

The Figure of the Aesthete in the Writings of Evelyn Waugh¹

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Those who have read *Brideshead Revisited* and those who have seen or watched the dramatisation of the said book, I believe, may remember some unforgettable characters and scenes. Some would think of Charles and his close friend Sebastian in their Arcadian days. Some could not forget the fountain scene at Brideshead Castle in which Charles and Julia discuss their future. However, for a number of people, there is no character as vivid and memorable as Anthony Blanche. Many critics and scholars have tried to find out about the model, or models, for Anthony. Trying to discover the real-life equivalent for a character is obviously not always profitable. When it comes to Waugh, however, some interesting points will emerge when we look at some of the aesthetes in his novels. The motivation of those who want to identify the models for Anthony must include an element of interest in, even desire for, the given character, who at the same time may evoke a frisson of discomfort owing to his sexuality. This combination of attraction and recoil can be located in the novelist's own feelings; but it can also be seen as derived from broader historical ambiguities concerning the depiction of the figure of the aesthete.

I shall begin my paper by touching upon the cultural background of the time when the novelist lived in terms of Modernism and of the aesthetes who are alleged to feature in some Waugh novels, along with Waugh's own attitudes toward homosexuality. After that, I will be introducing some of those models in greater detail. The third issue which I wish to cover is how aesthete characters developed in his novels such as *Vile Bodies*, *Put Out More Flags* and *Brideshead Revisited*. Finally, I will conclude by comparing Cedric Hampton in Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate* with Waugh's descriptions, showing how aesthetes with their aggressively camp and, so to speak, 'over-the-top' attitudes and influence and subvert the main characters and even the novelists themselves.

I

Evelyn Waugh published *Decline and Fall* in 1928. This was his first proper novel as the manuscript of a previous one had been destroyed. It was followed in 1930 by *Vile Bodies*. The first part of *Brideshead Revisited* depicts Waugh's Oxford days of the early 1920s. During that period, the Western literary world faced one of its most monumental challenges. In 1922, both James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* appeared. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 'Manifesto of Futurism' had been issued as early as 1909, when Waugh was six years old. Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* came out in 1914 as the symbol of the 'Vorticist' Movement. It has been often pointed out that Waugh, particularly in his early writing, was attracted to Modernism, and that a number of Vorticist paintings by Lewis in that magazine influenced his own drawings and

illustrations. Arthur Waugh, Evelyn's father, managing director of Chapman & Hall, 'liked Kipling' and 'hated T. S. Eliot, prompting Waugh to complain about his father's 'conventionality in literary taste' (Davis, p.2).

When one reads Waugh's biographies, almost all of them refer to Brian Howard and Harold Acton. Those figures are always mentioned with the epithet 'aesthete'. This part of my paper shall consider its definition. Obviously, the most famous representatives of the movement are Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater, who belonged to the Victorian period, before Waugh's birth. The term 'aesthete' is related to the 'Aesthetic Movement' as *The Oxford Concise Companion to English Literature* suggests:

The Aesthetic Movement – a movement which blossomed during the 1880s, heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, Ruskin, and Pater, in which the adoption of sentimental archaism as the ideal of beauty was carried to extravagant lengths and often accompanied by affection of speech and manner and eccentricity of dress. It and its followers (e.g. Wilde) were much ridiculed in *Punch*, in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* (1881), etc (Drabble and Stringer, p.6)

As can be seen in the above quotation, 'art for art's sake' did not necessarily connote sexuality when this movement started. However, it goes without saying that what was decisive in bringing about the attachment of homosexual undertones to aestheticism was Oscar Wilde's trial for what was described as the act of 'gross indecency'. Gradually, its connotations became more and more 'tainted'. In Waugh's youth, the word 'aesthete' was already an old-fashioned one; as he writes in his autobiography, *A Little Learning*, it displayed 'a kind of ferocity of elegance that belonged to the romantic era of a century before our own' (p. 205).

Brian Howard and Harold Acton were regularly described as 'aesthetes'. Nowadays, this type of attitude could be called 'camp'. In the 1960s, before his death, to describe those people, Waugh used 'homosexual' and 'homosexuality' in his essays, instead of the more coded term, 'aesthetes'. In this paper, I would give almost the same meaning to those words but when I use 'aesthete', I emphasise the fashionable and effeminate side of homosexuality. In this essay, the term 'homosexuality' itself denotes mainly sexual orientation.

For the present, it may be useful to look more closely at three famous 'aesthetes' who were at the same time prominent homosexuals: Brian Howard, Harold Acton and Stephen Tennant.

Brian Howard was born in Surrey, England in 1905, almost two years younger than Waugh; he grew up in England but was of American parentage. It is said that he was suspicious about the circumstances of his own birth and believed himself to be Jewish. He went to Eton and then to Oxford, where Edith Sitwell found out about him. Through this writer, he was introduced to Gertrude Stein, who was one of the avant-garde artists representing Modernism. Since his school days at Eton, he had been openly homosexual and involved in many complex relationships. After his last boyfriend had died, Brian Howard committed suicide by overdosing in the same year. It was in 1958.

Sir Harold Mario Mitchell Acton was born in 1904, a year junior to Waugh. He was one of Waugh's lifelong friends. Just like Brian Howard, he went to Eton and then to Oxford. At Eton, he and Howard had published a magazine together, *The Eton Candle*. He was quite open about his homosexuality at school and the Varsity. Living in Beijing in the 1930s, he worked on some publications on Chinese literature. In his later life, he lived at his family residence La Pietra, which was and still is located near Florence. He adored Edith Sitwell, T. S. Eliot, and Gertrude Stein.

Compared to Brian Howard and Harold Acton, this third figure has not often been introduced when Waugh is discussed but he attracted many people in society in the early 1920s. The Hon Stephen Tennant, officially so styled, was also an aesthete and famous for his relationship with Siegfried Sassoon. It is said that he spent most of his life in bed mainly because of his illness (tuberculosis), but he survived Waugh. He was a close friend to society photographer Cecil Beaton. Tennant did not go to public school but he met a number of literary figures, and knew Nancy Mitford, Edith Sitwell, Evelyn Waugh to some extent and Brian Howard. Judging from his photographs, he looks quite effeminate and fair-haired. When photographed, he often posed to the extent that he looked narcissist, with his head slightly tilted.

A number of people still may consider that Waugh was conservative and even reactionary. This image however is founded on the persona he cultivated in his later self-fashioning as a country gentleman. In his youth, he was much attracted to Modernism. When he first met them at Oxford, he was fascinated by the aesthetes Acton and Howard. Even at Eton, it seems that those prominent aesthetic figures were regarded almost like stars. Since a number of Etonian contemporaries went to Oxford, their reputation had already been instantaneously established there. As I have already mentioned, those aesthetes were interested in Modernism. Acton highly valued T. S. Eliot's poetry and famously recited *The Waste Land* from a college balcony, as Anthony Blanche does in *Brideshead Revisited*. Brian Howard wrote quite a few avant-garde poem; perhaps, caricaturing the 'Futurist Manifesto' (1914), or appreciating it, he issued an invitation in the Futurist style, as Johnnie does in *Vile Bodies*.

As has been already observed at the outset, Vorticism and Futurism represented speed. Waugh was also one of those who were obsessed with velocity. In *Vile Bodies*, a car race is depicted in Chapter Ten, and a party on an airship is also described in Chapter Eight. These are good examples of state-of-the-art technological progress at that time. The dust cover of the novel shows a Vorticist-like picture, depicting the car race scene. Regarded as the 'advocate' for the Bright Young Things when he published the novel in question, Waugh illustrated excessive and obscure binges, crazy and feverish indulgence, in the aftermath of the Great War. In terms of his drawings and illustrations, his books such as *Black Mischief* contain many images which remind us of Wyndham Lewis's pictures and primitivism.² One should recall the novelist's caricature, or glorification: 'AT THE SIGN OF THE UNICORN. MR HAROLD ACTON THE LAST OF THE POETS.'³

II

So far this paper has looked at Waugh's attraction to aesthetes and Modernism, which they

admired. It may be worthwhile to consider in what way the novelist regarded his own sexuality. A letter from Waugh to Nancy Mitford dated 18th December 1954 confides, '...I went to Oxford & visited my first homosexual love, Richard Pares, a don at All Souls.' (*Letters*, p.494) Biographers have written that Waugh was intensively sexually attracted to Alastair Graham and Hugh Lygon, both of whom are said to be the models for Sebastian Flyte, although his relationship to them might have not been 'consummated'. Most biographies assume that Waugh may have conducted homosexual acts at times when he was inebriated. (See Byrne, pp. 61-2, for example)

However, Waugh's attitude toward homosexuality is ambivalent. When She-Evelyn, or Waugh's first wife, committed adultery with another man, Waugh claimed that he was devastated. He bitterly complained that his homosexual friends such as Harold Acton, who had been the best man at his wedding, did not express his sympathies properly enough to him. In Waugh's letter to Henry Yorke probably written September 1929, one can read after a P.S. that: 'P.P.S. It is extraordinary how homosexual people however kind & intelligent simply don't understand at all what one feels in this kind of case.' (*Letters*, p. 50) It seems as if the novelist tried to distance himself from those 'homosexual friends' through calling them 'homosexual'.

In *Brideshead Revisited*, the novelist added a disclaimer. It reads:

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am not I: thou are not he or she
they are not they
E. W.

(*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 4)

Since a number of characters in the novel are so much based on the real figures whom Waugh and his circle knew that he had to add this disclaimer, one could interpret as 'they are actually they'. Paradoxically, Waugh claims that he was not 'they', or his homosexual friends, but this leads one to suppose that he was 'they' too. He could have been homosexual. He could perhaps be termed a *corrigible* homosexual. Waugh seems to show a similar attitude, as if to say that 'I have nothing to do with homosexuality', especially when readers come across 'an incorrigible homosexual':

He [Brian Howard] was an incorrigible homosexual, subject to a succession of delusions, and died by suicide at the time when he at last became rich. He will reappear later in these pages. At the age of nineteen he had dash and insolence, a gift of invective and repartee far more brilliant than Robert's, a kind of ferocity of elegance that belonged to the romantic era of a century before our own. Mad, bad and dangerous to know. (*A Little Learning*, p. 205)

However, Waugh openly expresses his detached feelings toward Brian Howard in his personal writing. Here is a letter by him written to one of his friends, a son of Prime Minister Baldwin:

I used to know Brian Howard well – a dazzling young man to my innocent eyes. In later life he became very dangerous – constantly attacking people with his fists in public places – so I kept clear of him. He was consumptive but the immediate cause of his death was a broken heart. His boy friend gassed himself in his house. (*Letters*, p. 572)

Waugh here sounds very cruel to his deceased acquaintance, although there is surely also some poignancy in the ‘broken heart’ allusion. One might be tempted to conclude that Waugh simply hated Brian Howard, but any such uniform hostility is surely contradicted by ‘dazzling young man’. In his uncompleted autobiography, Waugh in fact spends far more words on describing Brian, than on other friends who might have been expected to figure more prominently.

In addition, in *A Little Learning*, he intended to write more episodes and events on Brian Howard. The Byronic allusion of ‘Mad, bad and dangerous to know’ again suggests Waugh’s fear and attraction. Again, such mixed feelings can be easily discerned in the following letter to Nancy Mitford dated 29th May 1965:

What do you know of a Mrs Lancaster who gives you as reference in soliciting help in writing a treatise on Brian Howard? I can’t believe he will be subject of many biographies. It would be a pity if some hack who didn’t know him or see his point, should take him in hand. Is she American? What age? Except you and Nancy Cunard there are few women who knew him. (*Letters*, pp. 713-4)

In the novelist’s last novel, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, the protagonist suffers from his drug-induced auditory hallucinations on a boat to Ceylon and decides to write about it in a Proustian manner; its completion becomes the novel *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* itself. The hallucinations say either he is homosexual or Jewish. This typifies his fear and uncertainty about the nature of his sexuality, which Sedgwick has famously termed as homosexual panic.⁴ The protagonist is loosely connected to the writer as Waugh experienced the same situation.

As we have seen so far, Waugh’s attitudes toward the aesthetes in question and homosexuality are extremely mixed. This kind of paradoxical feeling seems to be reflected in his novels, especially in his descriptions of aesthetes. I will explain their development in the order that the novelist wrote his books one by one, considering the models for those characters.

If we take at face value what Waugh claims in his letters, Anthony Blanche is a composite of Brian Howard and Harold Acton. Waugh wrote to Lord Baldwin on 14th March 1958:

There is an aesthetic bugger [sic] who sometimes turns up in my novels under various names – that was 2/3 Brian 1/3 Harold Acton. People think it was all Harold, who is a much sweeter & saner man. (*Letters*, p. 572)

This passage shows two issues. Firstly, ‘people’ from the very beginning thought that Acton was the model. Anthony’s famous recitation of *The Waste Land* naturally caused them to assume that Waugh adopted this episode from Acton’s. Secondly, Brian appears a number of times in

Waugh's novels under different names. When readers pay attention to some aesthetic characters, they will notice a number of features in common between them and Waugh's acquaintances: Brian Howard, Harold Acton and Stephen Tennant.

III

Waugh's first novel in which aesthetes appear is *Vile Bodies*. One character instantly reminds readers of Brian Howard: Johnnie Hoop. His presence, however, is shadowy and insubstantial. Johnnie Hoop issues a party invitation mimicking the 'Futurist Manifesto'. The novelist in fact gives a footnote for this:

...and finally there was the sort that Johnnie Hoop used to adapt from Blast and Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*. These had two columns of close print; in one was a list of all the things Johnnie hated, and in the other all the things he thought he liked. Most of the parties which Miss Mouse financed had invitations written by Johnnie Hoop. (*Vile Bodies*, p. 44)

This 'author's note' is exactly the same as Brian Howard's party invitation as can be seen below. The column on the left says that 'J' ACCUSE', or 'I accuse/ hate'. The one on the right is named 'J' ADORE', or 'I love'. In 'J' ACCUSE', 'public schools', and 'English "society"' are included. As I shall show later, Howard seems to challenge the British establishment, where he spent a long time in his youth and grew up, as Anthony and Ambrose do.⁵ On the other hand, in 'J' ADORE' are included 'Diaghilev', whom Anthony Blanche has met, and 'Germany', where other Waugh novels locate a thriving gay underground culture. Jean Cocteau's name as an item in 'J' ADORE' appears honourably in the middle the invitation. Of course, Anthony has met him as well.



Gene D. Phillip writes as follows:

Ambrose Silk was obviously based on Brian Howard, a notoriously degenerate homosexual acquaintance from Waugh's Oxford days. Howard had already served as the source of the social-climbing Johnny Hoop [sic] in *Vile Bodies* and would later appear in the guise of Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited*. Howard not only recognized himself in Ambrose Silk but also was able to identify Hans as his own German friend Toni and was deeply offended by Waugh's treatment. (p. 46)

I totally agree that Ambrose and Anthony were based on Brian. In fact, Phillip's comment should be derived from Brian's postscript, on *Put Out More Flags* in his letter to his boyfriend: '...P. S. Evelyn Waugh has made an absolutely vicious attack on me in his new novel *Put out more Flags* [sic], *You* come into it, too!' (Lancaster, p. 254) One should note the slight time difference between the publications of those two books. Therefore, there are some similarities in them. In *Put Out More Flags*, readers come across the phrase 'a hair's breadth above reality and her mind' (*Put out more Flags*, p. 24) while the novelist writes 'lift us a finger's breadth above the turf and hold us suspended'. (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 26)

Similarly, the aesthetes sound quite alike in the novels in question. Ambrose Silk in *Put Out More Flags* is very similar to Anthony Blanche:

The Café Royal, perhaps because of its distant associations with Oscar and Aubrey, was one of the places where Ambrose preened himself, spread his feathers and felt free to take wing. He had left his persecution mania downstairs with his hat and umbrella. He defied the universe. (*Put out more Flags*, p. 174)

One should pay attention to the words 'preened', 'spread his feathers' and 'take wing', which obviously, they symbolise a bird. This type of effeminate mannerism resembles Anthony's. Charles the narrator says:

He had been pointed out to me often in the streets, as he pranced along with his high peacock tread; I had heard his voice in the George challenging the conventions; and now meeting him, under the spell of Sebastian, I found myself enjoying him voraciously. (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 34)

In the case of *Brideshead Revisited*, the word 'peacock' again obviously reveals the camp attitude which Anthony strikes. In *Put Out More Flags*, on the other hand, Ambrose's homosexuality is foregrounded in the figures of the two aesthetes, Oscar and Aubrey: or Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. This association would direct readers to thinking of Ambrose's sexuality. More conspicuously, his homosexuality is further emphasised by his book on a German man. Waugh summarises the content of the given book, bullet-pointing each detail as follows:

Monument to a Spartan described Hans, as Ambrose had loved him, in every mood; Hans immature, the provincial *petit-bourgeois* youth floundering and groping in the gloom of Teutonic adolescence, unsuccessful in his examinations, world-weary, brooding about suicide among the conifers, uncritical of direct authority, unreconciled to the order of the universe; Hans affectionate, sentimental, roughly sensual, guilty; above all, Hans guilty, haunted by the taboos of the forest; Hans credulous, giving his simple and generous acceptance to all the nonsense of Nazi leaders; Hans reverent to those absurd instructors who harangued the youth camps, resentful at the injustices of man to man.... (*Put Out More Flags*, p. 186)

As Phillip mentions, as we read this passage, it is easy to understand why Brian was infuriated by Waugh's novel. Interestingly, in *Brideshead Revisited*, Anthony Blanche is nicknamed 'Toni' by a gay man at the Blue Grotto, a gay nightclub. Toni was Brian Howard's boyfriend's name.

On the other hand, Anthony's milieu is obviously situated in the following passage:

When peace came they returned to Europe, to hotels and furnished villas, spas, casinos, and bathing beaches. At the age of fifteen, for a wager, he was disguised as a girl and taken to play at the big table in the Jockey Club at Buenos Aires; he dined with Proust and Gide and was on closer terms with Cocteau and Diaghilev.... (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 47)

As for Ambrose and Anthony, they share another similarity: i.e. they are both Jewish. As long as Anthony is concerned, the narrator says that he is 'part Gallic, part Yankee, part, perhaps, Jew; wholly exotic' (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 34). Ambrose is also described as having a 'pale Semitic face' (*Put Out More Flags*, p. 174).

Additionally, both Ambrose and Anthony like words of endearment such as 'My dear'. This phrase is, or was at least, quite often used among upper-class people. Naturally enough, as Anthony went to Eton, he might have picked up such 'posh' English idioms there. Parenthetically, Anthony uses 'footer' for 'football'. Again, importantly enough, Brian was a habitual user of 'My dear'.

In addition, as I have already mentioned, what is important here is that Anthony is a composite of two aesthetes, Harold Acton, and Brian Howard, who was born to American parents in Britain and grew up there. Acton's mother was also American. This perfectly matches Anthony Blanche, considering the word 'Yankee' quoted in the previous part of this paper.

Despite their similarities, however, there are of course differences in those novels. At first sight, Basil's treatment of Ambrose appears to be quite cruel. Basil, originally seeking revenge on his supervisor at the War Office, victimises Ambrose and sends him to an idyllic pasture somewhere in Ireland. Brian Howard worked for MI5 and Ambrose's situation is practically the same. On the other hand, in *Brideshead Revisited*, Anthony carries with him an exotic cosmopolitan atmosphere, but also plays a very important structural function in providing Charles with information concerning different aspects of Flyte family life. Consequently he acquires a measure of social authority. It is likely that Brian was furious about the

characterisation and situation of Ambrose, but after this Waugh wrote *Brideshead Revisited*. This may be his compromise. Anyhow, the development of the importance in the aesthetes is explicitly acknowledged.

IV

The back cover of Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster's *Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure* says that Howard was not only the model for Anthony but also Cedric Hampton in Nancy Mitford's *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949). However, according to Philip Hoare, the author of *Serious Pleasures: the Life of Stephen Tennant*, Cedric is taken from Tennant. I would tend to support the latter claim but what is quite likely is that Cedric is not entirely based on Tennant but also on Brian in some features. At this point, descriptions of an aesthete by another novelist could make an illuminating contrast with Waugh's.

Love in a Cold Climate is loosely based on Mitford's own experience. The heroine Fanny's best friend, Polly has been disowned by her parents Lord and Lady Montdore because she has married her uncle Boy (by marriage, not by blood), who perhaps used to be Lady Montdore's lover. Therefore, quite a distant relative, being the only heir, Cedric Hampton is arriving and welcomed just after Polly and Boy have left.

Part II Chapter III describes Cedric's grand entrance as can be seen below:

A glitter of blue and gold crossed the parquet, and a human dragonfly was kneeling on the fur rug in front of the Montdore, one long white hand extended towards each. He was a tall, thin young man, supple as a girl, dressed in rather a bright blue suit; his hair was the gold of a brass bed-knob, and his insect appearance came from the fact that the upper part of the face was concealed by blue goggles set in gold rims quite an inch thick. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 274)

Cedric wears blond hair just like Tennant. At the same time, to some extent, this arrival scene is a little similar to Anthony Blanche's first fashionably late entrance to Sebastian's luncheon:

When the eggs were gone and we were eating the lobster Newburg, the last guest arrived.

'My dear,' he said, 'I couldn't get away before. I was lunching with my p-p-preposterous tutor. He thought it very odd my leaving when I did. I told him I had to change for F-f-footer.'

(*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 34)

The former is described as a 'human dragonfly' while the latter is described as a 'peacock'. (Tennant's photographs show that his fingers were very long like female hands.)

'Welcome,' she [Lady Montdore] said, 'to Hampton.'

'The beauty,' Cedric went on, floating jointlessly to his feet. 'I can only say that

I am drunk with it. England, so much more beautiful than I had imagined (I have never had very good accounts of England, somehow), this house, so romantic, such a repository of treasures, and above all, you – the two most beautiful people I have ever seen!’ (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p.274)

Readers could detect easily Cedric’s sexuality in such passages as those describing his relationship with Archie.

This Archie was a nice, handsome boy, a lorry-driver, whom Cedric had found with his lorry broken down near the gates of Hampton.

‘For your ear alone, my darling, it was a stroke of thunder when I saw him. What one does so love about love is the time before they find out what *One* is like.’

‘And it’s also very nice,’ I said, disloyally, ‘before *One* finds out what they are like.’

Archie had now left his lorry for ever, and gone to live at Hampton to do odd jobs. Lady Montdore was enthusiastic about him. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 284)

Obviously, Cedric is sexually attracted to this working-class man. I will not handle here the issue of homosexual relationships and class differences, but one could cite the example that E. M. Forster, having received elite education and being a Fellow at Cambridge with an upper-middle background, formed a very close relationship with Bob Buckingham, a police officer.

He spoke with rather a curious accent, neither French nor Canadian, but peculiar to himself, in which every syllable received rather more emphasis than is given by the ordinary Englishman. Also he spoke, as it were, through his smile, which would fade a little, then flash out again, but which never altogether left his face. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, pp. 274-5)

Interestingly, Cedric’s speech is ‘neither French nor Canadian’. It is difficult to locate his accent. The aristocratic son Stephen did not grow up in North America. As for Brian Howard, born in the United States and educated at Eton College, his accent would not have sounded American but more British with affected speech. That considered, Cedric contains some aspects of Brian as well, although Cedric never says ‘My dear’ but instead uses ‘My Darling’. Thus, there might be a very good chance that Cedric was a composite of both figures.

Just like Brian Howard and Stephen Tennant, Cedric is an art director and producer. He plans and throws a big party. Brian was keen to design costumes for his performance and the biography by Lancaster is full of his portrait photographs. He also held an exhibition, which was sheer fiction or hoax. He invented a fictional artist, Bruno Hat. Nancy Mitford’s brother played the artist and it is said that Evelyn Waugh wrote a pamphlet. (See Lancaster, pp. 163-4: no source or proof is offered to support this claim. However, apart from Lancaster, David Lebedoff in his *The Same Man: George Orwell & Evelyn Waugh* refers to this hoax on p. 60.) Tennant, on the other hand, is posing wearing clothes in a quite effeminate way in many photographs. Fanny gives Polly the

accounts on the spectacle, although she did not attend it.

‘... It seems to have been very splendid, Cedric changed his dress five times, he started with tights made of rose petals and a pink wig and ended as Doris Keane in Romance and a black wig, he had real diamonds on his mask. Your mother [Polly’s mother, Lady Montdore] was a Venetian youth to show off her new legs, and they stood in a gondola giving away wonderful prizes to everybody – Norma got a silver snuff-box – and it went on till seven. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 315)

Women are very much passionately attracted to Cedric. However, men are not. Fanny’s uncle, Matthew detests Cedric and aesthetes in general. One of the examples is that he writes down on a piece of paper the object of his hatred and puts it into a drawer just like necromancy. He used to write Boy Dougdale but now writes ‘Cedric’. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 287)

Another example is the scene in which Uncle Matthew jumps onto Cedric, who is about to buy a fashion magazine, *Vogue*. He cannot stand the design of his clothes either. Fortunately, Cedric is released when the train has just arrived and the ‘attacker’ jumps onto it. This is an overtly homophobic attitude. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 287)

Uncle Davy, Aunt Emily’s husband, is not as homophobic as Uncle Matthew but questions Lady Montdore’s passionate attachment like a mother spoiling a son.

‘You don’t like Cedric?’ I said, amazed. ‘How couldn’t you, Dave? I absolutely love him.’ (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 288)

Davy does not consider Cedric special mainly because he has known many people like Cedric. At the time of his education, he might have been acquainted with a number of aesthetes and homosexuals.

Biographies on Mitford point out the fact that she had a number of homosexual male friends such as Brian Howard and Robert Byron. According to Laura Thompson’s biography, Mitford’s first love object was the Hon Hamish St Clair-Erskine. Hamish was the second son of the Earl of Rosslyn from a Catholic family. He was also homosexual. Since Mitford’s brother Thomas formed a relationship with Hamish, he dissuaded her from seeing him. This pointless relationship seems to have vexed her. (Thompson, p. 93-5)

Open to discussion is the question whether Mitford was not aware of Hamish’s homosexuality. Thompson maintains that she was not innocent enough not to be familiar with homosexuality or at least, the existence of homosexuality (Thompson, pp. 94-5). For she was surrounded by men like Brian Howard, Robert Byron, Mark Ogilvie-Grant and Tom Driberg.

One should be aware of the abundance of aesthetes and homosexuals in the novel. There is a possibility that the husband of Fanny’s sister-in-law might be a closeted homosexual.

‘Sexually unsatisfied, poor her,’ said Cedric, when she had gone.

‘Really Cedric, what nonsense. She’s got four children.’

‘...of course, I feel certain the Professor must be a secret queer – nobody but a

queer would ever marry Norma, to begin with.'

(*Love in a Cold Climate*, [p]p. 300-1)

In Mitford's novel, Uncle Matthew openly expresses his disgust at Cedric's strong interest in fashion and his effeminacy, but his hatred only; his fear and uncertainty about his own sexuality are not foregrounded. On the other hand, Waugh's novel shows ambivalent feelings toward homosexuality and homosexual men. Charles is both drawn towards and afraid of Anthony. Considering that the standard definition of 'homophobia' is both fear of and attraction to homosexuality, Charles's case might be typically applied to it. As another good example, Anthony scares rough boisterous students by pretending to seduce them. (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 50)

In some parts of Mitford's novel, the novelist describes characters who question the sexuality of others. Cedric suspects Norma's husband is 'queer', although she does not realise it. The fact that Fanny as a narrator refers to this conversation between her and Cedric seems to suggest Fanny's anxiety about her husband too because although the couple have received a baby, her husband's expression of love sounds extremely feeble.

Even at the beginning of the novel, Boy's sexuality is quite ambiguous. Officially, he is considered as to be Lady Montdore's old flame; Fanny and her cousins felt interfered with by him, suggesting even paedophilia toward girls. One girl tells Fanny what Boy has done: 'He took Linda up on to the roof and did all sorts of blissful things to her... And I got some great sexy pinches as he passed the nursery landing.' (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 163) However, what stands out about him is his passion for sewing and embroidery. This hobby reminds me of the subject of the homosexual scandal of Earl Beauchamp (for details see Byrne, pp. 130-40). Both Mitford and Waugh frequented Earl Beauchamp's residence, Madresfield Court as they were close to his children. His hobby was sewing; a photograph of the embroidery by the Earl is included in Mulvagh's *The Real Brideshead*.

This suggestion could be pinned down by the following passage. In deed, at the end, readers find out that Boy and Cedric are in love with each other.

... Boy is being wonderful. I thought he might be knocked groggy by her [Lady Montdore's] appearance, but he's pretending not to notice, he is looking at Cedric all the time. They are getting on like mad. (*Love in a Cold Climate*, p. 317)

As Waugh carved out his literary career, the importance of the presence of aesthetes in the novel steadily increased. At the same time, his attitude toward the models for those characters and homosexuality had become more complicated. It is indeed, as Anthony mentions, 'less easily classified libido'. (*Brideshead Revisited*, p. 50) These paradoxical feelings are reflected throughout his novels, essays, diaries and letters. When Waugh's descriptions on the aesthetes in the novels handled here and Mitford's are compared, one could see that Waugh had both fear of and attraction to aesthetes, while Mitford seems to be afraid that every man she loves would eventually turn out to be homosexual.

Waugh observed aesthetes among his friendship circle and sometimes, made use of those

figures and transformed them into his fictional characters. His ears did not miss their characteristic diction and modes of speech and indeed re-created them in his texts. Whilst some aesthetic characters are composites of two or three figures whom Waugh knew well, Waugh's speech and their speech become inseparable. They are they, and he is they, so to speak.

It is surprising that before the Stone Wall gay liberation movement and even before the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the United Kingdom, the novelists whom I have considered presented so many interesting aspects of aesthetes-cum-homosexuals in their novels. Those books, whatever their overtly satirical motivation should be, could even be regarded as an implicit homage to their aesthetic and homosexual friends. Although he was not well prepared for it, Waugh wanted to be 'they'.

Notes

¹ This is an expanded and revised version of the paper read at the English Literary Society of Japan Kanto Region Branch Conference held on 30th April 2011.

² The illustrations are reproduced in *Black Mischief* in the Penguin Classics edition reprinted in 2000. The illustrations appear to be woodcut prints, emphasising very thick and strong lines.

³ See the reproduction of his illustrations found e.g. in Paula Byrne's *Mad World*.

⁴ See Sedgwick's *Between Men*, p. 1 and the endnote for the explanation of the term 'homophobia' on p. 219.

⁵ Even if Howard and Acton shared a number of preferences in art, there remained differences between them. Ironically, Howard 'accuse' the 'Bright Young People', even though he himself was generally regarded as an important member of the said group.

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