

# EVELYN WAUGH STUDIES

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## NEWS

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## Interview with Sara “Sue” Hodson, The Huntington Library Naomi Milthorpe

In late 2013 The Huntington Library acquired a major collection of Evelyn Waugh manuscript materials and rare editions, through the gift of collector Loren Rothschild. The collection includes significant Waugh materials including the corrected typescript of *Decline and Fall*, the manuscript of *Ninety-Two Days*, and an important correspondence series with Chapman & Hall, as well as association copies of Waugh’s novels, addressed to friends such as Nancy Mitford and Diana Cooper.

Sara “Sue” Hodson is Curator of Literary Manuscripts at The Huntington, and a distinguished scholar of Jack London and of library and manuscript studies. This interview took place on Wednesday January 6 2016 at 3pm in Sue Hodson’s office, at The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

**Naomi Milthorpe:** My first question is about acquisition of this collection. I understand this was a gift from Loren & Frances Rothschild. Why was The Huntington interested in collecting the manuscripts, and why were the Rothschilds interested in gifting it to The Huntington?

**Sue Hodson:** We’re interested in Evelyn Waugh because he was one of the major twentieth-century British writers, and we have a little bit of Evelyn Waugh material already in the collection, which I can talk about later. Loren Rothschild is one of our trustees, and he and his wife Frances have been long-time supporters and friends of The Huntington Library. They’re some of our most important friends and colleagues and donors, and Loren is a fine collector. He’s collected in a number of areas, including Sir Richard Burton, the explorer [which he’s still collecting]. Over the years he amassed this fabulous Evelyn Waugh collection, and he knew we were interested in modern literary collections. We were interested in bolstering ours, improving, enhancing and increasing the literary holdings that we have, so he knew that this would be interesting to us, and made this incredibly generous gift.

**NM:** Why was he interested in Waugh particularly? Was he a reader of Waugh?

**SH:** He was a reader. Loren is a really remarkable scholar and collector. He reads everything. He knows the literature of what he collects very well, very deeply, [and] he was a great lover of Waugh. He considers Waugh one of the most important writers of the twentieth century, and that’s why he began to collect him – because he so admired him as a writer.

**NM:** What makes this particular collection special? What are its particular strengths?

**SH:** The overall quality of the material in this collection is quite extraordinary. Loren has done a very careful job of putting this together. He’s a wise collector, and he’s made a really good collection out of material that he’s acquired from many different sources. The manuscript drafts are important – they’re quite remarkable. “The Hopeful Pontiff” – about Pope John XXIII; the

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early travel book *Ninety-Two Days*. Those are amazing [...]. It's great to get the drafts of the novels, the short stories, the poems, whatever the writer has produced. We love to get the drafts because you can see the creative process, and that's one of the most important things about literary research. To get early items [like *Ninety-Two Days*] or relatively unknown, or lesser known, items is quite amazing, and that's one of the great strengths of this collection. There are multiple versions of parts of *Decline and Fall* [...] and then the correspondence with Chapman & Hall. The publishing correspondence is quite a good run – a hefty number of letters. The greater the quantity of letters you have between the same two correspondents, the fuller and more complete that story will become. That's one of the impressive things about this collection.

**NM:** The material from Chapman & Hall – particularly about Waugh's interest in the book production process – is fascinating, and it's something that book historians will be interested in.

**SH:** Exactly, and that's very important to know about him, because not all authors are. It's important to us in another sense: The Huntington has a sub-speciality in collecting papers that have to do with the editing and publishing process. We have a number of British and American collections, from the late eighteenth century right up to the immediate past. That portion of the [Waugh] collection, the correspondence with Chapman & Hall, fits beautifully with all that material.

**NM:** It's a wonderful fit.

**SH:** That's right – a perfect fit. We didn't have extensive Waugh holdings before this arrived, so it can't be said to be a fit in that sense, or a building to strength. It was building to the strength of our modern literary authors, and to the strength of the editing and publishing collections that we have. But [this collection] has made us into a strong repository for Evelyn Waugh.

Another great strength of the Rothschilds' Waugh collection is the signed and inscribed first editions of the books. Those are amazing, and they have fantastic associations with that whole literary and social scene. [...]. That ties into some other Waugh letters that we already had, before this [collection] came in. We have the papers of Patrick Kinross [Lord Balfour] – a British writer, traveller, journalist, travel writer – he corresponded, and was a friend of Evelyn Waugh. There are about 26 letters from Waugh to Kinross. Those are great. Many of them are written during World War Two. Evelyn Waugh can't have been a happy camper in the armed services. It was not his thing, and Kinross wasn't either, but he fit in [a little better]. I don't think Waugh fit in at all. But the *Sword of Honour* trilogy that came out [of the war] was fantastic. A couple of letters that he wrote to Kinross, who has Scottish background, he's asking for a scene in one of those three books: how would a Scots officer dress for a full dress military dinner in a Scottish castle?

**NM:** So he's getting material.

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**SH:** He's getting material for the trilogy. It's Evelyn Waugh doing his research for his novels. They're just a great series of letters anyway. They're Waugh at his most outrageous, which is wonderful to behold.

**NM:** That's what makes his writing so delicious. You've just mentioned the first editions and I want to talk about those a little. These are association copies, signed and inscribed. Why is it important for a scholar to look at these materials – what value do association copies bring to our understanding of Waugh, or other authors?

**SH:** They bolster the picture you have of the friendships of the author. You get a sense of how he rated among his fellow authors, that they [or he] cared enough to give those copies. The inscriptions hark back to things they have in common, nicknames for each other, an incident that they shared [...] so it shows you the closeness of the friendships and it lets you have a little look behind the scenes. [...] It's talking about the friendships, and the relationships with other writers.

**NM:** Does The Huntington have plans to add to the collection?

**SH:** Always. Our policy is always to add to the collection – building to strength, that old familiar phrase. So I'll be watching auction sale catalogues, going to book fairs, always watching for more. The problem that we have is our acquisitions fund is quite anaemic, and Waugh is not cheap. So that's a challenge. But if we saw something that we absolutely had to have, if we felt strongly enough about it, we'd try to make it happen.

It has been said about this collection that it now makes us the second largest collection in the US, after the HRC in Texas. We feel the responsibility not to let it just sit here – to make sure it's used. And we've had people using it. We had to catalogue it very quickly. Loren is very closely tied into the Evelyn Waugh Society and community, so the word spread like wildfire. The multi-volume Oxford edition of the *Complete Works* is coming out, and we've had editors of those volumes chomping at the bit to come in. The importance of Waugh, the value of the collection, and the imminent publication of these volumes shot Waugh right to the top of our processing list. The readers have been coming in to use it. And we plan to add to it, absolutely.

**NM:** Is it difficult to acquire new materials? I imagine there's a lot of competition among libraries in acquiring materials for their own collections.

**SH:** Absolutely. We don't get into a bidding war, ever. There's no point. The bottom line with any material that comes on the market, manuscript or rare book, is that if it goes to a good repository that will take care of it, if it goes to a good home where it belongs, and is going to be made use of, that's the bottom line. Whether it's us or HRC, it doesn't matter. I might feel acquisitive about something that I see in a catalogue but if we don't get it, and it goes to another institution where it's a good fit that's fine - that's happy. We have to be a little bit competitive, because we want good stuff too. But we also have to be altruistic, and let things go if that's the right thing to happen. Always the bottom line is: as long as it goes to a good home, where it will

be looked after well, and made available for scholars. That's the important part. I might grieve a little bit if we don't get something cool – but only a little bit. It's important, in our profession, to be that way.

**NM:** Libraries are the homes for writers and their manuscript corpus, after all. In terms of future use, The Huntington has a very lively public programs schedule. Are there public events planned around the Waugh collection?

**SH:** Yes. There is an Evelyn Waugh conference in the planning stages right now [for May 2017], to honour Loren Rothschild and his gift to The Huntington, to celebrate the collection, to focus on Evelyn Waugh, and to honour the [Oxford *Complete Works*] publication. For the conference I'll put out a display for exhibition.

**NM:** The association copies would be of interest – and beautiful objects to look at. What about online exhibitions?

**SH:** We're not set up for that, but it needs to happen. We're perpetually hampered by insufficient resources. Online exhibitions tend to grow out of actual exhibitions here. [...] We definitely want to. [...] One thing we are doing is The Huntington Digital Library. We're digitising our collections as rapidly as we can considering that we don't have [the resources], but getting more and more material up on the digital library. It's a long slow process. We have eight million manuscripts, five or six hundred thousand rare books, something like 250,000 historic photographs, so you can imagine it takes a while to digitise. Any digital things that we want put up online have to become a special project, and we have to raise money to do that. We're committed to doing that. [...] The covers and inscriptions in the Evelyn Waugh collection would be great candidates, because they're so visual, so strong.

**NM:** The majority of Waugh's papers are at the HRC, but not all – they're scattered across the US and UK. What challenges and benefits are there for the scholar and the institutions in collections being split in this way?

**SH:** Split collections are generally not a good thing. You need the entirety so you get the unified context for the author. Collections do get split – it happens. [...] It is ideal for the collection in its entirety to go to one place. That serves the author whose papers they are, [and] it serves scholarship [...]. On the other hand, there's always going to be some travel: with any collection of an author's papers, the correspondence is going to be the incoming letters. The outgoing letters are going to be scattered all over the place. If Waugh wrote to Kinross, then the Kinross collection has those letters. Everybody that Waugh wrote to, those papers are in different places. One thing we do is, any time we get a new collection, we immediately start looking for letters by that person, because the correspondence is heavily or exclusively incoming, and we want to get the outgoing. Inevitably there's going to be some scatter, but we like to keep that to a minimum.

**NM:** Those are the challenges. What about the benefits?

**SH:** You can visit more places - that's fun. You can look into more libraries and find things you didn't expect to find there. Serendipity is one of my favourite research techniques. You start looking down one trail, and it takes you someplace else. [...] Serendipity in related material – telling a story that you didn't know that you would find. It adds to what you're doing or it becomes the new project to work on. I've seen that happen here, and I love that. [...] Going from one repository to another takes you to these different environments where you have all these opportunities to find material you might not have expected to be there.

**NM:** How important is the librarian in that process, given that sometimes the researcher doesn't know what is in the collection?

**SH:** Very important. Curators and archivists and librarians carry a lot of details about the collections in their heads. We always encourage researchers who come here to talk to the relevant curators. Increasingly they need to talk to more than one of us, because we're getting projects that cross our boundaries. We see very fluid subject boundaries now. We're divided by subject fields, but for literature that could carry into British history, into Western American history, into history of science. There's a lot of crossover. It's very important for researchers to talk to staff members. For example, the Evelyn Waugh collection was catalogued by Gayle Richardson, who's a fine cataloguer. She knows the Waugh collection extremely well, better than I do, because she catalogued it. [...] She's an incredibly important resource, and is for all the collections she's catalogued. [...] The cataloguer and the curator together know a lot about the collections and can really be a help to researchers, give them a lot of intangibles: the things that you can't get into an online record or even a long finding aid. [...].

The curator of rare books is retiring in the middle of next week – he's been here forty years – and people have told him that he can't retire until they download his brain. He knows everything. [...] A lot of us have been here a long time, and to one extent or another we have that institutional knowledge and collection knowledge – we know what's in the stacks. [...].

**NM:** Two more questions. As a person who's interested in books, as well as in knowledge, where do you see the place of the book in the digital age? Is the book endangered, or durable as ever?

**SH:** I don't know the answer to that – it's still evolving. I was reassured to read the other day in the *New York Times* that something like only 25% of the books people buy and read are e-books. Everybody thought that would be 50 or 60% by now. That's still low. This tells you where I am – I was reassured by that. I've read books on a tablet, and I didn't particularly enjoy it. I get tired of looking at a screen. I just like books. I like so much of what they stand for, even the smell of a book, the feel of a book. I like being able to turn the pages. I'm not alone in this. I like that you can flip back and forth and find where you are, much more easily than you can on an e-reader. [...] It's still evolving. I tend to think that e-readers are not going to completely replace paper, printed books, because of that.

Another thing I've noticed in recent years is that publishers are now making their standard trade books much more like keepsakes. They're making fine bindings, they're using deckled edges on the fore edge. They're making them into something lovely, not just "here's a book, read the text," but something to treasure, to keep. I think that came about when they could see the competition from e-readers, they wanted to make the book special. This is why you should invest money to buy a physical book. [...]. I don't see books as disappearing quite yet – that might be my generation. I think that books can give a real pleasurable experience.

Not that e-books can't. They have a real purpose. When you're travelling, for one thing. For research: putting things online. You can look at Shakespeare online, you can look at artworks online, and increasingly our collections are going online. People anywhere in the world can do research using what's online. That's fabulous. An incredible step forward. An amazing thing that couldn't have been envisioned thirty years ago. It's a tremendous resource that you can't [have] without that digital capability. So that is a great advantage. But I still think that there will be a place for books.

**NM:** And for manuscripts?

**SH:** Oh, manuscripts are disappearing. Authors are increasingly working online. They may not keep their emails. They may not keep drafts of their novels. They correct the proofs online. And then it's gone – it gets deleted. I've heard authors say of their most famous book, "Oh, I think I deleted that." That makes a literary curator have the chills, almost faint – because there goes the archive. Research collections in the future are not going to be the way they are now. They're already changing profoundly. We're losing something. We're losing something with no more handwritten letters. There are schools in the United States that don't teach cursive handwriting anymore. [...] To me that's a step backwards. [...].

What are we losing? Think of the handwritten letters you've read in research libraries – what it tells you about the person. Is the handwriting angry? If you look at Henry James's handwriting – his letters sag down at the end of the line – they slope down at the right end. It's like he's run out of space on the paper, and he can't squeeze it all in, and to me that's so wonderfully, humorously emblematic –

**NM:** Jamesian?

**SH:** It's Jamesian! It's the way he wrote his books. He can't fit it all in. And you couldn't get that if you typed it and it had automatic line wrap. You'd lose that. So it's those intangibles that I think bring writers alive. It's what I love about working with manuscripts. I love books, but I work with manuscripts, exclusively, in my job. And the reason is I love what they tell you. I love that personal look at someone – you're reading someone's mail. You're learning more about someone that isn't part of their public persona - the person behind the works that they write, or the history they're involved in. We're losing that. [...] But we're losing a lot of the personal. A print-out of an email doesn't have the same kind of feeling and touch that a handwritten letter

had. Handwritten bread-and-butter notes – thanking someone for a wedding gift, wishing you a happy birthday – that’s going away. It’s just part of progress, but people in my age group can regret this, and miss it. [...]

Archives won’t be the same. I think we’re going to lose content. The deleted draft of the novel – that’s gone. You’ll never see the changes that followed the author’s thinking. Texting or emailing and then deleting – you’re going to miss the communication. So what will that do to what we’re familiar with – the published volumes of letters? [...].

Part of the loss will be with electronic records, that are hard to handle. We have the papers of one columnist with the *Los Angeles Times*. He started working before they got computers, but he threw out the old stuff. He started saving stuff right about the time they got their first computers. With his papers came in five boxes of floppy disks in every size and form that there ever has been. How do we recover that? And also we got two hard drives that came in with his papers.

**NM:** So the archivist has to become a digital archivist.

**SH:** The profession is full of ways to deal with these situations [...] but that kind of recovery is hundreds and hundreds of hours’ work. One thing our photographic department is doing is saving dinosaur computers, dinosaur printers, dinosaur reel-to-reel tape players. We have reel-to-reel tapes that haven’t been converted yet. We have hundreds of audio-visual items – audiotapes, videotapes, in every format. Including 8-track tapes. All those formats, you have to get them transferred, but do you have a lab that will do it? We don’t. Do you have a technician that is assigned to that? We don’t. So we outsource it, we try to get grant money to cover it, but it really is difficult.

If you look back, one of the most durable and long-lasting surfaces is parchment. If you treat parchment reasonably well it will last nearly forever. As long you put it in a good stacks, with climate control, and don’t expose it to light, it’s going to last. [...]. The second best is the first paper, made from linen and cotton rag, up to about 1850. It doesn’t have acid content. So the books and manuscripts on that era of paper are going to last pretty well. And then you come to 1850, and wood pulp paper with alum rosin in it, which destroys the paper from within. Bingo. You’ve got crumbling books. Books that when you bat them on the shelves, pieces of paper fall out. Those don’t last. Even more ephemeral are audiovisual and electronic media. [...] As we advance, the forms of capturing the content get more and more ephemeral. With technology now, with all the electronic records and the audio-visual material, you have to keep migrating it forward, every few years, or it’s at risk of being lost. [...] It becomes this constant, constant pressure; keeping it going, don’t lose track of it, don’t get out of it. It’s very difficult, because libraries are universally understaffed and under-resourced, and we feel this responsibility deeply.

**NM:** What you’ve just said chimes in with my last question, which is about the role of the research archive in the contemporary world. How does the archive connect people to knowledge and to culture?



**SH:** A research library like The Huntington has so much that tells scholars and the general public – especially students – about the world around them, about their history, their heritage, about what they’ve read or not read – it tells them so much, and is useful to anyone of any age, from the scholar right on down. The scholars will come in and do original research for a publication that will then disperse what they’ve learned to other readers, who will then filter it and disperse it to others, so there’s this wonderful panoply of the spread of knowledge based on original research.

You can also show students and the general public through exhibitions some of the original materials, and they’re looking at their heritage, they’re looking at the past – how did they get where they are today, what led into the population, the society and culture.

I’ll give you one example: we have the papers of the Los Angeles early-twentieth-century African American civil rights activist, attorney and judge, Loren Miller. There’s a Loren Miller Elementary School in L.A., and the fourth graders have been coming over here to view original material by Loren Miller – they didn’t know who he was, and the principal discovered that we had the papers. He’s been having his students [visit], and I’m able to tell them why he was important. I love it, because it gets them excited. They look at a letter from the NAACP thanking and commending Loren Miller for his successful arguing against restrictive housing covenants before the U.S. Supreme Court. [...]. The kids are a “united nations” – every background is represented, and they’re all learning. I show them that colour doesn’t matter; race, background, country of origin, religious beliefs; those don’t matter when you’re looking at intelligence and what you can accomplish – this is what Loren Miller did. [...]. This is where an archive can be such a resource for public schools – it enriches. They see a letter from a civil war soldier, and it brings the battlefield alive. They realise what that life was like, more than they do when they read about it in a textbook. [...] We can introduce people to the riches that all libraries have, what they mean, and why they’re important to preserve.

## REVIEWS

### Strangely Familiar

*The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination*, Dominic Sandbrook. London: Penguin, 2015. 688 pp., £19.99.

Reviewed by Roger Irwin

In his 1952 preface to *Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh noted with unease that it had been “impossible to foresee, in the Spring of 1944, the present cult of the English country house.” Since then membership of this “cult” has only increased and, as Dominic Sandbrook convincingly demonstrates in his latest book, shows no sign of diminishing. In *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination*, Sandbrook identifies the English country house as a “symbol of the romantic nostalgia for which British popular culture is internationally famous.” And it is pop culture -- not just country houses -- that is the subject of this book. It provides a wide-ranging account of British popular culture from the early twentieth century to the present day that, while making no claim to be exhaustive, certainly lives up to the strangeness promised by its subtitle.

Sandbrook opens with laudatory recollections of the Danny Boyle-directed opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012. In certain ways the book’s mode of storytelling has affinities with Boyle’s idiosyncratic, slightly free associative way of presenting British history that was showcased at that ceremony. The scope of the book spans the post-industrial midlands of Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, Tolkien’s Middle-Earth and Rowling’s Hogwarts; from the idyllic Jamaican home of Ian Fleming and Island Records to the countryside mansions inhabited by the “new rock aristocracy” – the Beatles, Rolling Stones and Sabbath (again) – and onto the Windsors, “the longest-running country-house drama of all.” The book’s central contention is that modern Britain, in the midst of large-scale imperial and industrial decline, transformed itself from a manufacturing to a cultural powerhouse. Present-day Britain, then, is a factory where cultural products are readied for export around the world. Where once the main British exports included coal and steel, Britain now specialises in manufacturing and, most importantly, selling culture.

Sandbrook eschews the critical opinion of what he terms “self-styled intellectuals,” happily devoting his attentions to the middle ground: the mass-produced and the middlebrow. For instance, Catherine Cookson demands inclusion due to her “sheer, unignorable popularity.” (Sandbrook cites an estimate of Cookson having sold 123 million books). It is in keeping with his favoured metaphor of the (manu)factory that Sandbrook associates cultural value with units shifted and profit margins much more readily than with the critical snobbery of an out-of-touch elite. Something of a doorstopper at 600-odd pages, *The Great British Dream Factory* tells the story of a surprisingly diverse array of cultural products that Britain exports to a global market -- TV dramas, novels, pop music, video games, films -- with a greater dominance than any other

nation, albeit with the likely exception, the author concedes, of the United States. British culture is *popular*. And Sandbrook makes no bones about taking popular culture seriously.

Of most interest to Waugh readers will be the chapter that concerns the English country house and its supreme popularity as a British cultural export, “Enchanted Gardens,” itself a nod to *Brideshead*. *Brideshead Revisited*, naturally enough, is treated as canonical in Sandbrook’s assessment of country houses in the post-war British imagination. Yet while declaring that Waugh “remains the guiding spirit of the country house drama,” he allots only one page to discussion of the novel. By contrast, six pages are devoted to *Downton Abbey*, and *Brideshead Revisited* is used more as a springboard into the discussion of the success of the ITV adaptation of the novel and *To the Manor Born*. The best use of Waugh’s writing, though, occurs when Sandbrook explores the legacy of *Brideshead Revisited* in novels by contemporary British writers: Ian McEwan, Sarah Waters, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Alan Hollinghurst. There is little in the brief analysis of Waugh’s most famous novel that will be new to readers of *Evelyn Waugh Studies*. However, this section might well interest fans of the television programmes and novels it inspired or, at least, strongly influenced. It should also be pointed out that in a book where Waugh’s work is quoted with such scarcity, Sandbrook makes a comically unfortunate misquotation when citing Waugh’s artistic intention to show the “operation of a divine grave [sic] on a group of diverse but closely connected characters.” It should be “divine grace,” of course; but for me, “grave” is suggestive enough in its own way to be almost worth the copyediting error.

The section of the book on the country house motif opens with an account of the infamous drugs raid on Redlands, Keith Richards’ West Sussex country house, in 1967. I was curious to learn that within months of their first chart success each member of the Rolling Stones had bought his own mansion in the English countryside. Sandbrook describes with relish the peculiar keenness with which rock stars, often of working class origins, spent their money on the status symbols traditionally associated with the upper classes. Though it may be, as he writes, “naturally tempting to mock the Stones for their eagerness to re-enact *Brideshead Revisited*,” the image of a 22-year-old Richards taking on the role of a country gentleman bears comparison to that of the newly rich Victorian industrialist buying or building his own country estate in the age-old dwelling places of the English aristocracy. This is the other major argumentative thrust of *The Great British Dream Factory*: the unexpected investment of modern British popular culture in its archaic, mostly Victorian, antecedents.

Sandbrook reads the *Harry Potter* books as derivative incarnations of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (naming the series “Billy Bunter on Broomsticks”); *Doctor Who* and *28 Days Later* are viewed through the lens of Victorian science fiction (especially H.G. Wells); and *The Lord of the Rings* is Tolkien recycling the common themes of Arthurian legend. Waugh, as a committed collector of Victoriana, could have figured more centrally in this productive, historically minded reading of modern culture. Sandbrook makes a habit of surprising his reader with the unexpectedly conservative nature of much of popular culture; and it is this reactionary *British-*

*ness* that, whether in the guise of *Brideshead Revisited* or *Top Gear*, is so eminently marketable to a global audience.

## **The Brothers Waugh: Men of Letters to the End**

*The Prose Factory: Literary Life in England Since 1918*, D. J. Taylor. London: Chatto & Windus, 2016. 501 pp., £25.

Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Manley

As the subtitle of this book announces, it is about “literary life,” but that in itself begs the question of who lives that sort of “life.” D.J. Taylor includes in this category those who write and review or criticize books, those who read them, and the degree to which it is possible to earn a living from writing. It is more about people, rather than books themselves, and does not deal much with the publication or distribution of books as a product. This is rather a broad remit, but Taylor manages it pretty well.

To organize the subject matter, Taylor arranges the book into three chronological periods: Interwar, WWII/Post War, and from 1970. Within each period, he considers literary movements or fashions of writing, literary journals and their editors, the machinery of reviewing, academic oversight (real or attempted), and the level of incomes. He cites authors from each period for comments on or criticism of their books or those of their contemporaries. Some writers burn brightly in one or two periods and then disappear. Others, though few in number, thrive to some extent during the entire period covered (sometimes posthumously through their reputations). Among those are the brothers Alec and Evelyn Waugh.

Because of the subject matter, much time is spent listing names, books, periodicals, movements, fashions, print runs, incomes, etc., on page after page. But just when the reader is on the threshold of pain from information overload, Taylor changes gear and offers what are essentially short essays on more focused subjects. These resemble what he describes as the “middle articles” (86), or simply “middles” (86), that once appeared in periodicals such as newspapers and literary magazines. They were “between 800 and 1,500 words in length, meditative, sometimes topical, nearly always humorous ... and could be about practically anything” (86-87).

On occasion, Taylor’s “middles” are given their own chapter titles, even though they are much shorter than the normal chapter. That is the case, for example, with essays on Alec Waugh’s bestseller, Hugh Walpole’s reputation, Orwell’s prewar novels, and A. S. Byatt’s quartet of novels about Frederica Potter. At other times, they are simply inserted into the running narrative, with no title or other indication of subject. Examples include sections devoted to J.B. Priestley’s *Angel Pavement*, the Sitwells, Frances Partridge, and Cyril Connolly. A few writers, such as Alec Waugh and Orwell, get one of each type in two different periods. Evelyn, on the other hand, although one of the most mentioned authors, has no section dedicated to him or his work. Alec, but not Evelyn, is mentioned on the dust jacket.

After a chapter devoted to the prewar generation’s survivors led by J.C. Squire and the Georgians, Taylor introduces the Modern Movement, Squire’s nemesis. It is, of course, the

home of Eliot, Joyce and Virginia Woolf, but the real stars of these years are, according to Taylor, the Sitwells, to whom a very memorable “middle” is devoted. The Sitwells were the movement’s “public face,” with Eliot as its “high priest, a figure of paralyzing celebrity” (59).

Evelyn Waugh left a notable allusion to Eliot in *Brideshead Revisited*, where Anthony Blanche recites part of *The Waste Land* from a Christ Church balcony, as registered by Taylor (70), though he might also have mentioned another in the title of *A Handful of Dust*. Another figure from this period who made an impression on Waugh and his contemporaries was Aldous Huxley. Taylor includes Anthony Blanche’s swotting up on a copy of *Antic Hay* before proceeding to a party at Garsington (70). However, by far the most important influence on younger writers is, in Taylor’s view, Ronald Firbank. In another of his “middles,” Taylor explains, with examples, how Firbank’s writing style was adopted by this generation. It is most noticeable in his “talking heads” dialogues, stripped down prose and allusive references to advance his plots. Taylor gives an example from Waugh’s *Decline and Fall* where seemingly minor, abbreviated and isolated allusions to the accidental injury of a student (Lord Tangent) at a school sports day eventually morph into an announcement of his death (72-73).

Taylor also addresses what he calls middlebrow literature, and in the 1930s one of its chief representatives was still the veteran of the prewar years, Hugh Walpole. Alec Waugh, decidedly middlebrow himself, is mentioned for having been unafraid to express his admiration for Walpole, arguing that it was not necessary to always be the best in the room so long as one was invited to the party (76). Walpole is later dispatched from the book in a chapter explaining how he never overcame the embarrassment of being depicted as second rate in a novel by Somerset Maugham. Taylor misses the irony that Maugham himself failed to rise above the middlebrow, although perhaps he minded less than Walpole.

Another “mainstream” writer taken up by Taylor is J.B. Priestley. An example of his dismissive treatment by literary types comes in Anthony Powell’s *From a View to a Death*, “when half-witted Jasper Fosdick...tries to impress a girl by offering to lend her the family copy of [Priestley’s] *The Good Companions*” (96). Evelyn Waugh dismissed him in a 1960 BBC TV interview as “That ass, Priestley.” Here, he is given some credit for making an effort towards serious writing in *Angel Pavement*, where he describes the impact on a family’s life of the complexities of the machine age. They are sustained not by their material circumstances but rather by “careful cultivation of what might be called their personal myth” (98).

In the chapter on the left-wing turn of 1930s writing, Taylor prominently cites Cyril Connolly’s parody of Brian Howard’s leftward trend in his essay “Where Engels Fears to Tread,” which treats the ineluctable theme of unemployment. Evelyn Waugh explored the problem in the plight of John Beaver of *A Handful of Dust*, who was constantly looking for some sort of work that would avoid a fall in social status. Alec was prepared at least to recognize the importance of left-wing writers (such as Auden) while his brother preferred to caricature them.

In the chapters on novelists' incomes in the various periods, Alec Waugh is prominently mentioned as one writer who managed to understand the system or adjust to its changes and then live off it for his entire lifetime. In the 1920s and '30s Alec wrote a novel every year while also contributing short stories to magazines. He learned early the importance of popular American journals such as *Redbook*, which paid high prices for stories meeting their editorial profile. Alec's career (starting from an upper-middle-class family with publishing connections) is compared to that of Walter Allen (who had to work his way up from humbler beginnings). Both managed to become "men of letters" living entirely off their writing. Alec stressed the importance of "immense resilience" as a factor in his success, and Taylor gives him credit for succeeding in the face of the greater critical appreciation enjoyed by his younger brother (147-49).

Alec also enjoyed an early success with *Loom of Youth*, though, according to Taylor, it was his fourth novel *Kept* (1925) that really set him up. (Evelyn designed the dust jacket for this book, but that was before he decided to try his hand at a career in writing.) Alec used the money from that book to support four years of extended travels, with particular emphasis on the important U.S. market. He had another success in 1930 with *Hot Countries*, a description of these travels, after which he settled back in England with a new wife, the second of three (150-51).

Taylor provides income levels for some novelists—at the top or the bottom mostly. Alec Waugh said that he was earning £1600 annually in 1931 when he returned to England. Evelyn managed £2500 per year from journalism in the 1930s plus whatever he made from books, whereas after the war he was making a total annual income of £10,000. In all periods covered, however, it would be unusual to find anyone earning a sufficient living entirely from novels. The Waugh brothers may have managed with a mixture of novels, stories and freelance journalism, but in some periods, Alec was pretty close to the margin, even to the point of considering suicide in the early 1950s.

The chapters on the war years explain how writing came to be centered on the magazines such as *Horizon*, *Penguin New Writing* and *Poetry London*, which mostly published short stories, poetry, and essays, and were edited by Cyril Connolly, John Lehmann and Tambimuttu, major literary figures all. The enhanced demand for short stories also permitted a talent such as Julian MacLaren-Ross to exist, if not always to thrive. Waugh contributed to *Horizon*, most notably seeing the first publication of *The Loved One* into print in a dedicated issue (210-11), but by the late 1940s the market for the wartime periodicals dried up, and the short story became an unsupportable career. Lehmann and Tambimuttu soon disappeared, Connolly went to work for *The Sunday Times* and MacLaren-Ross lived an ever more precarious existence.

The post-WWII years differed markedly from those following The Great War. There was no literary upheaval such as the Modern Movement of the 1920s. Novelists were otherwise engaged during the war and not many novels appeared in its immediate aftermath. Those

relating to the war were issued about a decade later, with Evelyn Waugh's and Anthony Powell's war trilogies as examples. Evelyn was an exception, however, in managing to write two books during the war, one in the course of a long trip home from Egypt via Cape Town and the West Indies (*Put Out More Flags*) and the other on extended leave from an Army that didn't have much use for him (*Brideshead Revisited*). The latter also succeeded in establishing his career in the U.S. as a bestseller, whereas before its publication Alec was probably the better known of the two in the U.S. market.

Alec also had a big break in the U.S. in the 1950s. This is a subject of one of Taylor's "middles" (261-64). After an assured income from his short stories dried up and several novels enjoyed distinctly modest sales, he was reduced to writing corporate histories on commission. It was at this time that his U.S. agent put him onto the U.S. publishers' new marketing schemes in which they presold books that they deemed would be bestsellers. Alec wrote a book aiming at this category. It was *Island in the Sun* (1956), from which he earned \$500,000 even before it was published, from the sale of serial, book club, condensed book and film rights. He earned enough from the book to live for the rest of his life. Although he went on writing, he never had another blockbuster. By living rather modestly, however, he never needed one. Evelyn's income in the mid-1950s was, as noted previously, about £10,000 per year. Taylor provides an interesting breakdown of the sources, which are fairly diversified (252-53), but even at that level of income, Evelyn complained that he was living like a "shabby-genteel mouse." Unlike his brother, he insisted upon keeping up appearances.

By the 1950s, the literary press found much copy could be produced from discoveries such as "Angry Young Men" writing prose and a "Movement" of poets. Taylor documents how these phenomena can be traced to ambitious journalists looking for things to write about. Out of such groups came writers such as Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin, for whom and for whose artificially constructed groups Evelyn Waugh had little use (275).

One of the best parts of Taylor's book is his dissection of the 1950s, that "you sometimes feel have been subjected to rather more interpretation than they can bear...tending to obscure a literary climate that can seem a good deal more open-ended than critical orthodoxy likes to insist" (270). He senses that, in a way, Amis and Larkin captured the 1950s just as, in Evelyn Waugh's view, Auden and Isherwood did the 1930s. He also claims that the "most distinctive characteristic" of the "Movement" is its need "to be qualified almost out of existence to have any value at all" (276).

The Waughs and the writers of their generation do not make much of an appearance in the book's final section. Evelyn died in 1966 and Alec retired to writers' colonies and finally to a bungalow in Tampa, Florida, to enjoy his sunset years. Evelyn's reputation enjoyed a rebirth in the 1980s following the publication of his diaries and letters and the production of a lavish TV film adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*. Alec died in relative obscurity in 1981 by which time most of his works were out of print. Modern technology has been kind to him, however, and



much of his work is now available in print-on-demand format, which along with TV-inspired revivals is an innovation affecting a writer's reputation that Taylor fails to address.

The book's description of the end of the century features critics such as Ian Hamilton and John Carey, academic novelist-critics Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge, and garden-variety novelists such as Martin Amis and A.S. Byatt. There are "middles" on Byatt and women writers but, aside from that, not as many sustained considerations of novelists as those that characterized the earlier periods. Auberon Waugh gets a brief mention (418). Unlike his father and uncle, he found that combining novels and journalism didn't work. There was too little income from novels (his last produced £600 for three months' effort), and to succeed in journalism demanded full-time attention.

Taylor writes of what he describes as a "publishing crisis" in the 1970s when firms were struggling and incomes threatened. But that was followed by a consolidation and recovery in the 1980s. What influence American publishing practices may have brought to bear on English "literary life" following the recovery is not addressed, even though many British publishers ended up under American corporate control (including the publisher of the book under review).

The earlier sections of the book, up to the 1960s, are clearly superior to the final part. But even so, the "middles" devoted to Malcolm Bradbury's career and A.S. Byatt's four-volume novel series come up to the standards of the early chapters. One regret is that Taylor didn't use the opportunity to devote one of those sections to a more detailed analysis of Evelyn Waugh's early fiction as well as his letters and diaries, reflecting as they often do on the difficulties of making a living as a writer and the need to supplement an income from books with journalism.

In a book of this length (500 pages), it is hard to hope for the addition of more material. There were several places, however, where the existing narrative seemed to lag. The first chapter on "University English," dealing with academic critics of the 1920-30s, and "Reaching Out," the chapter on the largely aborted Arts Council subsidy project, could have been eliminated or much curtailed, at least enough to have allowed inclusion of a "middle" on Evelyn Waugh. The book is well produced and edited. The index is excellent. The generalized endnotes work well, but in a book of this sort a bibliography would have been helpful.

NOTE: A different version of this review appeared in the *Newsletter of the Anthony Powell Society* (62 [Spring 2016]: 30).

## **You Didn't Have to Live There**

*Writers' Houses: Where Great Books Began*, by Nick Channer. London: Robert Hale, 2015. 264 pp., £22.

Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Manley

Although this book describes several houses associated with British writers over the years, it is not a guide book. It contains no information about how to find the houses, when (or, in some cases, even if) they are open to the public, entrance fees, etc. It is more a collection of essays about the houses but attempts no central, unifying theory connecting them, nor does it seek to explain how the houses may have affected the writings that came out of them in the same or different ways. So, it is not really literary criticism either.

Most of the houses described are those in which writers lived at some time in their lives. There are also articles on several houses that, while never the primary residence of a writer, nevertheless influenced his or her work. These include, for example, Uppark House and Arbury Hall, where H. G. Wells' and George Eliot's respective parents were employed, and Groombridge Place and Mapledurham House, where Arthur Conan Doyle and Kenneth Grahame were visitors, again respectively. This last category also includes Evelyn Waugh and Madresfield Court.

Waugh's connections to Madresfield Court are widely described by his biographers and, more recently, in more focused texts by Paula Byrne and Jane Mulvagh. Nick Channer cites some of these works in his bibliography.

The physical description of the house is accurate but that of Waugh's connections a bit less so. For example, the essay seems to attribute Waugh's introduction to the house to his friendship with Hugh Lygon, the middle son of the family who lived there. They were, indeed, friends at Oxford, and Waugh planned to share a flat with Lygon on Merton Street in his final term. But this plan fell apart when Waugh lost his scholarship due to a low score in his final exams, and his father refused to pay his fees. Channer describes their meeting as follows:

Waugh met the ethereally beautiful Hugh Lygon...when they were undergraduates at Oxford in the early 1920s, and first set eyes on Madresfield Court in 1931 when he was invited to stay at the house (138).

Both statements are correct, but the implication is planted that Hugh Lygon was somehow responsible for the invitation. This implication is strengthened on the next page where Channer states:

Through his friendship with the drunken Hugh...the house became an integral part of Waugh's life (140).

In fact, the invitation to visit Madresfield was not extended by Hugh but by his sister Mary Lygon (or “Maimie,” as he later preferred to call her), to whom Waugh had been introduced, in turn, not by Hugh but by Teresa Jungman, with whom he was trying to establish a romantic relationship at the time. When Waugh and Maimie met at a party in London, they discovered that Waugh was taking riding lessons at Malvern, near Madresfield, and Maimie offered him a lift. From that episode came the invitation to the house where he spent the Christmas holidays of 1931. Waugh became friendly with both Maimie and her younger sister Dorothy and was invited by them on several subsequent occasions. All this is explained in Selina Hastings’ biography of Waugh (248-56).

Channer correctly states that Waugh worked on *Black Mischief* (1932) during his early stays at Madresfield, and explains that the desk at which he worked is on display there today in the Long Gallery. But it is a mistake to infer that the entire text of that book was composed in that house or at that desk. At the conclusion of the book, Waugh notes that it was written at “Stonyhurst-Chagford-Madresfield, Sept. 1931-May 1932.” Stonyhurst was the home of his friend from Oxford, Christopher Hollis, where the latter was teaching at the time, and Chagford was the location of the Easton Court Hotel where Waugh frequently rented a room to write and where he later wrote the text of *Brideshead Revisited*.

Channer also correctly notes that elements of *Brideshead Revisited* were based on Madresfield Court and the Lygon family. In particular, the chapel at Madresfield is as described in the novel, quoted by Channer. Hugh Lygon is widely accepted as a possible model for Sebastian Flyte, and Lord Marchmain has certain features in common with Hugh’s father Lord Beauchamp. But Waugh was careful not to push the connections too far, as he had no wish to alienate his friends Maimie and Dorothy Lygon. Whether Waugh modeled Julia Flyte on Maimie (as Channer claims) is less well established.

Waugh appears in two other entries in the book. His description of John Betjeman’s house, The Old Rectory at Farnborough, is quoted, and a visit by Waugh is also mentioned. Channer writes that the Betjemans left that house in 1951 after “the first serious rift in their marriage” (105). He might have gone on to explain that the rift was due to Penelope Betjeman’s decision to become a Roman Catholic, consistent with the constant urging of Waugh, who made matters worse by his hectoring of John Betjeman to do the same. Waugh is also mentioned as a frequent visitor of the Sitwells at Renishaw Hall. He is quoted as claiming that the Sitwells “took the dullness out of literature,” but I think the correct quote is “They declared war on dullness” (Evelyn Waugh, “Urbane Enjoyment Personified,” *Essays, Articles and Reviews* [423]).

The most interesting essays are those relating to Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsburys, and to William and Dorothy Wordsworth. In these, Channer carefully delineates the differences between two or more houses associated with the authors, eliminating what has, in my mind at least, been confusion as to who lived where, when and why. Most of the

essays are well written and about the right length, but there are a few (particularly in the sections on Scotland and Wales) where neither the house nor the writer seem of sufficient importance to have warranted inclusion. For example, in Scotland, Violet Jacob and the House of Dun, and in Wales, Kate Roberts at Cae'r Gors and Ellis Evans at Yr Ysgwrn seem a bit obscure. On the other hand, more might have usefully been written on the North Devon writer's hut of Henry Williamson, author of *Tarka the Otter* and two major, largely under-rated novel cycles about 20<sup>th</sup>-century England. That structure was central to his writing, and he describes its construction in one of his books.

Finally, each essay closes with a short biographical sketch of the writer whose house is described. The one relating to Waugh is concise and accurate, with one exception. It says that he "wrote two travel books—*Labels* (1930) and *Remote People* (1931)" (143). If a second edition is prepared, there should either be an "*inter alia*" inserted or an extending of the list to include his other travel books.

The book is well produced and edited and the photographs and index are helpful, although cross-referencing in the text to provide guidance to writers' appearances in more than one essay would also have been useful. As noted at the outset of this review, however, the book succeeds neither as a guidebook nor literary criticism. For example, aside from mentioning information already widely available on how Madresfield Court contributed to Waugh's writing, the essay on that house is of no particular interest to students of his work. And, while warning that the house is open only by appointment, the book does not explain how to secure one. What audience is intended for such a miscellaneous collection of essays on writers and houses is unclear.

## NEWS

### ***Brideshead Revisited* returns to Castle Howard for Unique York Theatre Royal Event**

In April York Theatre Royal opened its doors, having completed a major capital redevelopment, with the world premiere production of *Brideshead Revisited*. York Theatre Royal and English Touring Theatre have produced an adaptation of the much loved story by Evelyn Waugh.

When the tour ends in York, YTR is holding a unique and exclusive fundraising evening on Sunday 26th June at Castle Howard. All monies raised will make a vital contribution to York Theatre Royal's highly acclaimed ongoing work with young people.

The black tie event is for 100 guests in the beautiful setting of Castle Howard, with a drinks reception, two-course dinner, performed extracts of the play and the chance to meet creatives and actors of the YTR production.

If this is an event you would be interested in attending, save the date and register your interest by sending an email to Caitlin Hazell ([caitlin.hazell@yorktheatreroyal.co.uk](mailto:caitlin.hazell@yorktheatreroyal.co.uk)).

If you are unable to attend, but would consider giving a donation or raffle prize to the event, YTR would be delighted to hear from you.

### **Full Cast for First Ever Large-Scale Stage Production of *Brideshead***

<http://www.broadwayworld.com/uk-regional/article/Full-Cast-Set-for-English-Touring-Theatre-York-Theatre-Royals-BRIDESHEAD-REVISITED-20160311>

### **Sale of Waugh-Powell Letters**

A series of forty-two autograph letters and cards signed ("Evelyn Waugh", "Evelyn", "E.W." and "E"), to his fellow novelist Anthony Powell ("Dear Tony") and wife Lady Violet.

<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23576/lot/203/>

<https://www.finebooksmagazine.com/press/2016/06/letters-from-the-great-names-of-20th-century-english-literature-at-bonhams.phtml>

## **Faringdon for Sale**

In the previous issue of EWS (No. 46.3, Winter 2015) Jeffrey Manley reviewed the book *Mad Boy* by Sofka Zinovieff, concluding with the information from the book's dust wrapper that she and her family had decided to live in the Faringdon estate that she inherited from her grandfather Robert Heber-Percy, friend and companion of Lord Berners. In the latest issue of *The Economist* (7 May 2016, 49) there appears an advertisement for the sale of the property by Savills, the estate agents. It is described as about 74 acres and a house with 5 reception rooms, 12 bedrooms (3 en-suite), 3 further bathrooms, self-contained apartment, 2 stable flats, 3 lodges, chapel, wine cellar, walled garden, parkland, swimming pool, lake. Price on application. Faringdon, Oxfordshire: "As desirable a house as one could wish for."

## **Country Life**

There is an article on Waugh in the March 2nd edition of *Country Life*. It starts on page 68 and is by Clive Aslet.

Waugh is also quoted in their list of "60 Things that Make Britain Great:"

<http://evelynwaughsociety.org/2015/evelyn-waugh-in-country-life/>

## **Septimus on EW**

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/03/let-evelyn-waugh-back-into-combe-florey-churchyard/>

## **OED**

"Evelyn Arthur St John Waugh (1903–1966), writer. The 775th most frequently quoted source in the OED, with a total of 612 quotations . . . ."

## **BBC2 to Adapt *Decline and Fall***

<http://deadline.com/2016/06/eva-longoria-jack-whitehall-bbc-evelyn-waugh-adaptation-decline-and-fall-1201768393/>

## **Evelyn Waugh Society**

The Waugh Society has 169 members. To join, please go to <http://evelynwaughsociety.org/>.

The Evelyn Waugh Discussion List has 81 members. To join, please visit

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Evelyn\\_Waugh](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Evelyn_Waugh).

The Evelyn Waugh Society is also on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/evelynwaughsoc>.

The Waugh Society is providing an RSS feed: <http://evelynwaughsociety.org/feed>.

And the Waugh Society's web site has opportunities for threaded discussions:

<http://evelynwaughsociety.org/forums/>.

## **Submission Guidelines**

Essays as well as notes and news about Waugh and his work may be submitted to *Evelyn Waugh Studies* by mail or email to ([jpitcher@bennington.edu](mailto:jpitcher@bennington.edu), [patrick.query@usma.edu](mailto:patrick.query@usma.edu)). Submissions should follow MLA style and be no more than 5000 words in length. Since most readers will be familiar with Waugh's work, authors should minimize unnecessary quotations and explanatory references. All submitted essays are first screened by the Editors and if deemed acceptable for publication are then sent to Associate Editors for further review. Authors should expect to be notified of the editors' final decision within twelve weeks of submission.

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**End of *Evelyn Waugh Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1**

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