

changed for his taste. The more democratic emphasis of education after World War II, sparked by Labor governments, eroded both the privileges and mystique of Cambridge and Oxford. Moreover, gay liberation in the 1970s diffused homosexual life and the need for special redoubts of privileged homophilia at the universities and public schools receded.

Alfred L. Rowse, claiming to be unbiased, and Sir Kenneth Dover, professing that he is straight and happily married, broke the taboo against writing on homosexuality which John Addington Symonds thought had barred him from a chair in classical scholarship and on which Sir Maurice Bowra never dared write a book or even an article. After World War II British universities proliferated. At Essex and Sussex, institutions on a new model, gay studies have emerged under auspices that encourage rethinking of established gender patterns.

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CAMP

Camp is a type of wit common to, but by no means exclusive to male homosexuals. A definition of the concept is elusive, but it may be tentatively circumscribed by saying that camp consists of taking serious things frivolously and frivolous things seriously. Camp is not grounded in speech or writing as much as it is in gesture, performance, and public display. When it is verbal, it is expressed less through the discursive means of direct statement than through implication, innuendo, and intonation. As an art of indirection and suggestion, it was suited to the purposes of a group that found it imprudent to confront culturally approved values directly, but preferred to undermine them through send-ups and sly mockery. Because it is viewed, perhaps mistakenly, as relatively unthreatening, camp gains entree into the upscale worlds of chic and swank.

Roots of Camp. Camp has close links with the modern world of mass entertainment, and it may have found its first artistic outlet in late-nineteenth-century music halls, vaudeville, and pantomime. The word first appears in the slang of this period—the earliest printed attestation is from 1907—where it refers to outrageous street behavior. The term has been plausibly traced to the French verb *se camper*, which can mean (among other things) to posture boldly. (In Australia, *camp* has acquired the common meaning of “gay, homosexual” without other qualification, but this usage is rare elsewhere, where heterosexuals and bisexuals may be “camp” with little fear of loss of reputation.)

Some recognize a gamut of low to high camp, ranging from the provocative behavior of a street queen determined to “camp up a storm” to the elegant writings of Oscar Wilde and Ronald Firbank. Indeed, Wilde’s tour of America in 1882 was one of the first media successes of high camp. By definition camp is a form of exhibitionism that requires an audience; it cannot be done in the privacy of one’s home—except as practice.

The targets of camp are good taste, marriage and the family, suburbia, sports, and the business world. Camp is thus a less hostile continuation of the trend of nineteenth-century Bohemia to *épater le bourgeois*, to bait middle-class respectability. Undeniably, camp is subversive, but not too much so, for it depends for its survival on the patronage of high society, the entertainment world, advertising, and the media.

Antecedents and Analogues. Camp is characteristically modern, yet examples have been noted in earlier centuries, including the Roman writer Petronius, the Italian mannerist paintings of the sixteenth century, the *précieuses* of the French salons of the time of Louis XIV, Bel Canto opera, and in fops and dandies of various periods. To a large extent camp is in the eye of the beholder, so that Charles De Gaulle’s stylized speeches and appearances

may have been camp to scoffing Anglo-Saxons but not to his French followers.

Camp should be distinguished from several related phenomena. Classic satire strives to reinforce social solidarity by exposing its targets to withering ridicule, while camp narrows the distance between performer and victim, suggesting that the last laugh might actually be with the latter. Kitsch is unintentional bad taste, while camp is always aware of the elements of artifice and irony. A camp collector can acquire kitsch objects, but only if they are displayed in a manner that indicates he knows what they are. Camp often employs elements of the decadent sensibility, but avoids heavy satanism and the macabre. Thus Joris-Karl Huysmans' novels are decadent, the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* is camp. Camp may employ the device of pastiche, that is, putting together components that have been "pinched" from different sources. However, not all pastiche is camp (Baroque oratorios, 1980s painting). The world of chic belongs exclusively to the affluent and fashionable, but even a guttersnipe can attempt camp. Bitchiness reflects underlying anger and a desire to wound; camp tolerantly views everyone as imperfect, but eminently salvageable. A frozen analogue of bitchiness, "attitude" requires striking a pose, but one that is too narrow and inflexible. Drag in the sense of a male impersonating a woman may be an element of camp, but ironically not if it is successful. If the transvestite's simulation is so complete that the observer is taken in, the element of conscious and detectable artifice that is essential to camp is lost. Camp is always presented with an invisible wink.

Representative Figures. Examples that would generally be recognized as camp are (in the theatre) Sarah Bernhardt, Noel Coward, Joe Orton, Tallulah Bankhead, Danny LaRue and "impressionists" generally; (in films) Fatty Arbuckle, Divine, Jayne Mansfield, Mae West, and Sean Connery (in the James Bond movies); (in literature) Wilde, Firbank, Jean Cocteau,

Gabriele D'Annunzio, Lytton Strachey, the Sitwells, Stevie Smith, Evelyn Waugh, Dorothy Parker, and Truman Capote; (in popular music), David Bowie, Boy George, Mick Jagger, Grace Jones, and Bette Midler. By common consent the crown prince of camp in the 1960s and 1970s was Andy Warhol. His effect was achieved not solely through his paintings and films, but through his trademark self-stylization that used New York's media factory as its megaphone. During this period, popular culture, formerly condemned by the intellectual elite, became fashionable, though it was usually approached in an arch, ironic context. The principle of shift of context, yielding incongruity, is a basic camp procedure.

Conclusion. Perhaps it is not too much to say that camp aspires to fulfill Friedrich Nietzsche's precept of the reversal of all values. It certainly serves to bring into question established hierarchies of taste, as expressed in the scale from high brow to low brow. Proof of the accomplishment of such subversion is the delighted cry: "It's so bad it's good!" By suggesting that inauthenticity pervades the performance and the thing satirized, the camp adept puts us on notice that the line between authenticity and inauthenticity is never easy to draw; it may even be nonexistent. The world of camp then serves to deconstruct the cult of seriousness and "values" that sought to fill the gap produced by the fading of religion and traditional class society in the West. Significantly, no equivalent of camp seems to exist in the Third World. The recognition and cultivation of camp is thus a distinctively modern phenomenon, belonging to a cultural landscape of doubt, alienation, relativism, and pluralism.

See also Humor; Variety, Revue, and Cabaret Entertainment.

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