

## Stereotypes of Homosexuality in the Fiction of Angus Wilson

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Writing about the place of the homosexual hero in fiction Stephen Adams says :

In his own life Wilson has been willing to identify himself with the campaign for gay rights. However, his homosexual characters are never vehicles for propaganda. They are variously as comic, as pathetic, as wise, as foolish, as good and as bad - as human, in other words - as all of his other characters.<sup>1</sup>

Other critics - K. W. Gransden and Walter Allen, for instance<sup>2</sup> - have also noted this modernist inclusion of the 'homosexual' in fiction and have related it to the familiar liberal-humanist attempt to discredit Victorian and pre-modern (also oriental) attitudes towards homosexuality.

However, if we are to relate the recent studies of sociologists towards the place of the homosexual in the Western world we find that labelling men as 'homosexuals' has alienated them from the society and given them negative self-images.<sup>3</sup> The public-image of the homosexual is equally negative. He is considered effeminate, abnormal and in-capable of getting married. But this distinct homosexual image has emerged only in modern Western societies and did not exist either in Classical, oriental or even pre-modern Western cultures.<sup>4</sup> There also seems to be evidence to suggest that the stereotype of the 'homosexual' in fact makes individuals fit into the expected role so that the image creates the role and not vice versa.<sup>5</sup> Above all, while sociologists have

recognized all this and have reacted against essentializing (the change from 'doing' into 'being') trends the gay movement itself moved towards it while invoking the rhetoric of emancipation. Thus Angus Wilson's identification with the modern gay movement (not that side of which fights against prejudice as such but the one which has created the distinct 'gay' sub-culture) does not necessarily imply that he has actually helped to fight against the stereotyping and categorization of homosexuals in the West.

To make this clear it must be kept in mind that the Greeks considered good-looking adolescent boys legitimate and natural objects of desire for normal men.<sup>6</sup> This passivity of the adolescent was institutionalized in their culture so that moral stigma attached to man boy love unless the latter was mercenary or immodest. The Roman and oriental cultures favoured the same attitude in relation to men but made an important reservation in the case of the boy-catamites. Passivity was now disgraceful not because it was homosexual but because it was feminine and in a strongly patriarchal culture discrepant ethical standards existed for the sexes. The catamite, if discovered, would have to face social obloquy because he had chosen the females' role.<sup>7</sup> However, adolescent boys' beauty was celebrated more often than female beauty in Muslim mystic literature where indeed, it symbolized divine beauty.<sup>8</sup> Among the Muslims, however, whereas the desire for boys was not considered 'abnormal' or 'sick', it was indeed considered sinful - as, of course, were all extra-marital sexual activities.<sup>9</sup>

The tradition of the Renaissance was not essentialist either. Sodomy with youths - for there is no evidence proving the existence of the kind of adult-homosexuality which exists today - was viewed with horror but it was considered a product of inordinate lust not mental illness or biological determinism.<sup>10</sup> Later homosexual sub-cultures emerged and by the early twentieth century homosexual behaviour had become linked in people's minds with effeminacy and neurosis.<sup>11</sup> In the Victorian Public School, however, the oriental model of the older boy - younger boy or man-boy relationships prevailed. However, there was a strong tradition of sentimental friendship, spiritual devotion on the David-Jonathan or the platonic model, as well as coarse eroticism.<sup>12</sup> More often than not tenderness was not absent in these relationships but, if the relationship was sexual, the boy who had taken the feminine role could be teased and, presumably, psychologically harmed. His active partner, was, however, treated with such envious chaff as heterosexual philanderers are subjected to nowadays.<sup>13</sup>

While conceding that such attitudes were neither fair nor conducive to the happiness of all concerned, it must not go unnoticed that they - like those of the Renaissance - were not essentialist in conception. That is to say that they did not assume that people were *either* 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' and that if they were the former they were effeminate, abnormal or neurotic. They made it possible for the ephēbophile not to be categorized as an alien being in the public school 'milieu' and for the catamite to escape social obloquy if he could conceal that aspect of his past as a grown-up. (The mutual sexual practices of grown-up men were, of course, not very well understood so that it was only being sodomized which was disgraceful). There was, in other words, no psychological imperative to define one's sexuality and, with reference to it, one's social identity and behaviour pattern. I have therefore based this article on the assumption that the modern attitude towards homosexuality, because it does not distinguish between varieties of homosexual behaviour, has created a stereotype of the 'homosexual' in the public mind which has alienated more people who respond to males than the attitudes of the Orient, Rome or the Victorian public schools. Since the modern image of the homosexual as effeminate, neurotic and incapable of marriage is rooted in pseudo-scientific theories it is an inescapable fact of the Western man's mental conditioning. Since this feature of it could give a negative self-image and endangers gender-confusion in all those who have, for any reason, homosexual experiences, it is, in fact, less humanitarian in effect than per-modern prejudices.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that though Angus Wilson has debunked Victorian paternalistic attitudes towards homosexuality he has not helped in breaking the modern stereotypes about it. In fact, I shall contend that his fiction helps to confirm the myths which have made this stereotyping and its concomitant alienation of the 'homosexual' possible.

With this in mind I will come to the fiction of Angus Wilson and see how it relates to modern Western stereotypes of homosexuality.

To begin with he makes no distinction between the different manifestations of homosexuality according to the choice of sex-objects. In 'El Dona Frentes', a short story included in *The Wrong Set*, Mr. Newman is an ephēbophile since he likes an eighteen year old Swedish youth called Sven. Eric, the boy-friend of Bernard Sands, the protagonist of *Hemlock and After*<sup>14</sup> (1952), is a youth too. However, Eric is described more in conformity with the Greek-Roman Oriental image of ephēbes than Sven. He is considered 'a good-looking boy' by the cashier with something very distinguished about his dark eyes and fair wavy hair (HAA 34). In fact he has the prettiness of a page and

gratifies himself by narcissistically comparing himself with 'the youngest of Lorenzo's pages' (p. 32). This preoccupation with youthfulness and boyish good-looks is central to Hamo Langmuir's sexual problems in *As if By Magic*. Hamo Langmuir, the eminent agriculturist whose magic crop has created great wealth cheek by jowl with abject poverty in rice-growing countries, is a typical ephebophile. His relationship with Leslie, in spite of the latter's genuine affection, cannot be sustained when Leslie's boyish looks vanish.

'You can't have it off with someone of twenty-five. I think I can take that part as read now' (says Leslie) 'All right' [replies Hamo] 'Make it difficult for me to say. Anyway, with anyone else but you, it would be twenty-two. Only you look so young' [AIBM 67].

Hamo embarks upon a quest for 'the fairest Youth in the world' and finds him in Ceylon. The ephebe has an ideal shape [waist 24, hips 35, chest 30] [p 173, 230] which emphasizes buttocks rather than male genital organs. This image of the ephebe is reinforced in descriptions of Ray in *Late Gall* whose face is like 'a beautiful girl [s]' [LC 99] and of Mircus who in *No Laughing Matter* goes out as a sixteen year old boy to be picked up by men.

However, the 'Uncles' in *As if By Magic* are paedophiles. The boys they prefer are either pre-puberal children or pubescents. That is why Hamo makes it quite clear that he likes adolescent boys and youths but not children. When one of the paedophiles invites him to gratify himself with the boys, he declares :

'I'm afraid they are all a bit tender for me' [p. 167]

Obviously the writer does distinguish between the differences in sexual orientation. Similarly the writer distinguishes between Hamo's ephebophilia and Martin's androphilia [the latter likes Leslie after he ceases to please Hamo]. But all these distinctions are lost in the general categorization of all these behaviour-patterns under the rubric of 'homosexuality'. Thus the passive homosexuality of Marcus and Leslie as adults, the acceptance of the catamite's role in the case of Ray, Eric, Larry, Hassan and the native youths fancied by Hamo, as well as the active androphilia, paedophilia and ephebophilia of the various characters are all evaluated by the same homophobic social criteria.

The consequences of this are that most heterosexual characters express enlightened liberal sentiments while detesting homosexuals whereas, on another level, the homosexuals themselves internalize these negative and self-rejective attitudes and exhibit neurotically alienated behaviour-patterns. The first kind of attitude is illustrated by Bernard's daughter Elizabeth who says :

'Oh theoretically, I know. Elizabeth was impatient. 'It would have been pretty awful if you hadn't. I'm not medieval or something. I quite like queers if it comes to that, so long as they're not on the make like Evelyn's boys. I'd abolish all those ridiculous laws anyway. But then, I don't believe in capital punishment, or at least, I'm not sure, but if I didn't I wouldn't immediately commit murder' (HAA 58).

But these platitudinous assertions of liberal-individualism do not conceal the unmitigated contempt she feels for homosexuals. Her highly emotive vocabulary, in fact, reveals her real feelings. She not only categorizes people like her father as well as catamites and pathics as 'homosexual' but uses the word 'queer' which adduces her own acceptance of the myth of their being abnormal or mentally ill. Incidentally she does not consider the possibilities of Bernard's sex-objects being psychologically harmed though that would have been a defensible moral position. Her real objection, in spite of the individualist rhetoric of 'we're all quite separate adults and we can't rule our lives and wants by what's going to shock the others' (p. 59), is precisely that her father is not socially acceptable to her if he is stigmatized as a 'homosexual'. The rest is the lip-service the modern liberal pays to ideals which cannot but fail as long as the 'homosexual' is alienated as a 'type' apart from the rest of the society.

The same stock-response comes from the two fathers Professor Middleton and Harold when they learn that their sons are 'homosexuals'. When Elvira tells the Professor that John 'is a homosexual' (ASA 202), also using the word 'queer' for him, he answers slowly:

'I didn't know that John was a homosexual' he said. 'I know very little about him really, and even less about the subject we're discussing. I've only come across it three or four times in my life, among people I actually knew, that is. It revolts me rather, I think, but I'm not violent about the subject. I'm just not interested'. (ASA 202)

But, notwithstanding his disclaimers to the contrary, the Professor is prejudiced about the subject and his lack of interest is only from homophobic distaste. He tells Mrs Portway about Gilbert Stakesay that 'whatever his faults (he) was completely normal' (p. 289) and reveals his complete acceptance of the modern idea that only heterosexuals are 'normal' and that ephebophilia - for John likes adolescent boys - is abnormal.

Harold, interestingly enough, is not as revolted by the suspicion of ephebophilia on the Public School model as he is by passive homosexuality. This is a point which critics have not interpreted with reference to these

discrepant attitudes towards homosexuality. Gransden<sup>15</sup> relates it to the Victorian convention of silence whereas Arthur Edelstein sees it solely as further evidence of Harold's dishonest pretense of largemindedness when he says :

The 'understanding' letter he writes to his older son, on learning that the latter is a homosexual (it was evident all along, though not to Harold), is [a] futile and dishonest gesture-after-the-fact.<sup>16</sup>

The supporting evidence for this view is furnished by the letter he writes to Ray in which he says :

If you had, what was probably only a passing phase in every adolescents' life [I seem dimly to remember some 'crush' as we called them on a golden-haired, cherubic junior-by-now no doubt a hoary father of five - in my own school days] [it] need never have assumed the exaggerated proportions in your life that it has now [LC-3 5].

Harold's confession of an infatuation with a 'choir-boy' is reminiscent of the typical experience of Victorian upper form public school boys. Since the female role was given to the younger and prettier partner, the senior boy never lost his positive image as a male. Secondly, once again in the Victorian tradition, such an infatuation was considered a 'passing phase'. The modern image of homosexuality being a pathological condition of mind and therefore likely to be permanent had, as I have mentioned earlier, still not been unanimously accepted. Thus Harold receives no great shock as long as he does not suspect his son of having given up the male role. Even when Mark says 'Ray's never liked girls' [p. 298], he probably thinks it is because he has not grown out of his 'crushes' on 'cherrubic' boys. Ry's first letter, too, is quite-obscure. He does not specify his sexual role in relation to Geoffrey. It is only when the second letter comes and Ray reveals that 'Geoffery had wanted him to join him for the past three years' [p. 310] and that he now worked for him and lived in his flat that Harold realizes that his son is a despised catamite. It is then that he reveals his Victorian prejudice for males who take the women's part and call him 'a little whore' [p. 312]. Had he actually internalized modern indiscriminating homophobic values he would have reacted more like Professor Middleton or Elizabeth, but because he adheres to paternalistic values he practices what is, in effect, male-chauvinism rather than hetero-chauvinism'.

On the whole the homosexual underworld is depicted as mean, ignoble and selfish. Isobel finds so many beautiful pansy young men, all with the same standard voices, jargon, bow-ties and complicated hair-do's, that she tended now to ignore them' [SDD 157]. Sherman, in *Hemlock and After* is a homosexual and his introduction to Eric is described as follows :

Sherman Winter, however, advanced eagerly towards them. 'Bernard my dear, Heavens!, Sherman's speech had not changed for twenty-five years 'And with such beauty, double Heavens! Don't be cagey, dear, introduce !' when Bernard said, 'This is Sherman winter, Eric Craddock, Sherman. I only hope you hate each other like poison'. (HAA 88)

And this caricatured 'Pansy manner forms the distinctive of feature the minor homosexual figures. Along with the manner goes the implicit suggestion that such artificial human beings are inadequate even on moral grounds Leslie, though so unselfish and devoted to Hamo, does leave him to live with Martin in his quest for self-fulfilment. However, given the liberal cult of sexual release and self-fulfilment, the author can approve of him for this with impunity. What is less praiseworthy is his denial to lend his villa to Alexandra, his niece, when she is pregnant, when his man-friend Martin insists on lending it to her he says :

If Ally has her baby in my villa then that's the last you'll see of me (AIBM 117)

And that is enough to make Martin recant his generous offer and tell Alexandra that in an individualistic society the imperative of helping others would have to be abandoned under the illusion of self-reliance. The 'Uncles' have a seraglio of oriental boys whom they exploit with impunity in *As if By Magic*. Here, however, the writer shows his complete disapproval for what is, in effect, a variant of slavery. The anti-colonial overtones of the book are by no means counteracted by Hamo's own penchant for the local youths. The latter are older and, in every case, willing partners whereas the young boys have been seduced by economic inducement. On this assumption even Marcus who keeps Arab catamites in *No Laughing Matter* does not emerge as blameless as Hamo. The other major figure such as Bernard Sands and John Middleton too cannot escape censure.

Bernard Sand's case, however is of central significance in establishing the consequences of the homophobic reaction towards homosexuals in western societies. Here it is a successful author, a socially-accepted man, who accepts homophobic attitudes while paying lip-service to liberal ideals. 'I could say I've made my attitude on the subject perfectly clear. In *Night Gleaning* and, again in my essay on Goethe' (HAA 58) he tells Elizabeth as indeed he has. But still, in practice, he feels thrilled when a homosexual young man is arrested for importuning in Liecester Square. This has been seen as a case of the modern failure of humanism. A. O. J. Cockshut pointing out this

failure compares it with Hubert's attempts to procure a thirteen year old girl. He asks the question:

Where is the difference? Is it merely that one kind of perversion is more repulsive than another? If it is just a matter of taste, then tastes will naturally vary, Is it that one kind is more anti-social than another?

And concludes, by way of reply, that Bernard is a humanist who 'despairs, yet never ceases to clutch in his agony at humanism's tattered banner'<sup>17</sup> Other critics too seem to favour conceptions about the presence of evil motives in good actions. C. B. Cox,<sup>18</sup> for instance, feels that awareness of such negative motives makes his final redemption possible, whereas Jay Halio says that there is a 'streak of cruelty or sadism that underlies his humanist love'<sup>19</sup> Edwin Riddel, however, seeks to explain his failure in terms of the incompatibility of the humanist temperament in the modern world. He says:

The important thing about the characterization of Bernard Sands is that he is the humanist temperament in the modern materialistic society, but the whole underlying question of his position is whether the novelist can occupy the same place today as the novelist of the nineteenth century whom Wilson so admires<sup>20</sup>.

In fact it is hardly a question of the compatibility of humanism with either 'modern materialistic society' or a Freudian mistrust of one's good motives, It is merely an illustration of the humanist idea that the values of kindness, charity and altruism are not compatible with homophobia. Bernard Sand's failure is an individual moral failure though, of course, it would not have taken this form in a society which had not had such prejudices against homosexuals. As it is, he has internalized these prejudices and they have impaired his moral integrity and made him, without being fully cognizant of it, unsympathetic to the open homosexual. That is why he persuades his ex-boyfriend not to stay with the notorious Sherman:

'I'm sorry' said Bernard. 'I just don't think anyone who stays long at Sherman's will be much worth knowing. I thought, at least, that you'd learnt that sort of open ruthlessness and cruelty were not only disgusting, but also calculated to put people off' (HAA 96).

In fact, Bernard is on the side of snobs like Evelyn and hypocrites like Elizabeth. His effort to prevent Terence from living with Sherman is a



defence of the very attitudes which makes his daughter so unsympathetic, Since he stands higher in the 'pecking order' than Sherman he can imply that the latter is despicable on account of his open homosexual behaviour. From this point of view his behaviour towards Eric too is selfish, If he is helping to foster and perpetuate the social values which could give the boy a negative self-image as being a 'pansy', and 'queer' he is ethically unjustified in introducing him to the homosexual underworld or initiating him into paederasty at all. This, it may be said, is the case against John Middleton's relations with the boy Larry. Here the Socratic allusion to Hemlock rings false since Greek boys were not similarly placed in relation to their cultural norms.

In the light of this reasoning the failure of Bernard to feel sorry for the young man can be understood. His reaction to the young man's arrest is described as follows :

It was neither compassion nor fear that had frozen Bernard. He could only remember the intense, the violent excitement that he had felt when he saw the hopeless terror in the young man's face, the tension with which he had watched for the disintegration of a once confident human being, He had been ready to join the hounds in the kill (HAA 53).

The incident is of such vital import that Angus Wilson comments upon it in his autobiographical book *The wild Garden*.

The scene in Leicester Square in which he realizes with desperation his own sadistic nature may appear too sudden a revelation for a man of Bernard's intelligence who has already passed middle age (p. 31)

But the writer fails to realize that, in the crypts of his mind, Bernard Sands has accepted the popular derogatory image of the homosexual. In Mrs. Evelyn's party, let us remember, he ostentatiously sees himself in the role of the apparently respectable' god-father of the disreputable 'queer' group. Thus, he reflects, if the latter drove out, the older, more effete, more established, more indigenous fauna' he would have to take the side of the other group and remain to make havoc with the destructive invaders. It was after all only a question of which kind of rat you preferred to be' (HAA 102). This is the mood in which he has a discussion with Charles about the exercise of authority :

'I'm not particularly happy with those in authority, although I get on with them all right' (p. 19)

He declares in conclusion and goes to Leicester Square to wait for Terence. The homosexual young man tries to attract his attention but he disregards him with assumed frigidity. The young man is 'second rate' in his eyes and from such people Charles's embittered acceptance of his official station in life has preserved him' (p. 106). This sets off the process of ratiocination which begins by an identification with the heterosexual world, and goes on to reject the young man as belonging to a category apart from his own world and consequently he feels pleasure at the young man's arrest. It is the pleasure of a heterosexual who hates all homosexuals and he feels it because he has identified with the heterosexual world. In essence it is the reaction of the Victorian public school ephebophile who does not accept himself as a homosexual at all and sees his inclusion in that category as a threat to his male-image. Since the open passive homosexual is as much a threat to his security as he is to the homophobic heterosexual, so both join in the hunt when the time comes.

However, the Victorian public-school paederast would not have been called a 'queer' anyway. The modern ephebophile is. So the imperative to secure his psychological integrity makes him dissociate with the most offending members of the homosexual world. This is not to deny that Bernard Sands had elements of cruelty in his psyche. His exploitation of boys and the inability to communicate with his wife are, to some extent, the outcome of cruelty. It is, however, worth stating clearly that it is modern homophobia intensified by his resentment at being considered 'queer' which brings out this hidden cruelty at a crucial time,

The other major myths which may not apply to all homosexuals but are reinforced are - as already mentioned - the myths of marriage being incompatible with homosexuality; the alleged preference for male genitalia; the alleged appeal of hardness in the sex-object; and that they molest little boys. Taking the marriages of homosexuals we find that Bernard Sand's marriage is unhappy and he remains 'alone and yet never alone' (TWG 99). He feels guilty for marrying her and is for ever recalling that he had done his wife a great wrong'. This is a judgement most critics often pass on the marriages of boy-lovers. Philippe Julian, for example, says about Oscar Wilde's marriage:

Oscar suddenly decided to live an ordered life; he came to a decision, perhaps the most serious mistake that this charming man was to commit: he married<sup>21</sup>.

Though, as Richard Burton pointed out, in the Muslim orient the paterfamilias often turned to the Ganymede<sup>22</sup> once his wife, or wives became unshapely. Other marriages in Angus Wilson, such as Mr. Newman's are tension ridden

too. Mr. Newman's object of desire, the flirtatious Swedish youth Sven decides that 'if so kind a man should behave stupidly, it would be necessary to be very polite and very firm' (WS 216); But this does not prevent the youth from wanting to 'make that bitch unhappy' (meaning, of course, Mrs. Newman). The youth does that and comes home with Mr. Newman without having spent the night with him. He has, however, the ring symbolizing his surrogate-marriage intimacy with Mr. Newman whereas Mrs. Newman only gets a pendant. She refuses to wear the pendant and the story ends ambiguously with Sven about to depart and Mrs. Newman reconciled with her husband. However, this is only subterfuge as far as the husband is concerned. He is glad because he has not been found out :

'Safe thought Edwin, safe, thank God! But the room seemed without air, almost stifling. He threw open one of the windows and let in a refreshing breeze that blew across from the hills (WS 233).

The homosexual marriage, Angus Wilson has shown precludes real communication and genuine intimacy.

Other homosexual characters do not marry at all preferring to live with members the same sex or alone. In *Hemlock and After* Terence and Sherman want to live together; in *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* John wants to keep Larry; in *Late Call* Ray leaves home to live with Geoffrey and in *As if By Magic* Leslie and Martin live like a married couple. In *The Middle-Age of Mrs. Eliot*, David lives alone after his friend's death whereas in *No Laughing Matter* Marcus keeps Arab catamites. The reluctance to marry is clearly portrayed in *As if by Magic* when Alexandra offers to marry Hamo. Having been conditioned in the west, Hamo, of course, considers himself a 'queer' and thinks that 'it was all wrong. First, because all women married to queers were deceived' (p. 364). Then other stereotyped ideas come to his mind. 'He tried to remind himself that she had no cock, but then had he ever cared whether the youths he fucked had cocks or not?' (p. 364). Though Hamo gets rid of this idea by self-knowledge, but even in his case, 'obsessed though he is by youth's buttocks, he cannot fully emancipate himself from the stereotype. Even when he is drowning, he thinks 'it would never have done, womens' bodies suck you in, I need the hard resistance of a youth' (p. 368). This is, however, not really true. He likes youths only when they are not hirsute like men and he tells the Jonkheer 'I have no taste for the tough. That I can promise you' (p. 168).

Thus when the second English 'uncle' teases him about a youth he had fancied calling him 'hoary' and 'hairy' Hamo not only shudders at the adjectives but

insists on the youth's tenderness saying he was 'a smooth nineteen' (p. 168). All the youths he fancies have the qualities of the ideal ephebes - smoothness, coyness, good-looks and slenderness. His senses tell him that he likes a girl with such attributes :

It was a sensation he had never known, a lust and a sort of bursting through of worship into desire that made his head swim, his ears ring. If only, he thought, there had been girls like this, like boys when he was younger (p. 364).

But the attitudes he has accepted from his society prove even stronger than the direct evidence of his senses and Hamo Langmuir cannot get married. In this context it may be remembered that Hamo and Ray are among the noblest of the homosexuals, Hamo dies while trying to prevent a riot in Goa which has been caused because of his methods of rice cultivation. The families whom his innovations have impoverished - to whom, ironically enough, his ephebes belong - gather together as a mob, which throws him into the river where he drowns. Ray has the moral courage to live with Geoffrey and has always been helpful to Sylvia, his grandmother. Yet both these characters consider themselves abnormal. Hamo, as has already been said, admits himself to be a 'queer' (AIBM 364) and Ray tells his brother Mark how he would have settled down in Carshall. 'If I was normal, that is, but then I'm not' (LC 299). Similarly John Middleton accepts himself to be a case of oedipal complex. His mother's excessive love, he thinks, had made him a homosexual. In hysterical diatribe after Larrie's absconding from his mother's house he reveals his complete acceptance of Freudian theories of homosexuality :

John shouted at her more violently each minute. He had rehearsed this scene so often in his life when her possessiveness had threatened him that now the words poured out before his sense of shame could stop them. 'You'd better get wise to yourself, Thingy' he said, 'you've never considered anyone else but yourself for a minute of your life. Your affection for me! you've tried to strangle me with your selfish love! He laughed hysterically in her face. 'If you don't care for my friendships you can thank your unhealthy, greedy love, for me? He was horrified to hear himself speak all these stock, casebook sentences.

Inges great round mouth opened wide, but she only mumbled, 'It was not a good friendship, your friendship, with Larrie, Jonnie'. He stared at her for a moment, 'That bloody swine your husband's been talking to you' he said (ASA 310).

John seems to accept himself as a psychological case' with the acquiescence created by a non-critical faith in 'case-book sentences', There is nothing in the book which would suggest that such theory may itself be suspect outside the western social context. Nor is the force of this aetiological assumption mitigated by presenting an alternative one in the case of Marcus. There is, however, a departure from the accepted norm. Neither is there a possessive mother in this case, nor is Marcus seduced by a homosexual. He confesses that he started going out at sixteen with 'red on my cheeks and my lips from my paint-box, and sometimes blue on my eyelids' (NLM 201). He begins, therefore, by pretending to be a catamite and tries to imitate the homosexual by adopting the stereotyped mincing gait and even pinning flowers on his coat. The more he is scared the more he lapses into this alienating mimesis. He confesses :

Once when I'd pinned a small bunch of violets on to my overcoat a man came up and said 'Bloody little pouff?' They ought to poleaxe the lot of you! I was so scared I peed myself, but I only put on a more queeny act I held the collars of my overcoat together as though it was the sables of the Grandduchess and smuggled out of Vladivostock. I just longed to be noticed. It didn't matter how. (p 20)

But this is a small deviation from the norm and loses its significance since, however he started, Marcus becomes obviously effeminate at the age of twenty-one :

His good-looks, however, are of the kind that do not give promise of the masculinity demanded conventionally in our own day of those who call them men.....

His intermediate type has never perhaps found a satisfactory social niche since Saint Paul, interpreting Jesus Christ's revolutionary views in the light of his own peculiar sexual temperament, brought to an end the long-lived sexual morality of the Romano Hellenic world. In 1925 he stands between the national scapegoatism of Oscar Wilde and the national obsessive attention of the later decades. Given England, he has no choice but to be 'artistic' (p. 206).

Thus, though Marcus has become a catamite particularly for economic reasons and partially because he does not get adequate maternal love at home, he is regarded by the author as the 'intermediate type' later. The stereotype is asserted and the little departure from convention becomes unimportant since only a reader familiar with multicultural theories of homosexuality would notice it.

Strangely enough, there is another departure from Western expectations. Marcus, after having been a pathic for long (as his more serious emotional relationship with Jack and his carnal passion for the virile Ted (pp. 303-307) prove) becomes an ephebophile, much according to the oriental pattern, in his middle age. He is shown to have a playful erotic relationship with a catamite called Hassan whom he pulls, for instance, 'face downwards on the cushions beside him' (p. 429). He also develops a taste for dancing boys and lives like an oriental aristocrat. Of course, Angus Wilson is aware of the expected transition of the catamite to the married man and the ephebophile in oriental societies. The catamite Hassan at the age of twenty six, for instance, is 'married and building a fine family. What he may have been as a pretty boy of sixteen is long forgotten' (p. 458). But this is a transition which no other character makes and is therefore, distinctive. It does not, however, help in breaking the stereotype because there is little differentiation between ephebophilia and adult homosexuality in the Western mind. If Marcus had turned to girls, however, he would have been considered to have become 'normal' and that would, indeed, have been a striking departure from the stereotyped norm.

This transition may have been because Marcus too does not really accept his homosexuality though the writer does not make that clear. The only thing which seems to point to that interpretation is his bitter memory connected with the events of his youth. He cries when he recounts how a major had insulted him when he told him that Margaret the short story-writer was his sister (NLM 203). The major is, obviously, one of those grown-up Victorian school-boys who considered themselves normal and the youths they exploited 'bitches' (p. 203) Thus Marcus's indulgence in oriental catamites when in a position of economic power may be an act of vengeance on the unfeeling cruelty of the exploiters he met with as a boy.

The cruelty associated with homosexuality may itself be related to the cultural images of it in the minds of the participants. The first type is purely neurotic and has been more in evidence in modern Western Literature than any other. Of this type the works of the Marquis de Sade are the seminal source. His works are full of gratuitous cruelty which is relished since it is productive of sexual pleasure. In English Literature, however, D.H. Lawrence's short story 'The Prussian Officer' with its theme of the Officer's lust for his orderly changing into cruelty was the first work by a major artist of this nature. Thus Angus Wilson's self-confessed experience involving the transformation of lust into cruelty follows a tradition much in evidence in Modern

Literature. In this context it may be worthwhile to remember that Wilson recounts an experience of this nature from his own boyhood as follows :

More disturbing to me is the recollection that, at as late an age as fifteen, I deliberately burned moths in the flame of a candle that lit my bedroom in the seaside house we rented during the summer holidays. I also remember clearly that this childish perversity was closely connected with sexual excitement and that the moths were fairly conscious substitutes for boys at school who had aroused my lust (TWG 80).

And this may be a possible explanation for making Bernard Sands possess a streak of cruelty in his mental make-up

It is the cruelty born out of prejudice and fear, however, which is more relevant. Though Angus Wilson says 'suppressed lusts laced with sadism are, of course, the common-places of English public school education' (TWG 80), This was not always the case, as has been said earlier, but he is not entirely wrong in that this has changed in the modern age as tenderness has come to be dismissed as sentimentalism, and all forms of homosexual behaviour are liable to create personality crises and negative feelings. Thus cruelty towards homosexuals has increased because they have come to be seen as abnormal and effeminate. If this makes the public-school senior boy with a penchant for juniors more hostile and cruel than his Victorian predecessor it is understandable in that he resists being thus categorized,

If it be conceded that attitudes must be evaluated by the social effects of their acceptance, it must be contended that modern values have significantly failed in making homosexuals find happiness within the society. They have merely extended the negative categorization to ephebophiles while not eliminating the others. In his depiction of homosexuals, therefore, Angus Wilson neither sees them as individuals nor in the spirit of liberal-humanism. Thus his fiction fails to transcend the prejudices of his age and culture and stands condemned on that count.

### Notes and References

1. Stephen Adams, *The Homosexual in Contemporary Fiction*, (London : Vision Press, 1980), p. 156.
2. K.W. Grandson, *Angus Wilson - Writers and Their Works*, No. 2.8, (London: Longman, 1969), p. 11; Also see Walter Allen *Tradition and Dream*, (London; Phoenix House, 1964), p.292.

3. This is the thesis of Kenneth Plummer in *Sexual Stigma* (London ; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975); Also see Plummer - ed - *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, (London : Hutchinson, 1981), pp. 18-29
4. This point was made by Mary McIntosh in 'The Homosexual Role', *Social Problems*, Vol 16, No. 2, (1968), pp. 182-92; Also see Rudolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites : Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Social History*, Vol II, No, 1, 1977, pp. 1-33.
5. Plummer (1981), pp. 54-75.
6. K J. Dover, 'Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behaviour', *Arethusa*, Vol. 6, (1973), p. 65.
7. Trumbach, p. 8-9.
8. Robert Graves and Omar Ali Shah, *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam*, (London ; Cassell & Company Ltd, 1976), p. 7; Also see the article on 'Islamic Mysticism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 9, p. 944.
9. Richard Burton. trans, *Arabian Nights*, Vol X, (London : privately printed, 1886), pp. 208-254.
10. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, (London : Gay Man's press, 1982), p. 35.
11. Bray, p. 103; Trumbach, p.17 Ulrich's theories popularized by Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* (London : Swan Sonnenschein 1909) helped further to equate homosexuality with effeminacy; Krafft-Ebing and Freud's work helped to link it, in the public mind, with mental illness and neuroses.
12. For the themes of Man-boy love see J. Z. Eglinton, *Greek Love* (London : Neville Spearman Ltd, 1971), pp. 364-405 and Timothy D'Arch Smith; *Love in Earnest* (London ; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 163-196. Whereas Eglinton uses the word 'Greek Love' and Smith 'Uranian love' for sexual or emotional response towards adolescent boys or youths, I have called it 'ephebophilia' in my unpublished M.A. dissertation 'Ephebophilia in Late Victorian English Literature', University of Sheffield 1982. This is to distinguish it from paedophilia (child-molestation) on the one hand and androphilia (responding to grown-up men) on the other.
13. See the boastful attitude of Tully who seduces younger boys in Roger G'ellerts' Play, *Quaint Honour*, (London : Secker and Warburg, 1958)
14. References to the works of Angus Wilson will be cited parenthetically in the text and denoted by prominent initials as follows : ASA *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*; London : Secker & Warburg, 1961.



- AIBM *As If By Magic* London : Secker & Warburg, 1973
- HAA *Helock and After* London : Secker & Warburg, 1950
- LC *Late Call* London : Secker & Warburg, 1964
- NLM *No Laughing Matter* London : Secker & Warburg, 1967
- SDD *Such Darling Dadas* London : Secker & Warburg, 1959
- TWS *The Wrong Set* London : Secker & Warburg, 1961
- MME *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot* London : Secker & Warburg, 1958
- TWG *The Wild Garden* London : Secker & Warburg, 1963
- BOM *A Bit off the Map* London : Secker & Warburg, 1957
15. Gransden, p. 11.
16. Arthur Edelestein, 'Angus Wilson : The Territory Behind', ed Charles Shapiro, *Contemporary British Novelists* (Southern Illinois University press, 1965; London : Arcturus, 1969), p. 151.
17. A.O.J. Cockshut, 'Favoured Sons; the Moral World of Angus Wilson', *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. 9, i, 1959, pp. 50-60.
18. C B Cox, 'The Humanism of Angus Wilson : A study of *Hellock and After*', *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Autumn 1964), p.233,
19. Jay L. Halio, *Angus Wilson*, (London: Oliver Boyd, 1964), p. 34.
20. Edwin Riddel, 'The Humanist character in Angus Wilson' *English* Vol. 21, No. 11, (1972), p.49.
21. Philippe Julian, *Oscar Wilde*, (London : Constable & Co Ltd, 1969) p. 135.
22. Burton, p. 233

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