

## **Introduction:**

I have chosen to write a sequel to *Another Self*; a short autobiographical novel by the historian and diarist, James Lees-Milne.

First published in 1970, *Another Self* tells the story of Jim, an aloof, baffling boy from what he describes as a lower-upper class family. The original novel deals with Jim's life from his birth in 1908 to 1941 when we learn he has been invalided out of the army during the second world war.

Readers will undoubtedly track similarities with *Brideshead Revisited* and in doing so, may find Jim's story rather dull. That said, Jim is more protracted when dealing with his friends and acquaintances. At times Jim is pithy, even dismissive; but there is a warmth in his own character that shines through. Unlike the Waugh novel, Jim's recollections are decidedly more comical. There is also an understanding that as Jim matures, his outlook is matched with a realisation of vocation – that of a conservationist for the English country house.

In the same way *Brideshead Revisited* ends abruptly, so *Another Self* refuses to take the reader on beyond the second world war. In truth, I believe James Lees-Milne possessed no intention to carry on his novel to a second book, though unknown to his literary agent at the time Jim really wanted to publish his diaries. In turn, the now-famous diaries would supplement any need for a further autobiographical novel.

As an avid reader of James Lees-Milne, I believe the author could have taken a different path. Such was the case of course, with Evelyn Waugh. Neither did...

In my sequel opening, we find our Jim enjoying a meal at West Wycombe Park with host Edmund Janus, a fictitious archetype of a dying breed of British upper class. Janus is trying to woo Jim back to the fold of the nation's conservation trust. The Trust have been evacuated from London to West Wycombe Park in Buckinghamshire, the stately home of the Dashwood family. Jim has been friends with the Dashwoods since the early 1930s and I'm sure views this association to support his bargaining position with Janus. With Janus's patience running thin, Jim continues to treat his exchange with Janus as a game.

## **A NEW SELF by Ian Welland**

Janus looked at Jim and said firmly, 'It's time you settled down Jim. The Trust needs you back. Lord knows your skills have been missing from our cause. How long has it been since you bloody well left us?'

Nonchalantly, Jim lent back in his chair. The unmistakable creaking of wood on fixing pierced the silent interlude allowing him to calculate an answer. 'All, about five years. But the war doesn't allow for easy access across the country right now, so what can I do? Besides, Harold remains foolishly in London and Tom is still serving abroad. Neither are available to accompany me.'

'All the more reason for you to dedicate yourself to the task in hand. You're the only one who can deliver the country house scheme and stop the wrecking ball. What does Harold think?'

'Harold has his own concerns with Sissinghurst. I don't think for one moment he wants my troubles.'

'And what troubles are they, Jim? You are no longer able to serve. Being stationed down here you will only need to warden in the village, no more than that. I'll even give you time to write those books of yours.'

Jim rested his right index finger against his upper lip. 'It's tempting.'

'Look Jim, there are no parties in town. No frolicking about. Besides, your indiscretions as we shall describe them were starting to get irritating.'

'Really?'

'You need to adopt a more discreet approach dear boy. It's perfectly alright in the upper classes as the establishment will close ranks but be clear, there are those who want to bring us down and down they will.'

Jim looked out of the west window. The fountain, long drained, had taken on a classical overgrown arcadian look. Strangling in ivy, Jim could visualise Sir Joshua Reynolds lecturing his art students with discourses on the considered high art form. Jim's eyes then alertly resumed on Janus's grumpy face. 'I do like West Wycombe and Jonny has been a great friend down the years.'

'All the more reason for you to stay here with us Jim,' said Janus placing his clenched fist on the dining table. 'You could visit the gentry. Get them on side; you're good at that. Extol the virtues of tax advantages and achieve the transfer of their piles to the Trust in due course. The winds of change, as the bloody socialists intimate, will not prevail as far as preservation goes.'

'And access?' asked Jim.

'Lord Haven will provide a letter. The roadblocks will let you through. Official government business, that sort of thing. Didn't Eton and Magdalen teach you anything?'

'Oh, it taught me alright.'

'Good. We have a desk set up for you in the green room. There's not much heating due to Jonny's primitive stoves, but I'm sure you will cope. Oh, and by the way you'll have a young buck called Stephens helping you. See he doesn't get into any mischief. He's Lord Bradenham's protégé but too young to serve.'