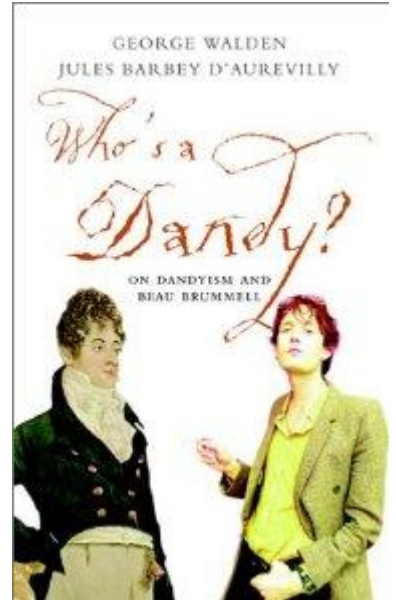


(British) unnamed male presenter: Dandy is a word that really isn't in common currency now, but 150-200 years ago you would've known exactly what it meant: a flashy, style-conscious flirtatious figure, perhaps quite elegant... er... elegant, often to be found in politics. Well, the former Conservative MP George Walden has written a history of dandyism—it's being serialized in *The Times*—and it asks amongst other things this intriguing question: "Where are our dandies now?" He's with us. I suppose it's a word, apart from anything else, that's fallen out of fashion. What do you take it to mean?

George Walden: Well, I think our understanding of dandies has fallen out of fashion too *[laugh]*. Because I think people believe that dandyism has something to do with dressing up extravagantly. Er... dressing up, to some extent yes, but you can be naked and be a dandy, because it's all about attitudes. And you mention politicians. It's very difficult for a politician today to be a dandy, because if you're a real dandy, you don't ingratiate yourself with people, and you certainly don't ingratiate yourself *[laugh]* with the public.



Unnamed male presenter: Are there any dandies in public life, then?

George Walden: Well, that's a good question. I don't think there are because in the 19th century, people talked about Disraeli¹. Well, by my definition, he was never really a true dandy...

Unnamed male presenter (interrupting): Who would you talk about? Beau Brummell?

George Walden: Yes, becau... if you go back to first principles, a true dandy must be completely idle, he must be useless...

Unnamed male presenter (cutting in): A fop?

George Walden: Er... yes, but rather more than that. Beau Brummell for example had an extremely good sense of style. So in that sense he was useful. But he didn't do anything useful in his life *[laugh]*. So that rules out a lot of people *[laugh]*.

Unnamed male presenter: Well, do we put up with people of that sort now? Do we want such adornments in our...?

George Walden: That's... that's exactly the point, because Beau Brummell was thought of by people who thought about these things, like Baudelaire, as the last cry of the aristocracy. Needless to say Beau Brummell himself was a... you know, a bit of a social climber. He wasn't an aristocrat, but he mixed amongst them. He did have taste. He wasn't just a fop in that sort of pointless sense...

¹ Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) – a Victorian PM.