qua non* for further existence of the human race, of which society is the concrete manifestation. The grudge is with nature. The rebellion which began as rejection of God continues its rage against the natural order which God created and of which the homosexual finds himself an unwilling and uncooperative part. Forster's book points out one of the paradoxes of contemporary sexual history. The more the barriers against sodomy fall, the more the rage of the homosexual increases. Midge Decter in her brilliant essay, "The Boys on the Beach" (*Commentary*, September 1980), hints at a causal connection between the cessation of police harassment of homosexuals in New York and the rise of drugs, sado-masochism and the ultimate in self-punishment, suicide. "A homosexual friend," she writes,

when questioned about whether the scenes of the leather bar in *Cruising*, scenes of an almost unbelievably relentless degradation, were truthful, said they were much exaggerated. Because, he explained, while such places are always packed with masochists, there are usually never enough sadists to go around. . . . Having to some extent succeeded in staying the hand of the cops. . . can it be that they feel the need to supply for themselves the missing ration of brutality? Having to a very great extent overcome the revulsion of common opinion, are they left with some kind of unappeased hunger that only their own feelings of hatefulness can now satisfy?

Behind the homosexual's railing against what he claims to be the arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions placed on him by an unthinking and insensitive society is his simultaneous fear and conviction that the

laws against sodomy are based on some deeper immutable configuration of the nature of things. "Clive," the narrator tells us, "was in full reaction against his family." And the main source of the reaction is the burden he feels at the prospect of getting married and having children.

"These children will be a nuisance," he remarked during a canter.

"What children?"

"Mine! the need of an heir for Penge. My mother calls it marriage, but that was all she was thinking of."

Maurice was silent. It had not occurred to him before that neither he nor his friend would leave life behind them.

These intimations of mortality then fill Maurice with "an immense sadness" and the realization that his homosexuality has not only placed him at odds with society but at odds with nature as well.

"THE WAY OF ALL STERILITY"

He and the beloved would vanish utterly—would continue neither in Heaven nor on Earth. They had won past the conventions, but Nature still faced them, saying with even voice, "Very well, you are thus; I blame none of my children. But you must go the way of all sterility." The thought that he was sterile weighed on the young man with a sudden shame. His mother or Mrs. Durham might lack mind or heart, but they had done visible work; they had handed on the torch their sons would tread out.

The passage indicates a turning point in the novel. From this point on there are only two choices. The homosexual can become, to use Forster's word, "normal," i.e., he can marry, or he can persevere in rebellion, rage, and subversion. In *Maurice*, Clive takes the former path and Maurice the latter. While sitting in Athens in the theatre of Dionysus, Clive writes to Maurice, "Against my will I have become normal. I cannot help it." With normality comes marriage and with marriage a new more conciliatory attitude toward society. Clive now joins the entity he had formerly chosen to subvert. "With the world as it is, one must marry or decay. . . . All his grievances against society had passed since his marriage."

Maurice, however, fails to make the transition, either because he is unable or unwilling. In the world of the novel, the question remains open. His inability, however, has certain consequences. As homosexuality becomes the norm in his life, Maurice finds himself judging nature according to it. Unlike the first instance, where nature passed judgment on his sterility. Now Maurice's sterility passes judgment on what he perceives as the deformity of nature. The epiphany comes while looking half-absent-mindedly at a hedge of dog roses:

Blossom after blossom crept past them dragged by the ungenial year: some had cankered, others would never unfold: here and there beauty triumphed, but desperately, flickering in a world of gloom. Maurice looked into one

after another, and though he did not care for flowers the failure irritated him. Scarcely anything was perfect. On one spray every flower was lopsided, the next swarmed with caterpillars, or bulged with galls. The indifference of nature! And her incompetence!

DEFORMATION

The epiphany ends with Maurice leaning out of the window "to see whether she couldn't bring it off once," and finding himself confronted with "the bright brown eyes of a young man." The young man is the gardener, with whom he eventually has an affair, and the affair eventually confirms him in his choice of homosexuality over being normal. It is as if the deformation he perceives in nature allows him to feel vindicated in the eventual moral deformation which he chooses as his way of life.

By pleasuring the body Maurice had confirmed. . . his spirit in its perversion, and cut himself off from the congregation of normal man.

The consequences of this choice are predictable—guilt followed by rage. When he comes downstairs the morning after, he closes his eyes, "feeling sickish. He had created something whose nature he ignored. Had he been theologically minded, he would have named it remorse. . . ." But the remorse is soon transmuted into something else. After an unsuccessful attempt to treat his homosexuality, Maurice stops "because the King and Queen were passing; he despised them at the moment he bared his head. It was as if the barrier that kept him from his fellows had taken another aspect. He was not afraid or ashamed anymore. After all, the forests and the night were on his side, not theirs; they, not he, were inside a ring fence."

SEXUAL GUERRILLA WARFARE

The images of aggression are unmistakable. Maurice will wage a kind of sexual guerilla warfare against the society which is an implicit and inescapable reproach to what he has become. As Forster himself says, "mother, two sisters, a comfortable home, a respectable job gradually turn out to be Hell; he must either smash them or be smashed, there is no third course."

The novel ends with Maurice going off to live with his erstwhile blackmailer; "They must live outside class, without relations or money; they must work and stick to each other till death. But England belonged to them."

Given the compulsively promiscuous nature of homosexuality, the ending is hardly realistic. However, since Forster himself was to claim that "a happy ending was imperative," the only one he could possibly manufacture had to entail a parody of heterosexual marriage. However, given subsequent revelations about the homosexual demimonde and espionage, his final line was true in a sense he could not have known.

Or could he?

"OUR QUEER RACE"

In the same Forster essay, "What I Believe," which Blunt cited to Goronwy Rees, not too far after the line about hoping that he would have the guts to betray his country, Forster finally does get around to telling us what he believes in.

I believe in aristocracy, though—if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos.

Queer race, indeed! One can imagine Forster having a good laugh with what was left of Bloomsbury over the obvious double meanings in his speech. It was classic Bloomsbury; it was classic gnostic homospeak, and had evidently made enough of an impression on another member of the queer race, Anthony Blunt, to last him his whole life. In the years between when *Maurice* was written, in 1913-14 and when Forster wrote "What I Believe," in 1938, the subversion had become much more explicit, much more palpable and much more effective, and it had done so by becoming linked with the great conspiracy of our age, Soviet communism.

"SICK TOAST OF A SICK SOCIETY"

Malcolm Muggeridge, writing in his memoir *Chronicles of Wasted Time* saw the "queer race" from a different point of view. Its *locus classicus* was Lord Rothschild's basement flat in Bentinck Street during World War II:

There, we found another gathering of displaced intellectuals; but more prosperous, more socially secure and successful. . . John Strachey, J. D. Bernal, Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, a whole revolutionary *Who's Who*. It was the only time I ever met Burgess; and he gave me a feeling such as I have never had from anyone else, of being morally afflicted in some way. His very physical presence was, to me, malodorous and sinister; as though he had some consuming illness. . . . The impression fitted well enough with his subsequent adventures; as did this millionaire's nest altogether, so well set up, providing among other amenities, special rubber bones to bite on if the stress of the Blitz became too hard to bear. Sheltering so distinguished a company—Cabinet Minister-to-be, honoured Guru of the Extreme Left-to-be, Connoisseur Extraordinary-to-be, and other notabilities, all in a sense grouped round Burgess; Etonian mudlark and sick toast of a sick society, as beloved along Foreign Office corridors, in the quads and the clubs, as in the pubs among the pimps and ponces and street pick-ups, with their high voices and peroxide hair. A true hero of our time, who was to end his days in Moscow; permitted even there, for services rendered, to find the male company he needed. Now gone to Stalin's bosom; hip before hipsters, Rolling before Stones, acid head before LSD. There was not so much a conspiracy gathered round

him as just decay and dissolution. It was the end of a class, of a way of life; something that would be written about in history books, like Gibbon on Heliogabalus, with wonder and perhaps hilarity, but still tinged with sadness, as all endings are.

Perhaps because of the sexual revolution, most certainly because of the increased political power homosexuals have acquired over the past 20 years, it has become unfashionable to ask, as one was wont to do in the '50s, about the connection between homosexuality and treason. When asked in 1979 if it weren't possible that homosexuals were more likely to become spies because they felt rejected by society, Blunt said he thought not. It was the type of response one had come to expect from a master of disinformation. Goronwy Rees remembers receiving a letter from Guy Burgess, who was posted in Washington at the time of McCarthy's anticommunist crusade: "What aroused Guy almost to hysteria was McCarthy's identification of communism with homosexuality in the United States, and especially in the State Department"—a strange reaction coming from someone who was both a Soviet spy and a notorious homosexual. But then again perhaps the reaction isn't so strange after all.



TREACHERY AND FAGGOTRY

The fact remains that during the Second World War in England both treachery and faggotry shared the same headquarters. They were in effect two sides of the same coin. They shared a common vision—subversion—and a common technique—the double life. In the final analysis, the interlocking worlds were, as Muggeridge indicated, impossible to separate, both bespoke not so much conspiracy as decay and dissolution.

The interconnections between sodomy and espionage were confirmed by those who knew the interlocking circles from the inside, so to speak. Jack Hewit, picked up by Burgess when he was a 19-year-old working class youth, became Burgess's more or less permanent lover, a status which did not preclude his being passed around as part of a deal whereby sexual favors were exchanged for valuable bits of information. If we take Hewit as an arbitrary center point of the World War II London homosexual scene we begin to see how the homosexual underground was to be found, as Forster claimed, "in all nations and classes."

"The London gay world," according to Penrose and Freeman,

was an illegal one. Burgess and Blunt were both intrigued by pretty working-class boys like Hewit, known as "rough trade." There were certain well-known pubs, such as the Bunch of Grapes, where rough trade could be spotted. This was fairly safe. What was definitely not safe was "cottaging" (hanging around in a public lavatory waiting for men willing to perform short, anonymous sexual acts in the cubicles); and both Burgess and Blunt found the excitement of this irresistible, though it could have led to an embarrassing appearance in a magistrates court.

"GAY INTELLECTUAL FREEMASONRY"

Hewit, perhaps because of his lower class background, found "cottaging" not to his liking. He preferred liaisons with the more refined, people like . . .

E. M. Forster, for instance, was very kind to me. You have to understand that the gay world then had style which it doesn't now. There was a sort of gay intellectual freemasonry which you know nothing about. It was like the five concentric circles in the Olympic emblem. One person in one circle knew one in another and that's how people met. And people like me were passed around. I wasn't a trollop. Amoral perhaps but not a trollop.

In addition to his literary connections (Hewit had a short affair with Christopher Isherwood.), Hewit was passed on by Burgess to people in the diplomatic world as well, people like Baron Wolfgang zu Putlitz. According to Penrose and Freeman, the baron

was providing the British government with vital secrets about Hitler's intentions and by having an affair with him he, Jack Hewit, the boy from Gateshead, was doing his bit for Britain by calming the diplomat's shaky nerves. What Hewit did not know was that Burgess was also feeding information from zu Putlitz to his Soviet controller. Hewit conceded that to the mostly heterosexual MI5 and MI6 officers who had the job during the post-war years of trying to investigate the Soviet infiltration of the British establishment, the dynamics of the 1930s gay world must have seemed an incomprehensible web of interlocking relationships. But there was a logic to it.

THE LOGIC OF SUBVERSION

The logic is the logic of subversion, shared by homosexuals and communists alike. In the intellectual world of England in the 1930s, homosexuality, whose practice was rampant in public schools and universities, had established a pool of intellectuals alienated from the goals of their own and for that matter any society. With the arrival of fascism and the worldwide economic crisis, these alienated intellectuals now saw a mechanism whereby they could put their alienation into practice. Sodomy provided the motivation (and the guilt—a topic we will discuss presently) and communism provided the means. Just as Victorian irreligion led inexorably to Bloomsbury immoralism, so Bloomsbury's theory led to Marxist praxis.

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The transition is adumbrated in the lives of its protagonists. Julian Bell, writing in the *New Statesman* in 1933 claimed that "Communism in England is at present very largely a literary phenomenon, an attempt of a second post-war generation to escape from the Waste Land." Bell who had a homosexual affair with his fellow Apostle Anthony Blunt, found the philosophy of Bloomsbury, which is to say the philosophy of his parents Clive and Vanessa (sister of Virginia Woolf) inadequate. Bell needed something more potent than the religion of personal relations and aesthetic experiences to escape from the Waste Land. He found temporary escape in communism and permanent escape through the Spanish Civil War, where he was killed in 1936. His experiences are paradigmatic for the Blunt generation. Bloomsbury had been overtaken by what seemed to be a more powerful vision. When Lytton Strachey's book *Portraits in Miniature* appeared in 1931, one reviewer sniffed: "Mr. Strachey's values seem bland and banal. It is less easy these days to do without a conscience."

Now that the details of the Cambridge conspiracy are coming out in the open, observers of the scene are increasingly willing to discuss the connections which drove Guy Burgess to hysteria when Senator McCarthy made them in Washington over 30 years ago. In his recent book on Cambridge, *The Red and the Blue*, Andrew Sinclair has written a history of Cambridge in the twentieth century. One of the topics he discusses is

how sodomy eventuated in treason. The first link is the educational system:

The hidden group and the exclusive club were very much part of their education and their heritage. From the age of eight, boys were separated from their families and herded into preparatory and public schools, which became a substitute for the family. "The boys sought among their contemporaries affections which they associated with the school," Noel Annan wrote of Stowe, "and reciprocated by giving their hearts to the place." From the self-electing "Pop" of gaudy prefects at Eton who ran the college, through the innumerable societies at Oxford and Cambridge, of which the Apostles and the Communist cells were secret ones, through to the London clubs and the Masonic lodges so powerful in the world of business, an Englishman from the privileged classes expected to achieve male bonding exclusive of others, even of his own peers, certainly of the other sex.

Upper class England was honeycombed with secret societies, good, bad and indifferent. The rise of homosexuality in the upper classes, fostered by public school and university education, simply added a note of urgency to the already extant secrecy. Now insofar as secret societies like the Apostles became homosexual organizations, they were also beyond the law, antithetical to society, and a potential fifth column waiting to be exploited. Communism, with its claim to a superior morality, with its claim to have the solution to the world's problems, with its claim to be the only force organized to be an effective bulwark against fascism, was the superior force in the '30s which could and did arrange the exploitation. Sinclair gives his view of the connections:

The strong homosexual element among the Apostles did buttress their oath of secrecy and separate them more from conventional society. To be an open homosexual was to ruin one's career and risk legal prosecution and prison. To stay in the closet was necessary in the outside world, but unnecessary in the inner world of truth among the Apostles.

"DOUBLE LANGUAGE, DOUBLE VISION"

According to Sinclair, homosexuality "encouraged a double vision and a double language."

Those Marxists who were homosexuals were even more tightly bound together in worlds of subterfuge and deceit. They could betray neither their party nor their friends to their disapproving countrymen. . . . Homosexuality, indeed, reinforced the closeness of the Communist conspiracy. It was a tool of recruitment as well as a mechanism of control, a second threat of exposure to an alien and capitalist environment. Anthony Blunt certainly shared his sexual preferences as well as his ideology with Guy Burgess. . . . The selection process which made them Apostles was elaborate and began with their birth. Bennett called the Cambridge traitors of the thirties "English to excess." They were proud of their inheritance of irony and scepticism. "To be dubious about that inheritance was to be part of that inheritance." To mock one's country was to prove one's right to mock it. Bennett

quoted W. H. Auden saying that if he had been more clever, he would have been a criminal or a spy.

E. M. Forster said something similar about being a communist, implying that he was too old and didn't have the guts. One used to use claims like Auden's to support the thesis that all artists were outsiders. Now it seems more plausible to apply it to homosexuals or most especially homosexual artists like Auden. Left to fester long enough, the self-subversion that is implicit in every homosexual act will extend beyond itself to include an attack on society, first as manifested in the family but then as manifested in one's country as well.

George Steiner in his essay on Blunt remarks on "the strongly homosexual character of the elite in which the young Blunt flourished," but goes on to lament that "neither sociology nor cultural history, neither political theory nor psychology has even begun to handle authoritatively the vast theme of the part played by homosexuality in Western culture since the late nineteenth century." He goes on to claim that "Judaism and homosexuality (most intensely where they overlap, as in a Proust or a Wittgenstein)" are "the two main generators of the entire fabric and savor of urban modernity in the West."

SEXUAL LICENSE

Well, Steiner is entitled to his opinion; however, in the case of the Cambridge traitors the "gay intellectual freemasonry" that sodomy had become in England is a more than adequate explanation. Jewishness is a virtually nonexistent factor in the equation. On a wider scale, it is more plausible to claim that there is only one generator of urban modernity in the West and that is sexual license, of which homosex is merely a subset, an important one albeit, but only part of the picture. Modernity, as the recent spate of revisionist biography is starting to reveal, is rationalized sexual license. Bloomsbury, as a subset of modernity, was just what they were saying it was—namely, the "Higher Sodomy." As such, there is an internal factor in the transition from immorality to Marxism that needs to be explored. The classical explanations about why the intellegentia became Marxist in the 1930s all had to do with economic crisis and the menace of fascism. With the new biographies a new explanation begins to emerge, one which has to do with sex and religion.

"The Communists of the thirties," Sinclair writes, felt even more moral superiority than the non-Communists. There was no question that they were the heirs of the puritans and the evangelicals, who wanted a new heaven on a new earth. They supported the only society which knew how to produce it materially, Soviet Russia, while all other other societies were crashing to economic ruin. It was only two decades later that Bertrand Russell, in his essay, "Why I Am Not a Communist," could state that he was at a loss to understand how some people who were both human and intelligent could find something to admire in the vast slave camp produced by Stalin.

But at the time, it appeared to the left to be a laboratory forging a fresh human society. . . .

The question raised by Russell is a valid one; unfortunately he lacks the intellectual and spiritual discernment necessary to answer it. How is it that the cream of the English establishment could end up in treason? Is there some document which will explicate treason from the inside in the same way that *Maurice* explicates homosexuality? Well, there is and there isn't. The documents are there. Philby wrote his own *Apologia Pro Defecto Sua*, as Malcolm Muggeridge called it, after he arrived in Moscow, but since it was published with Moscow's imprimatur it is a worthless document.

"FROM BLOOMSBURY TO MARXISM"

Sir Anthony Blunt did much the same thing. In 1973 he wrote an article in *Studio International* entitled "From Bloomsbury to Marxism." Appearing six years before he was publicly denounced as a spy, Blunt's article tells us little more than we already knew. "I have never had the slightest desire to write my autobiography," he tells us, and with the gift of hindsight it's not hard to understand why. We learn that at school he edited a magazine called the *Heretick*, whose motto was "Upon Philistia will I triumph," another bit of information which gains added significance in light of subsequent events, but for the most part what he writes about himself could have been gleaned from any art history book or biography of the period. He confirms, for example, the influence of Bloomsbury in his intellectual development:

Strachey on the Victorians justified our hatred of the Establishment. . . . Life at Cambridge was to an extraordinary extent for me an extension of life at Marlborough. The ideas that we had been absorbing in art and literature were really already based on Bloomsbury. . . . In Cambridge a great many of the Bloomsbury figures were regular visitors to Cambridge, particularly Forster and the Stracheys, and of course Keynes was there all the time in residence. . . . They affected us through the Society of the Apostles. The Apostles had been in the previous generation of dominant importance in Bloomsbury.

Under their tutelage, especially that of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, Blunt and his contemporaries were rather insularly—according to his own description—raised on the theory of art for art's sake. "Then, quite suddenly in the autumn term of 1933 Marxism hit Cambridge," and "Cambridge was literally transformed overnight. . . . The undergraduates and graduate students were swept away by it and during the next three or four years almost every intelligent undergraduate who came up to Cambridge joined the Communist party at some time during his first year."

Perhaps because of his years of leading a double life (In 1973 Blunt still had not been exposed.) Blunt's explanation of what happened in Cambridge in the '30s covers up more than it reveals. It is especially good at



obfuscating the personal motivation involved in the conversion to Marxism. The only time he really pulls back the veil—and then ever so slightly—is to speak in an especially cold-blooded way about the influence of the young John Cornford on Cambridge students:

It may sound a callous thing to say, but it was in a way appropriate though tragic, that he should have gone to Spain and been killed; he was the stuff martyrs are made of, and I do not at all know what would have happened to him if he had survived. He was a highly emotional character, and I strongly suspect that he might have gone back on his Marxist doctrine.

"GREAT PLEASURE"

Blunt tells the anecdote with the same chilling nonchalance that Simon and Penrose note when he confides to Tar Robertson, former "Double Cross" team chief: "It has given me great pleasure to have been able to pass the names of every MI5 officer to the Russians" (p. 287).

But of personal motivation, there is not a word. It is simply that in 1933 Marxism hit Cambridge, and Cambridge was transformed overnight.

Yet, in a sense, what can one expect of a man whose life was based on duplicity, a man who led any number of double lives. In such a life, everything becomes a cover for something else until shadows and realities merge into one inextricable lived lie. Blunt did attempt to write an autobiography after he was exposed, but gave it up after 30,000 words. Blunt's brother Wilfrid put the manuscript in a trust which can only be opened in 50 years, but assured Penrose and Simon that they were missing nothing by not reading it.

THE GOD THAT FAILED

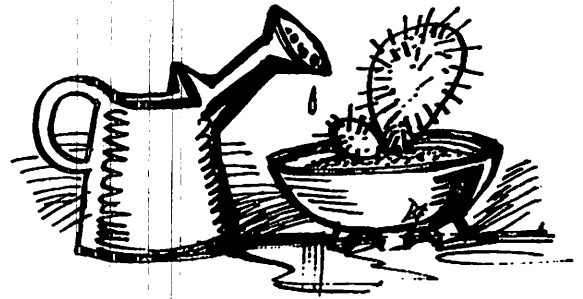
Others, however, have been candid in Blunt's place. In his introduction to *The God That Failed*, a collection of stories of those who converted to Communism in the '30s and then left disillusioned, Richard Crossman, M.P. describes the generation which was "willing to sacrifice 'bourgeois liberties' in order to defeat fascism. Their conversion... was rooted in despair—a despair of Western values.... greatly strengthened by the Christian conscience. The intellectual though he may have abandoned orthodox Christianity, felt its prickings more acutely than many." Then using a word that has gained significance since the book first appeared in 1949, Crossman adds "you can call the response *masochistic* [my emphasis] or describe it as a sincere desire to serve mankind," apparently indicating that the two motivations might be related. Serving mankind in the English communist party certainly had a masochistic tinge to it.

"A TORTUOUS WAY OF ACQUIRING A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE"

Arthur Koestler describes his own conversion to Marxism using the same religious and moral vocabulary. "I developed," he wrote of his days in Germany before joining the party there,

a strong dislike of the obviously rich, not because they could afford to buy things... but because they were able to do so without a guilty conscience. Thus I projected a personal predicament onto the structure of society at large. It was certainly a tortuous way of acquiring a social conscience.

Koestler's motivation was essentially religious. He would even base his conversion on a passage from Scripture: "Woe for they chant to the sound of harps and anoint themselves, but are not grieved for the affliction of the people." But communism had the then seemingly magic power of calling forth large quantities of moral indignation along with a strong desire to chuck the moral code it appealed to. It was the lure of wanting to have one's cake and eat it too. "The historical relativity of institutions and ideals—of family, class, patriotism, bourgeois morality, sexual taboos—had the intoxicating effect of a sudden liberation from the rusty chains with which a pre-1914 middle-class childhood had cluttered one's mind." "I was ripe to be converted," Koestler claimed, and the "common denominator" shared by others of his generation was "the rapid disintegration of moral values, of the pre-1914 pattern of life in postwar Europe, and the simultaneous lure of the new revelation which had come from the East." The main attraction of Communism was spiritual and moral. In describing his work as an agent passing gossip from the publishing house where he worked on to his communist control, he writes "I was already reaping the reward of all conversions, a blissfully clean conscience."



GUILT

Guilt, then, was the engine that pulled the communist train. If homosexuals were more likely to want to subvert society, they were also more likely, because of the activity that ruled their lives, to be more burdened with guilt and, therefore, more in the market for a palliative for a troubled conscience. The danger of blackmail is in a sense misplaced. With greater public acceptance of homosexuality the danger wanes. However the danger of blackmail by one's own conscience remains constant. In the contributions to *The God That Failed*, the role of guilt and bad conscience remains crucial if not primary.

Stephen Spender's contribution to the same book makes much the same point. In describing his own conversion to communism, he writes, "My arguments were re-enforced by feelings of guilt and the suspicion that the side of me which pitied the victims of revolution secretly supported the ills of capitalism from which I myself benefited... For the intellectual of good will, Communism is a struggle of conscience. To understand this, explains many things."

It explains many things indeed, most notably how the immoralism of the '20s led to the Marxism of the '30s just as inexorably as the loss of faith among the Victorians led to that immoralism in the first place. Communism in the '30s provided an engine to anesthetize conscience, and because of the way everyone had been behaving, most notably the Bloomsbury-Apostle-Cambridge crowd, that engine was in great demand. Spender is especially acute in explaining its attraction:

This doubly secured Communist conscience also explains the penitential, confessional attitude which non-Communists may sometimes show toward orthodox Communists with their consciences anchored—if not petrified—in historic materialism. There is something overpowering about the fixed conscience. There is a certain compulsion in the situation of the Communist with his faith reproving the liberal whose conscience swings from example to example, misgiving to misgiving, supporting here the freedom of some writer outside the writer's Syndicate, some socially-conscienceless surrealist perhaps, here a Catholic priest, here a liberal professor in jail. What power there is in a conscience which reproaches us not only for vices and weaknesses but also

for virtues, such as pity for the oppressed, if they happen to be the wrong oppressed, or love for a friend if he happens not to be a Party member! A conscience which tells us that by taking up a certain political position today we can attain a massive, granite-like superiority over our own whole past, without being humble or simple or guilty, but simply by virtue of converting the whole of our personality into raw material for the use of the Party machine!

THE SOVIET CONSCIENCE MACHINE

That the Soviet conscience machine became the god that failed is the gist of Spender's and Koestler's testimony. However, it should be clear by now that that conscience machine met a demand. It should be equally clear by now that private acts have public consequences. As Anthony Blunt said in his statement to the press in 1979: "In the conflict between political conscience and loyalty to country, I chose conscience." Blunt uses the word conscience as a synonym for altruism. However, the word he chose has meaning beyond those which he intends.

The consequences of his choice of conscience may not be known for a long time. Sinclair quotes a Lieutenant-Colonel Noel Wild, who "suspected that the Russians fed back to German intelligence details of the Allied manoeuvres in France near the end of the war to enable Hitler to counterattack in the Ardennes and delay the advance of the democratic armies so that the unchallenged Red Army could swallow up all of eastern Europe." George Steiner feels that "by passing his findings on to his Soviet control," Blunt "would have

helped the Russians to plan and carry out their murderous policies in the newly liberated countries of eastern Europe in 1944 and 1945." In addition Blunt's treason over more than thirty years "almost certainly did grave damage to his own country and may well have sent other men—Polish and Czech exiles, fellow intelligence agents—to abject death." Peter Wright, who had worked at MI5 and helped track Blunt down, tries to frame the damage by posing two rhetorical questions: "Have you ever asked yourself why Britain is in the mess that it's in? Why fifty years ago it was a great country?"

BLUNT'S BLASTED LEGACY

The value of Blunt's blasted legacy is the light it sheds on the present. The demands of conscience remain constant. Those who commit evil will be troubled by its pangs, and in their trouble they have only two alternatives: they can either conform their actions to the moral law or the moral law to their actions. The former case calls for repentance, the latter rationalization, ideology, and, ultimately, a social activism in which those who feel guilty will unite and try through political means to make wrong right. Guilt over abortion is the engine that pulls the women's movement. Forster's "queer race" now has its own political arm. Homosexuals are now a potent fifth column within the Catholic Church. Now as then subversion is the goal and ruin the consequence—ruin for those who choose sodomy and fail to repent but ruin as well, as recent English history has shown, for the country which lacks the will to enforce the moral law.

