



that same year. This book, too, was not without its autobiographical elements: the violist and cellist of the fictional quintet are based

The greater the demands Mr. Sackville West makes upon his talent, the more readily it responds until . . . it is indistinguishable from genius . . . [The novel] contains passages that are almost unique: passages in which the mind and soul are stretched and amplified to their extreme capacity, passages in which beauty, love and terror have found a new and livelier expression, and in which splendour of conception is matched by nobility of language.<sup>4</sup>

New College Library, Oxford, RS5381

The library is fortunate, as well, in its fine copy of the American edition of *Tragedy*; (we appear to be one of just two libraries in the British Isles to hold a copy).<sup>5</sup> The dustjacket carries a judiciously selective snippet from the review of the American edition, when that printing appeared at the start of 1927, would focus on the two outsiders, the tragedy, and the role of the sinister Marcus Fleming in particular, and the wider implications of his subjugation of Denzil Torrent:

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<sup>4</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 1926, 100, 30, at p. 30; <sup>5</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, 1926, 100, 30, at p. 30; (9 October 1926),



44, Edward Sackville-Kyncliff A. W. G. Ya ]b[ Notwithstanding that immense personal loss in Edward's late teenage years, he clearly shone at Winchester. He garnered a string of prizes— English Literature, French, German, Latin, Greek— and a Goddard Scholarship and School Exhibition, becoming Prefect of Chapel and eventually Prefect of Hall (head boy). Thence he sailed into New College in Michaelmas 1922 with a scholarship, two years after Eddy had gone up to Christ Church. (Eddy would not complete his degree, though that can hardly be said to have held him back.)

New College Archives reveal little evidence of his time at college, though he was, for a while, a member of the New College Essay Society. He hosted a couple of its meetings in his rooms in 1923 and 1924, and read a paper<sup>12</sup> Tf1 0 0 1 378.31 6p841

Photograph of Winchester College Officers, 1922 [detail] showing J. W. McDougall

together to Paris, after which trip, back at Oxford, Jack seems to have avoided Eddy for a term, on account of something having happened, of something having gone wrong. A letter Jack wrote to Eddy from Wallington – undated, though possibly in October 1923 – is revealing:

You quite naturally thought that when you had done all that you did to make me comfortable & amused in Paris, it was odd & ungrateful in me not to see you last term . . . I was very annoyed on that occasion when you practically told me that you thought by my heartlessness I was making you ill . . . & I really wanted to leave Paris at once . . . I stayed on, as if nothing had happened, & probably gave you no pleasure: it was in fact perhaps a mistake. . . . But having done so, I wanted then to give my rather ruffled nerves a long rest, and did so for last term. Now they are rested & the affair can either start again or not, as you like. All this must seem to you too cold & detached a manner of discussing an intimate relationship.<sup>15</sup>

Can we really deduce affair, as in love affair? How close and affectionate or situation it was that was going on between these two male undergraduate friends, which perhaps defied obvious categorisation? Jack goes much further than normal in this heartfelt confessional letter, as he tries to spell things out (whatever those and as the postscript reveals of his sense of emotional vulnerability arising from his own conciliatory openness towards Eddy. And he certainly wants to keep such effusions completely confidential between the two of them:

merely or offends

P.S. Please, even if this letter amuses you (& I am facing that) do not show it to anyone.<sup>16</sup>

In another letter (also likely 1923) and now held in the British Library too, Jack writes from Eddy/Eddie spellings seem somewhat interchangeable. He signs off most affectionately, while at the same time projecting forwards – both formulaically and with a degree of vagueness – to a time when he might imagine himself the father of sons (thereby presupposing, to an extent, a heteronormative standpoint both of and for himself):





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1966). Their partnership had an inauspicious start, however. Waugh incidentally, a Catholic convert like Eddy, and an Anglican had objected when in September 1945 Jack was promoted to the Board of Chapman & Hall over a longstanding colleague at the publishers. Such was the level of disillusionment expressed to his literary agent Augustus Peters (1892-1972), in a letter Peters received 23 September 1946 that Waugh was actually considering quitting the famous publishing firm altogether, the very firm his own father had previously run:

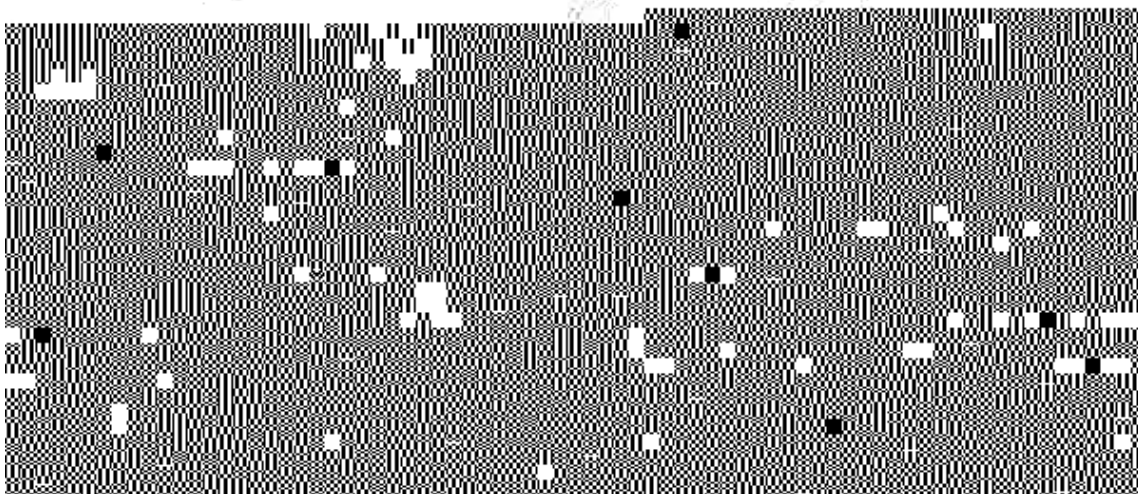
I should like to leave C & H lock stock & barrel but only for a firm like Macmillan . . . If a deal could be arranged later by which I went to Macmillan or a firm of equal

But, in time, the two men became firm friends, to the extent of respect and affection for Jack that meant he remained at Chapman & Hall. In 1949, in a letter from Waugh to Nancy Mitford, Waugh in a later letter to her of 1953, in which he muses over his playful dedication of his 1953 novella to Jack, he relates. In 1957 he was writing to Jack himself of and the following year he wrote letting



During the last 10 years of his life increasing ill health kept him more and more at home, where he was devoted to his charming American wife and their three daughters and five grandchildren. Died at his home in Shackleford, July 15th, 1976.<sup>38</sup>

A devoted family man – nothing out of the ordinary there. There is, indeed, nothing in that conclusion to Jc\`b`K ]`YmA V8 ci [U`fU]UgEÄ UFWg: `Ya ]b[ obituary in ..., or in any part of it, that speaks of any fleeting, cruelly taunting same-sex passion in >UW`g youth (his heady days at Oxford), a tormenting erotic relationship that may – or may not – have been. Surely, no New College anti-hero is to be found here?



Photograph (24 October 2014, E`cZ# c\_YfgN the home in Shackleford, Surrey, where Jc\`b`K ]`YmA V8 ci [U`fU]UgEÄ UFWg: `Ya ]b[ died in 1976<sup>39</sup> Surrey History Centre, Woking, CC1101/3/70/635

Christopher Skelton-Foord  
Librarian  
New College, Oxford

<sup>38</sup> ... , 9.

<sup>39</sup> H\Y\ca Yk \YfY>UW`A V8 ci [U`X]YX`cb`% `:i`m% +\*`k Ug# c\_YfgN]b`G\UW`YZcfXZ: cXUa ]b[ žGi ffYm`>UW`UddYUfg first to have taken out a let on this house in 1938. The house was a mid-18th-century redbrick one, with a small hall, drawing room, dining room, and five bedrooms, and it was set on a 1.8-acre plot. For further details, see the 1944 printed auction papers,

, available via <[www.peperharow.info/auction.htm](http://www.peperharow.info/auction.htm)> (Accessed: 15 June 2024). Photographs of how the house would have looked around the time Jack lived there are held by the Surrey History Centre in Woking. These days the house is a Grade II-listed building; see <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1029517>> (Accessed: 15 June 2024).