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NEWS

Unnatural Narratology and the Tiresian Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited*

Grace Stevens

As a repurposed Tiresian figure and an inherently queer minor character, Anthony Blanche presses upon the boundaries of strict realism in *Brideshead Revisited*, inviting a reinterpretation of the novel open to unnatural narratology. Narratology, the rigorous and systematic study of narrative, has burgeoned in the past decade, specializing into historical narratology, cognitive narratology, and -- perhaps most promisingly -- unnatural narratology. “Natural narratives” refer to narratives modeled on the mimetic or the actual world in continuation of the narrative tradition inherited from Gérard Genette. Elements of “unnatural narratives,” as defined through the ongoing dialectic spearheaded by Monika Fludernik and Brian Richardson, among others, may be interwoven into the fabric of an ostensibly natural narrative. These anti-mimetic threads break from or play with rigid mimetic reflections of time and space within the narrative’s diegesis. They can defamiliarize a narrative reductively deemed natural and can, as Fludernik argues, potentially “recuper[ate] the fabulous, magical, fantastic or supernatural,” even within the realist novel that has frequently monopolized narrative studies (363). While classical structuralist narrative theories have engulfed Waugh’s novel since its publication, unnatural narratology offers a differing approach to the work, a reading not bound by the logically possible.

A novel decried by critics for its overt Catholicism, *Brideshead Revisited* reads as a quasi-Augustinian story of conversion and a natural narrative with a fairly normative structure within which the theme, described by Waugh as “the operation of grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters” (7), unfolds. The character of Blanche, however, particularly as represented in the work’s first published version, surfaces in this interconnected network of characters as mimetically disruptive. Beginning with his recitation of lines from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Blanche introduces a queer temporality as a transposed parody of Tiresias, the mythological prophet and transsexual / bisexual seer, as he predicts the future to the skeptical protagonist.¹ In contrast to the closure-driven primary natural narrative, the space of Blanche’s minor character is typified by a sense of stasis, since he remains ageless and unchanging, prolonged in an anti-idyllic construct of childhood. Additionally, Blanche’s character appears consistently origin-less, ubiquitous, and generally exempt from the confines of place as he enters and vanishes from the diegesis unheralded and dominates the fictive space when present. Of course, queer narrative theory and unnatural narratology both deploy rhetoric of the “unnatural” and “non-normative,” a commonality underscored by Alber et al., and the intersection of these

¹Though some critics have passingly noted the parallel between Blanche and Tiresias, I draw on queer theory and unnatural narratology to consider questions of characterization and natural and unnatural narratives.

theories offers a rich nexus for re-approaching the realist novel.² Drawing on Lee Edelman's imperative against reproductive futurity and Judith Roof's theory of narrative middles, I argue that Blanche complicates a reductive mimetic reading of *Brideshead Revisited*: as a minor unnatural character, Blanche allows for the enfolding of a divergent and fantastical discourse into an otherwise natural narrative.

As commonly read, *Brideshead* is a classic story of (re)conversion, and throughout, Charles Ryder, from the stance of having converted to Catholicism, narrates and reframes his memories, arriving at a deeper understanding of the faith in the epilogue for having "revisited Brideshead." The story is framed with a prologue and epilogue that chronologically occur after the central narrative, which unfolds analeptically as Ryder, the autodiegetic narrator, pieces together memories of his interactions with the Flyte family, "an English Catholic family, half-paganized themselves" (7).³ The characters interact with Ryder according to the various stages of his evolving relationships with them and their Catholic faith and their own respective relationships with their faith. Structurally, the central narrative is divided into two books, "Et in Arcadia Ego" and "A Twitch Upon the Thread."⁴ Overly schematized, the first book establishes Ryder's interrelationships with the Flyte family, particularly his homosexual relationship with Sebastian; the second book largely centers on Ryder's relationship with Julia and how, to varying degrees, multiple characters including Sebastian, Julia, and Lord Marchmain are drawn back to Catholicism.

While not quite possessing the crowded character system of the sprawling 19th-century realist novel, *Brideshead Revisited* nevertheless provokes narratological questions about the representation of minor characters and how they disrupt or critique the major characters' space. Alex Woloch's *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* proposes a theory of characterization that relies on two categories: *character space*, an individual's determined position within the narrative, and *character system*, the arrangement of character spaces into a narrative (14). Woloch explores "how the discrete representation of any specific individual is intertwined with the narrative's continual apportioning of attention to different characters who jostle for limited space within the same fictive universe" (13). The jostling character system of *Brideshead* can be conceived of in several ways: having a single protagonist (Ryder); dual protagonists (Ryder and Sebastian or Julia Flyte); a group of major

²As other critics have done, Alber et al. gesture at the relationship of unnatural narratology and queer theory. For both, "the term 'deviation' has a positive connotation," and for Alber et al., the "use of the term 'unnatural' is similar to the use of the term 'queer' in queer studies" (132, n5).

³Of course, as the story is reconstructed from Ryder's memories and told in "flashbacks," the narrative already toys with an entirely mimetic concept of temporality.

⁴In the 1960 version, the book is divided into three sections titled "Et in Arcadia Ego," "Brideshead Deserted," and "A Twitch Upon the Thread." Likewise, the prologue and epilogue are titled "Brideshead Revisited."

characters (Ryder and the members of the Flyte family); a group of minor characters (Blanche, Rex Mottram, Boy Mulcaster, Mr. Samgrass, Celia Ryder, Cara, Ryder's Father, etc.); and the nearly nameless network or chorus of characters that surround Blanche at Oxford. Another method of classifying the character system would be according to corresponding spaces: Lady Marchmain with Brideshead; Lord Marchmain and Cara with Venice; Ryder's father with his home; Celia Ryder with the transatlantic ship; and Kurt with Fez. While some characters shift spaces, most noticeably Blanche, other characters remain in or even come to represent certain spaces. For example, Celia remains largely associated with the physical ship upon which she and Ryder reconnect and with the liminal space Ryder enters between his relationships with Sebastian and Julia.

Though Waugh welcomed the invitation to revise the 1945 version of the novel fifteen years after its publication, the 1960 version alters the characterization of Blanche, resulting in an inconsistent depiction of him and his character's interplay with the novel's character system.⁵ During the revision process, Waugh diligently excised or nuanced instances of what he referred to as the "grosser passages" (9) in the first published version, and Frank Kermode posits that "On the whole most readers, I think, would agree that the purgation of the first version... makes for improvement: the final version of the novel is preferable" (xv). Blanche's characterization, however, raises questions of the preferring of the latter version. In the 1945 American version of the text, Blanche stutteringly enters the narrative space with a description that establishes his character's effect upon this network of characters at Oxford:

From the moment he arrived, the newcomer took charge, talking in a luxurious, self-taught stammer; teasing; caricaturing the guests at his previous luncheon; telling lubricious anecdotes of Paris and Berlin; and doing more than entertain -- transfiguring the party, shedding a vivid false light of eccentricity upon everyone.... (32)

Here, Blanche's character strains against his own allotted character space, for the novel introduces him as swathed in a near mythic aura, which justifies why Charles Ryder and others in their Oxford set "held him [Blanche] in considerable awe" (American 46; British 39). Conversely, the British version omits this emphasis on the charismatic performativity of Blanche, instead foregrounding the exterior signs of the character and how these set his character apart from others, jarringly so:

He was tall, slim, rather swarthy, with large saucy eyes. The rest of us wore rough tweeds and brogues. He had on a smooth chocolate-brown suit with loud white stripes, suede

⁵The "American version" of *Brideshead Revisited* refers to the first edition of 1945, which is the version that has remained in circulation in the United States. In the United Kingdom, the second edition of 1960 has largely replaced the first edition in circulation and is here referred to as the "British version."

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shoes, a large bow-tie and he drew off yellow, wash-leather gloves as he came into the room...he pranced along with his high peacock tread. (27)⁶

The text highlights Blanche's exteriority, offering a flattened depiction of his clothes and "high peacock tread," a description that perhaps also gestures derogatively at his sexuality, rather than emphasizing his magnetic power over others (27). Both versions include a later scene that describes Blanche as an "impresario" at a Charity matinee and the other men as "disconsolate ladies...without a leader. Without him they forgot their cues and garbled their lines; they needed him..." (American 108; British 95).⁷ Since the British version's initial character description of Blanche minimizes his charisma, this dependence of others in the character system upon him seems textually unsubstantiated. Blanche, by nature of being a minor character, exists in a narrative within which the character solicits the reader's interest and also in "a fictional totality that forces this individual out of, or beneath, the discursive world" (Woloch 38). Particularly in the American version's characterization of him, Blanche, and therefore his powerful divergent thread or discourse, is continually "forced out" of the natural narrative.

Within the novel's character system, the minor character of Blanche disrupts the primary natural discourse of the novel perhaps most notably by repurposing the Tiresian myth, opening the narrative to an element of queer temporality. Shortly after Blanche enters Sebastian's rooms, he gives a verbatim recitation of several lines narrated by Tiresias in "The Fire Sermon:"

I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all,
Enacted on this same divan or bed,
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.... (243-246)⁸

This borrowing from *The Waste Land* and, therefore, double repurposing of the Tiresian myth, invites a transgeneric analysis of the structural functions of the figure. In his notes on *The Waste Land*, Eliot writes how he perceives Tiresias' function in the poem: "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting

⁶For a further textual study of the versions of Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited*, see the definitive article "'Clarifying and Enriching': Waugh's Changing Concept of Anthony Blanche," by Robert Murray Davis.

⁷All further citations are from the American version of *Brideshead Revisited* unless otherwise specified.

⁸Blanche recites these lines from *The Waste Land* to an impervious "sweatered and muffled throng that was on its way to the river" (33), the river being the Thames. In *The Waste Land*, "a crowd flow[s]" over the River Thames on "London Bridge," and a narrative voice, possibly that of Tiresias, remarks, "so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many" (62-63). The genre-shifting Tiresian figure intertextually connects the River Thames of both works with the mythological river Styx that Odysseus crossed in seeking Tiresias in the underworld.

all the rest...[he] sees, in fact, the substance of the poem” (notes on line 218).⁹ In describing Tiresias as “a mere spectator” and “not indeed a ‘character,’” Eliot casts the figure as a type of minor character in the poem. Therefore, if Blanche’s character receives a similar textual function as both a minor character and yet a sort of omniscient personage, he assumes a ubiquitous and all-seeing presence undergirding the diegetic space inhabited by Ryder as narrator.

The Tiresian analogy extends beyond Blanche’s structural function. Though gendered male, Blanche’s character frequently inhabits a feminine space, from wearing “embroidered robes” (33) and “disguising himself as a girl” (46) in his teenage years to imitating his erstwhile love interest Stefanie de Vincennes by “using the same color varnish for my toe nails,” “using her words,” and “speaking with her tone” (53). Like Tiresias, whose gender shifted from male to female and who, as Ovid writes, knows “both sides of love,” Blanche appears similarly transsexual and bisexual, since his gender and his sexuality remain undetermined.^{10 11} The narrative shows Blanche pursuing men, yet he tells Ryder of his affair with Stefanie, with whom he was “intoxicated...crawling with love like lice” (52). Additionally, as Creon in *Antigone* scrutinizes Tiresias’ motives for prophesying, Blanche also speaks to a skeptical audience (Ryder) and speaks as a potentially invested party (sexually interested in Sebastian).¹²

Most importantly, Blanche’s character functions as a Tiresian figure in his non-normative relationship to the future. When Blanche and Ryder meet for dinner at the beginning of their acquaintance, an extended scene unfolds in which Blanche “prophesizes” about the future; here, the minor character’s discourse becomes central as the skeptical major character is audience to Blanche’s monologue, the longest monologue of any character in the novel.¹³ In terms of “what” Blanche’s character predicts, he ironizes the scope of Tiresias’ gift, in that Blanche foretells pedestrian occurrences and an individual man’s fate, not the fate of a community or a sovereign.

⁹As seen in Waugh’s letters, Eliot impacted his work; he betrays being “deeply moved” by *Murder in the Cathedral* (447), and Waugh’s novel *A Handful of Dust* also draws its title from *The Waste Land*: “I will show you fear in a handful of dust” (30).

¹⁰In *The Metamorphoses*, Jove and Juno appeal to “wise Tiresias” in seeking the answer to their question about which gender receives more pleasure from loving (3.323). The text reveals that Tiresias knows “both sides of love,” having been transformed from man to woman after striking two copulating serpents (3.323). When he sides with Jove, Juno strikes Tiresias blind and his compensation lies in Jove bestowing upon him “the power to know the future” (3.337).

¹¹In keeping with the scholarship on the novel, Blanche and his character will be referred to throughout by masculine pronouns, though his character refuses relegation to a single gendered category.

¹²Though given the gift of prophecy, others continually suspect Tiresias’ motivation for prophesying, including Creon in *Antigone* who exclaims to Tiresias that “It is a sorry thing when a wise man / Sells his wisdom, lets out his words for hire!” (5.69-70).

¹³In the American version, Blanche’s nearly uninterrupted monologue extends for approximately ten pages.

Though Ryder wonders “how much truth there was in what Anthony said” (61), all that Blanche “predicts” comes to fulfillment. Regarding trite matters, Blanche’s prophecies include his declaration that the undergraduate boys who “put him in Mercury” the night before will be bragging of their doing so in “thirty years [sic] time” (50). He also foretells how Sebastian will react to Ryder telling him he had dinner with Blanche: “it will not make the slightest difference to Sebastian’s feelings,” and he “will immediately start talking about that amusing bear of his” (57). Beyond these “predictions,” the minor character Blanche foretells the trajectory of the major character Ryder by first sharing an exposé of the Flyte character group. Blanche depicts them all as “charming, of course, and quite, quite gruesome” (51), and believes that Ryder, in an artistic sense, will be “strangled with charm” (57).¹⁴ Later, after seeing Ryder’s art from South America and declaring it to be “charm again, my dear, simple creamy English charm, playing tigers” (273), Blanche underscores that his prophecy has come to fruition: “I was right years ago...when I warned you. I took you out to dinner to warn you of charm. I warned you expressly and in great detail of the Flyte family” (273). If endeavoring to naturalize the narrative, Blanche’s ability to “see the future” could be read as his ability to read others, a knack resulting from his extensive worldly experience.¹⁵ The particular nature of Blanche’s knowledge, however, appears uncanny when considered in tandem with the character’s general unnaturalness.

This transgeneric tracing of the Tiresian figure shows how time collapses in Blanche’s character, where the past (myth) and the future (prophecy) become statically sustained in the present. The childlike portrayal of Blanche’s character, however, is an addition to the mythical representations of the seer, and this depiction of Blanche as static within a prolonged childhood is itself a means of reconfiguring temporality and opposing the primary future-driven narrative. For Edelman, reproductive futurism preserves “the absolute privilege of heteronormativity” (2), with “the Child” as “the perpetual horizon” (3). Edelman and Roof, among others, assert “narrative temporality is the very essence of normativity” (Matz 231). Queerness, on the other hand, is “a refusal to reproduce the futurity that image [the Child] represents” (Matz 227). According to Edelman, queerness cannot permit the sequential chronology that characterizes narrative, which develops with a forward movement aiming at closure. In *Brideshead*, Blanche acts as an anti-temporal presence, interrupting and defying forward-moving temporality. As Blanche’s gender and sexuality are undetermined, in him “temporal dissonance” links with “sexual dissidence” (Freeman, qtd. in Matz 231). Even Blanche’s manner of speaking interrupts

¹⁴In addition to Blanche’s prophecies coming true, Ryder also notices the accuracy of his depictions of the Flyte family: “I met him [Brideshead] for five minutes on his arrival. Anthony Blanche’s description was peculiarly apt; he had the Flyte face, carved by an Aztec” (88).

¹⁵The source of Tiresias’ knowledge is also disputed. In *The Bacchae*, Tiresias makes a distinction between when he is prophesying and when he is simply reading others. Regarding his ability to see the future of Pentheus, Tiresias asks Cadmus to “Not take that as prophecy / I judge his acts” (368-369).

a forward movement. In Ryder's first encounter with Blanche, dashes punctuate his speech --"I should like to stick you full of barbed arrows like a p-p-pin-cushion" (33) -- and later, in addition to dashes, an excessive use of italics signals a prolonging of time -- "they are not animals in a zoo, Mulcaster, to be *goggled at*. They are *artists*..." (202).¹⁶ His "self-taught stammer" shapes and reshapes words in a manner that semiotically short-circuits his listeners' and the reader's understandings.

Blanche's peculiar agelessness or prolonged childhood furthers this temporal dissonance. Encountering Blanche for the last time at his exhibition, Ryder beholds the character as having "not changed from when I last saw him; not, indeed, from when I first saw him" (269). Though Ryder describes Blanche as "ageless" (33) in their first meeting, he revises this initial assessment after becoming more familiar with him. Even though Blanche "seem[s] then to be burdened with the experience of the Wandering Jew," (46) he is simultaneously "savage," "competitive in the bet-you-can't-do-this style of private school...cruel, too, in the wanton, insect-maiming manner of the very young and fearless, like a little boy" (47). Blanche disrupts temporality in both directions: his agelessness symbolizes a sort of prophetic ability to foresee the future, and yet his childlikeness resists futurity. Furthermore, his character depicts youth negatively as "savage," "competitive," and "cruel," in a sort of refusal to promote a speciously hopeful futurity through the image of the idyllic Child.¹⁷ This sameness, this sense of character stasis and concurrent agelessness and childlikeness, locates Blanche as an anti-narrative force that opposes the progressing movement of the narrative, additionally complicating an entirely natural reading of the novel.

Besides his anti-temporality, Blanche's character subverts realist constructs of spatiality in the novel by his lack of origin and ubiquity as he enters and exits the diegetic space unannounced. In the American version, Blanche enters the Oxford set character system "as foreign as a Martian" (32); in the British version, he is an amalgamation of identities, "part

¹⁶Blanche's fragmented stammer recalls the voice of Tiresias in *The Waste Land*, for the lines Blanche recites on Sebastian's balcony originally appear as parenthetically set apart in "The Fire Sermon." They are segmented from the remainder of the heavily disjuncted poem, interrupting the reading and marking these lines as "other," much like Tiresias as the "all-seeing" voice over the poem who "speaks" from another diegetic space.

¹⁷Extensive scholarship treats "childhood" and "the nursery" in *Brideshead Revisited*, particularly how Sebastian desires to prolong his childhood (i.e. clinging to Aloysius, his teddy bear). If considering the "Child" as Edelman does, a sign of the "privilege of heteronormativity" and the future, it is applicable to note that in the central narrative, none of the Flyte children have children of their own. Julia desires a child, and Bridey hopes for a child, but Lord Marchmain believes Bridey and his middle-aged wife will never have children: "Why should that uncouth pair sit here childless while the place crumbles around their ears?" (320). Though Ryder's wife gives birth to two children, both births occur in the space between Book I and Book II. Also, Ryder divorces his wife, and the children never actually appear in the narrative.

Gallic, part Yankee, part, perhaps, Jew; wholly exotic” (27). Though “an attempt had been made in his childhood to make an Englishman of him” (46), Blanche defies a single-origin heritage and “criss-cross[es] around the world” from Buenos Aires to Capri to Cefalu to California and Vienna (46). Indeed, Blanche was “a nomad of no nationality” (46). Like Tiresias who prophesied from the walls of Thebes to the underworld, Blanche seems spatially boundless.¹⁸ He recites the lines from “The Fire Sermon” while atop Sebastian’s balcony and then last meets with Ryder “down a side street...downstairs” (270) in an establishment whose ambience and collected characters amount to a modern adaptation of the underworld. “The strange significance of minor characters,” writes Woloch, “resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing,” and Blanche jumps in and out of the narrative unheralded and impacts the character system, particularly at Oxford (38). The disappearance of Blanche’s character results in a palpable absence, and the transformation he brought to the group reverts as they become “a bare dozen lethargic, adolescent Englishmen...lumber[ing] back into the herd” (108). Blanche’s presence then becomes untraceable, and his former set wonders “what became of...that extraordinary fellow Anthony Blanche?” (108). He reenters the narrative suddenly, approximately a year later, in photographs taken on Mr. Samgrass and Sebastian’s trip in Constantinople, where they “met him by chance” (150). After this recurrence in an unexpected place, Blanche’s character receives a sort of structural license to enter and exit the fictive world without explanation. He next interrupts the narrative two years later when Ryder enters a party and hears a stammering, “unmistakable voice, an echo from what now seemed a distant past” (202). Blanche’s character fades from this scene without explanation of his physical departure only to rematerialize a decade later for his last meeting with Ryder, who again hears his discordant voice: “I heard a voice at the turnstile I had not heard for many years, an unforgettable self-taught stammer, a sharp cadence of remonstrance” (269). The events of the ten years during which Blanche recedes from the narrative in the American version transpire primarily between Books I and II and are only partially reconstructed for the reader. Blanche himself refuses to account for his actions during this period when Ryder asks him “what have you been up to all these years?” (271) After Blanche tells Charles how charm has killed him, in fulfillment of Blanche’s prediction, Ryder emerges from the “underworld,” and Blanche permanently disappears from the narrative.¹⁹ In the epilogue Nanny Hawkins shares with Ryder the current location of the different Flyte family members and Rex, but the fate of Blanche’s character remains unknown.

¹⁸Tiresias repeatedly recurs in Greek tragedies relating to the history of the legendary Thebes and functions as a prophet within the city’s walls. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus encounters Tiresias in the underworld, where he predicts that Odysseus’s future journey will ultimately take him home “to Ithaka,” but only “after much suffering” (11.112).

¹⁹A parallel analogy between Ryder and Odysseus could also be drawn, since Ryder continues on his journey of conversion as Odysseus leaves Tiresias to continue on his journey home. Tiresias, conversely, remains sustained in a post-mortem “existence” as a shade in the underworld.

When present in the narrative, Blanche's character challenges his apportioned space by dominating scenes; when palpably absent, his character undergirds the narrative's analeptic middle expanse. In his scenes, Blanche's character becomes the focal point from charismatically monopolizing Sebastian's luncheon to delivering his extended monologue regarding the Flyte family to Ryder. When Mr. Samgrass recounts a version of his expeditions with Sebastian, Blanche appears in the photos, and, as Ryder later learns, ultimately took over the trip, "arrang[ing] things very amicably" (159). In one way, the central narrative, this collection of rearranged memories, serves as an embedded story or a "narrative middle" that Blanche's character undergirds. According to Roof, the "narrative middle, as in Freud's narrative of sexuality, provides the scene for doubt, risk, and uncertainty" (xxxiv). Roof considers sexuality and narrative as interconnected, arguing that the novel is inherently heterosexual, for it is difference that moves the story forward to closure, for heterosexuality [difference] is "the magical motiveless mechanism that turns everything right" (xxii). On the other hand, homosexuality and its sameness produce stasis or an anti-temporal force, stalling the "natural" progress towards closure in a "middling confusion" (77). In *Brideshead*, Ryder's homosexual relationship with Sebastian serves as a forerunner to his heterosexual relationship with Julia, which largely returns the narrative to difference and a closure-seeking form before the epilogue. Blanche's unchanging character, however, is a persistent source of stasis, of sameness, and therefore of confusion throughout the narrative's unsettled middle. Not only does Blanche frustrate the structural movement towards difference and closure, but he also confuses other characters in the narrative's middle as they alternate between deifying and ridiculing him. The character system in Oxford, including Charles, vacillates between declaring their dislike for Blanche, even "dunking him in Mercury" (50), to wandering aimlessly without him and openly speaking of regretting his absence. Additionally, in the middle narrative, characters play with gender; Blanche is described as dressing like a woman and on occasion donning a false beard-- "he had a beard in Istanbul, but I made him take it off" (153) -- while the male gendered undergraduates are described as ladies in relationship to Blanche (108). Since he threatens the closure and stability of the narrative, Blanche, like Woloch's description of an eccentric minor character, "grates against his position" in the narrative, must necessarily be "wounded, exiled, expelled, ejected, imprisoned, or killed (within the discourse, if not the story)" (25). Blanche's character is left in the "underworld," narratively, discarded to restore normativity and to allow the primary discourse to achieve a natural heteronormative closure.

While collapsing strict categorical concepts of gender and sexuality, Blanche's character narratologically presses against the realist boundaries of the novel and troubles an entirely mimetic reading of *Brideshead*. Through his lingering prophecies, agelessness yet perpetual childlikeness, and uncanny ubiquitousness, Blanche's Tiresian character seems always almost present in the narrative discourse. Considering the dual textual versions of Blanche further exposes how this minor character pushes against the flattened description and limited space allocated to him throughout the narrative's natural, albeit unstable, middle. While not advocating

for a reading of the novel in which Blanche “breaks free” from his subordination in the narrative, discerning the threads of the fantastical in natural narratives like *Brideshead* opens space for critical resistance reading and for a defamiliarized experience of a realist work as a story world within which the cognitively impossible becomes permissible. Though ultimately abandoned in the novel’s analeptic middle, Blanche’s character nevertheless offers a divergent discourse that critiques the constructed binaries of natural and unnatural narratives, and major and minor characters, and complicates an overly reductive reading of the realist novel while operating within the ostensibly natural narrative itself.

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The “Vanbrugh Brouhaha” in Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead* *Revisited*

David Bittner

Among “all the stuffy people” who stayed away from the “squalid” Flyte-Mottram nuptials, held in the “poky little” Savoy Chapel, used mostly for mixed marriages and marriages involving at least one divorced partner, there was a couple named the Vanbrughs. But the bride-elect, Lady Julia Flyte, counts the no-show of these fair-weather friends as no great loss. Several years later, when she and Charles Ryder happen to find one another on board the same passenger ship headed for New York, they catch up on each other’s news, including Julia’s wedding that made such little splash. Julia tells Charles about the Vanbrughs and two other society couples, the Chasms and the Anchorages, who boycotted her wedding to Rex. She says, “I thought, Thank God for that. They always look down their noses at me, anyhow” (198-99).

The Chasms and Anchorages are both Wavian inventions. But the Vanbrughs are real, in this novel which seems to mix real and fictional characters almost as liberally as “Roger Rabbit” does. And readers with eyesight sharp enough to catch the short list of aristocratic party-poopers may wonder if there is some connection between the Vanbrughs and the architect of Brideshead Castle, Sir John Vanbrugh.

One possible reason for the Vanbrughs’ stuffiness could have been snobbery based on being richer than the Flytes. Despite Rex Mottram’s well-meant and sensible advice to the Flytes not to “just let their money sit quiet” (174), Lord Marchmain is always having to “pop” [sell off] items of jewelry and other family valuables (including “Marchers,” the family’s London home) to keep out of debt. Julia reveals this in conversation around the dinner table with Charles Ryder and her older brother, “Bridey” [Lord Brideshead] (283). Earlier in the novel we learn from Rex that Lord Marchmain is overdrawn “near a hundred thousand pounds in London” (174-75). In short, the family has seen better times.

It is hard to see how the Vanbrughs or almost anybody else could have objected to the Flytes on the basis of heraldic rank. Lord Marchmain is a marquis, and that is a very hard thing to top in England. The only rank higher is duke, which is quasi-royal. But it might reasonably be objected that Lord Marchmain shirks his civic duties as a peer. “I am all that the socialists would have me be and a great stumbling block to my own party,” he admits (99).

I suggest the following reason why the Vanbrughs choose not to attend Julia and Rex’s wedding. Though Sebastian tells Charles that Brideshead Castle was built “in Inigo Jones’s time” (79), I gather Sebastian means the castle was built *after the style* of Inigo Jones, not that it was designed and built by Jones, himself. This jibes very well with the factual knowledge we have today that Sir John Vanbrugh was indeed the real architect of the fabulous manor house called Castle Howard that became 200 or more years later, especially on the big and little screens, Brideshead Castle.

Vanbrugh was a well-known dilettante of the late 1600’s and early 1700’s. Vanbrugh’s designing of Brideshead/Howard marked his first dabbling in architecture. Indeed, Vanbrugh

was so well-known for his widely-ranging interests that when Jonathan Swift got wind of Vanbrugh's latest venture, he quipped, "Van's Genius without Thought or Lecture, is hugely turned to Architecture" (Cook 144).

Now, it is very much to be expected that succeeding generations of Vanbrughs carried on the family tradition of being very house-proud. By the first decades of the twentieth century, a new generation of Vanbrughs might very well have turned their backs straight upon Julia because they felt their famous forebear's architectural masterpiece was about to be defiled all over again by Julia. After her year-long, so-called "secret engagement" to Rex, that originated as Lady Marchmain's idea of damage control (188), but widely became known in London for the intense affair it was...now Julia tries *her* hand at damage control with Rex's and her small, perfunctory wedding at the Savoy Chapel (188). This whole episode could be just one example of the "remarkable propensity," noted by critic Philip Ziegler, in his biography of socialite Diana Cooper, "of the English upper classes to behave like schoolboys" (28-29).

Another example of schoolboy behavior that comes quickly to mind is Bridey's, when he drops his second "bombshell" on Julia. On his engagement night, after capturing his sister's interest in her prospective, new sister-in-law, the widowed Mrs. Beryl Muspratt, Bridey informs Julia that his fiancée, Beryl, is a woman of "strict Catholic principle" who would never consent to be Julia and Rex's guest at Brideshead, that den of sin, made so by the Rex-Julia-Charles ménage. "Why, you pompous ass," Julia says to Bridey, as she abruptly rises from the dinner table and goes outside to the fountain, thus adding her own "remarkable propensity" for churlishness to the climactic scene.

Olive Cook, in her book, *The English Country House*, reminds us that such "priggishness and perfectionism" reached an apex with Sir John Vanbrugh himself, in his day. Having tangled so often with the Duchess, Sarah Churchill, Vanbrugh was refused entry to Blenheim, the very house he had designed for her family (149). It would hardly seem out of keeping with class and family character, then, for Vanbrugh's descendants to boycott the wedding of Julia—already a fallen woman—to a divorced colonial.

To turn again to Swift, the famous satirist said he "looked with savage disgust" upon people's "failure to reach their potentialities." To some members of Julia Flyte's crowd, such "failure" is probably just how Julia's marrying beneath her station must have looked.

Now, to end on an ironic note, one has to laugh at all this negativism about divorce on the part of people whose national church, the Anglican Church of England, was founded in order to legalize divorce. True, the Vanbrughs are an old Protestant family, but many Protestants, including Queen Elizabeth II, oppose divorce when it can be avoided. But at least for people like the Anchorages and Chasms, the issue would not have been "the house that Jack built."

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REVIEWS

Explanations, No Apologies

Evelyn Waugh, by Ann Pasternak Slater. Devon: Northcote House, 2016. 325 pp. £35, \$59.95, hardback.

Reviewed by J.V. Long

Ann Pasternak Slater's *Evelyn Waugh*, published in a series "Writers and Their Work," engages from first encounter. The cover features a portrait of Waugh that is unfamiliar, even out of character – if one's image of his character is informed by photographs of a jowly, late-middle-aged man in a preposterous checked-suit scowling next to his property's gate or staring over his large writing desk while brandishing a cigar. Those late pictures are self-conscious advertisements for the façade Waugh constructed through the 1950s and 1960s as a defense against the encroaching awfulness of the world as he saw it.

Pasternak Slater's cover-portrait is altogether different and sets a tone for the analyses that follow. Waugh appears young and thin and sports a moustache; he's dressed in a military uniform and glances sideways in a manner that suggests a sense of expectation, perhaps of drama. This 1940 photograph is from the period when Waugh was contentedly employed in the Royal Marines; it captures a moment during the Phoney War, which supplied the material for the redoubtable *Put Out More Flags* (1942). Not only was it a period of transition for Waugh; it was an opportunity for invention and re-invention.

The only other image is the book's frontispiece, which is a still from the 1924 film *The Scarlet Woman*; it shows Waugh in costume as the fatuous Dean of Balliol (the caption's designation "the Dean of Scone College" rather than Balliol and the date, 1926 rather than 1924, are slips) with a wig that looks like it was modeled after Martin D'Arcy. Both these images suggest experimentation with identity and character, and it is difficult not to assume that these pictures were very deliberately chosen. Indeed, their juxtaposition points to a fact that APS's criticism makes abundantly clear: Evelyn Waugh's work through the course of his life reflected the development of his character. "His novels took an undulating path towards greater depth and complexity. His self-ironizing public persona may have hardened into a grotesque. Yet his comic impulse, his moral seriousness, and his aesthetic credo remained essentially unchanged. Uniting them was his conception of the artist's craft: to transform the chaos of his own lifetime into *significant* form" (1). Thus Waugh's work is itself the sharpest portrait available, and Ann Pasternak Slater is expert at pointing to both its surfaces and depths.

Evelyn Waugh is a reader's book. That is, it performs criticism as an act of companionship between its author and her audience that will not only be welcomed by new students of Waugh but also be compelling to those already familiar with his work. Readers and reading are taken seriously and encouraged. It is a book of deep yet unobtrusive learning and literary sensibility that makes nuanced use of other authors (Shakespeare, Keats, Yeats, D.H.

Lawrence) and other texts. Discussions are always grounded firmly in the fiction itself; APS concentrates on words and sentences with an intense clarity that makes her reader want to return to the source straightaway. (I mean this as a compliment: in response to her chapters on *Decline and Fall* and *Black Mischief*, I re-read the novels with new pleasure before moving on to the treatments of *Vile Bodies* and *A Handful of Dust* respectively.) As with any salutary companion, it's possible to maintain a leisurely pace in order to appreciate the conversation. And perhaps that's the metaphor to explain the book's success. I felt as if I was observing APS orchestrate a series of conversations – among Waugh's books; between his biography and corollary texts (e.g., letters, diaries, and autograph manuscripts) and the fiction; between APS and other critics; and, most importantly between APS and her reader – designed to highlight “Waugh's intellectual coherence” (73) and consistent moral seriousness.

The book is structured chronologically and treats all of Waugh's major fiction – novels and selected short stories. Following a helpful outline at the beginning, a good deal of biographical information is included throughout and complements the analyses. For example, in her consideration of the war trilogy, APS thoroughly describes, supports, and reinforces Donat Gallagher's research that has been so crucial in clarifying aspects of Waugh's military service, especially in Crete. There are also bits of new information – at least to me – that fill out Waugh's features. Is it edifying – or simply interesting – to know that Waugh undertook “a penitential pilgrimage to Lough Derg in Ireland” (58) as a response to his exasperation with the delay from Rome to his petition for annulment? APS comments in an endnote, “Waugh's pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of St Patrick, Lough Derg, Co Donegal, is not mentioned by his biographers, but is included in his own unpublished list [in the HRC at the University of Texas] of major events in his life from 1927-39. The list, in reverse chronological order, is highly selective; the inclusion of the pilgrimage suggests its importance to him” (291). Its importance (and efficacy?) is confirmed by the cited description from Waugh's *Diaries* that the morning he returned, “Drove through empty streets to St James's where I found telegram ‘Decision favourable’ . . .” (58).

Although the archival research and specific connections to Waugh's life amplify the account, the heart of the book is its careful attention to Waugh's writing. APS emphasizes Waugh's “favoured fictional technique – theme and virtuoso variation” (34) with reference to the defensive letter he wrote to the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster when Waugh was attacked for excesses in *Black Mischief*. “I introduced the cannibal theme in the first chapter and repeated it in another key in the incident of the soldiers eating their boots, thus hoping to prepare the reader for the sudden tragedy when barbarism at last emerges from the shadows and usurps the stage” (34, *Letters* 77). There's a wonderful instance of APS's method in her chapter on *A Handful of Dust*.

Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar's flat is another rococo *tour de force* of aesthetic indecorum, being

furnished promiscuously and with truly Eastern disregard of the *right properties* of things; swords meant to adorn the state robes of a Moorish caid were *swung from the picture rail*; mats made for prayer were strewn on the divan; the carpet *on the floor had been made in Bokhara as a wall covering*. (HD 179, AMS 55, my italics)

All the italicized phrases are second thoughts added to and correcting the authorial manuscript. These fantastical narrative diversions encourage the critical misapprehension voiced by Malcolm Bradbury, that the novel is an amorphous triumph of ‘comic anarchy’; that it is ‘hardly open to direct moral interpretation’; that ‘Waugh’s real concern is at the level of comic tone’. Not so. These moments of anarchic comedy serve a firm aesthetic rationale that is profoundly moral . . .

They are all variations on the central theme. Jenny’s *promiscuous* tastes mix up the right properties of things and misplace them. (43)

I quote the example at length because it gives a fine sense of the author’s tools: focus on individual words and phrases enhanced by comparisons between different versions of the text; engagement with other critical voices; and a summary of “the central theme.” It is a synthesis that skillfully illuminates the defining characteristics, strengths and deficits, of each work under consideration. This procedure, modeled in each chapter, creates a cumulative impression of Waugh’s skill and craft that explains the esteem that surrounds his work.

One of the appeals of *Evelyn Waugh* emerges from the fact that Ann Pasternak Slater seems to like Evelyn Waugh. Her pleasure in the complexity and the comedy of his fiction is infectious. She has written a book that is easy to recommend and impossible not to admire.

Was This Book Really Necessary?

Evelyn Waugh: A Life Revisited, by Philip Eade. New York: Henry Holt & Co, 2016. 432 pp., \$32.00; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016. 432 pp., £30.00.

Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Manley

There is clearly no shortage of biographies of Evelyn Waugh. Not many 20th-century authors have two detailed and definitive biographies of their life and work such as Martin Stannard's two-volume version (1986, 1992) and Selina Hastings' voluminous single volume (1994). In addition, there are the more personal or shorter works by Christopher Sykes (1975), Douglas Patey (1998), John Wilson (1996, 2001) and Michael Barber (2014), not to mention several full volumes devoted to Waugh's complete oeuvre such as those by Robert Murray Davis (1981, 1985, 1989), Jeffrey Heath (1982), and more recently, Ann Pasternak Slater (2016).

There are several valid motivations, however, for having another attempt at a Waugh biography at this particular time. Firstly, it was written in conjunction with the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Waugh's death in 1966. Second, and perhaps most important, there was new material that had become available since previous biographers had completed their work. This was primarily in the archives collected by Waugh's grandson, Alexander, and, included most prominently, a memoir by Waugh's first wife and other papers from her files as well as letters Waugh wrote to Teresa Jungman whom he unsuccessfully tried to make his second wife. In addition to these newly available documents, the archives also contain the research of two previous Waugh scholars. These consist of interviews and correspondence compiled by Michael Davie in conjunction with his editing of Waugh's diaries as well those compiled by his biographer Selina Hastings. Many of the subjects of these archival materials died shortly after they were generated. Finally, the publicity stirred up by the new biography should help promote sales of the volumes in the *Complete Works* of Waugh series that are scheduled to appear beginning in 2017.

All of these goals seem to have been met by this book at least to some extent. Philip Eade, the writer selected by the Waugh Estate and granted access to the new material, is an experienced biographer with two well-received books to his credit. He was widely interviewed prior to U.K. publication, and the book was selected as "Book of the Week" for BBC Radio 4. Nicholas Grace (who played Anthony Blanche in the Granada TV adaptation) read out excerpts over 5 days. Eade has been invited to appear at numerous literary festivals, including Oxford, Buxton, Henley-on-Thames and Cheltenham. The book was widely reviewed and excerpted in all the major London papers, as well as several magazines and provincial papers. Indeed, the *Times* newspapers, within a period of less than a week, published two reviews of Eade's book as well as a memoir by Benedict Nightingale, who is the son of the first Mrs. Waugh by her third husband. Most of the reviews were favorable or mixed. How much all this activity and attention may help the sale of the complete works remains to be seen, but it cannot have hurt.

The new material from the Waugh archive is frequently cited throughout the book, wherever appropriate. In addition, Eade has read and cited several new works, both primary and secondary, that have appeared since the last full biography was published. In many cases, this new material is mentioned without drawing particular attention to its novelty. On the other hand, Eade does not claim to have found any information in the new archival material that would lead him to quarrel with or challenge conclusions drawn by his predecessors. Rather he uses the new material largely to support what are by now familiar findings with respect to Waugh's character and career.

The memoir of Waugh's first wife is intended to provide her "side" of the story of the failure of their marriage. Portions of Eade's book that rely on this memoir were excerpted in the *Daily Telegraph*. The memoir covers 19 pages and was written in 1975. There are references to an interview of Evelyn Nightingale, as she then was, by Davie. The memoir provides that her children may do with it what they like after her death, which occurred in 1994, and it may be then that it was sent to Davie. She writes that Waugh fancied her both for her "gay, boyish" (114-15) looks as well as her upper-class connections. For her part, she liked the idea of being married to a writer and had ambitions of her own in that direction. They met in May 1927, but it was not until December that Waugh proposed, at a time when it looked as if she was about to leave for Canada. The proposal was made at the Ritz Grill, and she recalled that it was in terms of "Let's get married and see how it goes" (118), rather than of love or commitment. She told Davie that she took this to mean "that absolute faithfulness was not required by her" (119). She accepted the next day.

The couple spent Christmas with the Waugh household on North End Road, and she was favorably impressed by his family (at least in comparison to her own). Thus, although there were tensions between Evelyn and his father and brother, they were nothing like the coldness and control that characterized her relations with her own mother, Lady Burghclere. Shevelyn (as she has come to be known) and Waugh's mother engaged in a polite correspondence. Nothing much is added to what is already known about the marriage ceremony that took place in June 1928 without her mother's knowledge or consent. There are several references from the memoir to Shevelyn's sickness during the Mediterranean trip that became the subject of *Labels*. There were signs of this about two months before the trip, an illness diagnosed as German measles, as well as a visit to the country house of her sister Alatheia and brother-in-law Geoffrey Fry, to which the Waughs retired to allow Shevelyn to recuperate before the voyage. The cruise itself seems to have bored her, and there are suggestions of this in her memoir. By the time the couple got home, there were already indications, noted by others, of strains in the marriage. There is nothing from the memoir, however, as described and quoted by Eade, that would explain what it was exactly that may have occurred on the voyage or elsewhere to make her dissatisfied with Waugh's performance as a husband.

Eade offers a paragraph (135) that suggests when, precisely, Shevelyn's friendship with John Heygate turned into an affair. This happened when Hevelyn was in Beckley writing *Vile*

Bodies. Shevelyn and Heygate went to see Hevelyn accompanied by Heygate's then girlfriend Eleanor Watts, who was at the time an undergraduate at nearby Oxford. During that visit, Heygate proposed to Eleanor but she was unsure, and the next time she saw Heygate in London, he became so drunk at a party given by Bobby Roberts that Eleanor left without him. Nothing more is said by Eade about Heygate's proposal to Eleanor. It was after that party that the drunken Heygate took Shevelyn back to his basement flat in Cornwall Gardens where, according to Eleanor, a manservant found them in bed together the next morning. As Shevelyn wrote in her memoir, it was then that she realized that she was "very seriously in love" (135) with Heygate.

This is similar to a description of these events in Selina Hastings' book, except Hastings writes that Eleanor had rejected Heygate's proposal before he got drunk at the Bobby Roberts party. Hastings says nothing about Eleanor's recollection that a manservant found Shevelyn in bed with Heygate in his apartment, although Eade cites Hastings' own 1990 telephone interview with Eleanor as his source for that information. In any event, what Eade offers on the failure of Waugh's first marriage, with the help of the Shevelyn memoir and Hastings' archive, is not all that different from what others have written without access to it.ⁱ Eade does, however, add interesting and previously undisclosed details, such as Shevelyn's understanding that the marriage was entered into on a "trial" basis. Overall, it tends to give a more balanced description of the reasons for the break-up than previous versions that were more favorable to Waugh's side.

Much the same analysis can be applied to the references made by Eade to Waugh's correspondence with Teresa Jungman. They add details to the narrative that show a softer, more romantic side of Waugh as he fruitlessly pursued Teresa. He pleads with her repeatedly to take him seriously as a lover, though these entreaties are not particularly well written. Indeed, banal is the word that comes to mind regarding the many quotations from this correspondence cited by Eade. For example, here are excerpts from two of Waugh's letters written in July 1933:

I think of you all the time...I believe you are the first woman I have ever been in love with...I love you so much...I don't think of much except you—your beauty, so fragile and intangible, a thing of fresh water and the early morning and the silence of dawn and mist just alloyed with gold and deep, saturated restful greens like sunrise on that river I travelled down last winter—and your intimate character, all mystery and frustration, a labyrinth with something infinitely secret and intimately precious at its centre...*etc., etc.* (177-78)

The letters continue in this vein until later in the year, after Waugh had started his proceedings in the Roman Catholic bureaucracy to annul his first marriage. He then formally proposed to Teresa, and she quickly declined. The rejected proposal is described in a letter to Mary Lygon, from which it appears that the proposal was delivered and rejected in person.ⁱⁱ Waugh still did not accept this as her final refusal. A few weeks later, after he received favorable (but, as it turned out later, premature) predictions on the outcome of his annulment petition, the

correspondence resumed in much the same tone as before. When Teresa made a gift to him of a sponge, he somewhat pathetically responded

I have clung to the last sponge you gave me through many changes of bathroom; I threw its shreds away today and will stick to the new one for months to come.
(185)

One can only hope that Waugh was attempting humor in this letter, but even if he were, it doesn't come off. These letters, from the evidence in Eade's quotes, would have had difficulty finding a comfortable perch in the 1980 collection by Mark Amory if his selection standard included the quality of the prose.

The frequency of this correspondence is much reduced in 1934, if Eade's references are anything to go by. At the end of that year Waugh reconnected with Laura Herbert, and his attentions shifted to her. Perhaps the most touching letter in his correspondence with Teresa, from which Eade includes a substantial quote (204), is the one from October 1936 where he tells her of his engagement to Laura. The letters demonstrate Waugh's vulnerability in the face of Teresa's repeated rejections. However, they do not offer any new information that would change in any meaningful way conclusions of previous biographers about how or why his second marriage came about the way it did. The facts are these: he wanted to marry Teresa and, to that end, pursued and then proposed to her, but she rejected him, and he eventually moved on.

In the one notable case where Eade does take issue with a previous biographer's conclusions, he relies, ironically, not on new archival materials but on notes taken by Selina Hastings from the research and interviews she conducted to write her own version of Waugh's life. Hastings gave Eade access to her files, which are now, as noted previously, in the Waugh archive. Eade cites material from her "cutting room floor" with about the same frequency as he cites that from the new materials. He uses Hastings' research to address some claims regarding Waugh's homosexual partners at Oxford made by Paula Byrne in her *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Bridehead* (London: HarperPress Paperback, 2010, 62-64). Byrne relied on quoted statements attributed to Waugh's friend Tamara Talbot Rice, at the time an Oxford undergraduate, relating to Waugh's alleged liaison with Hugh Lygon, but she provides no source. Eade finds Byrne's uncited source in Hastings' notes from her interview of Talbot Rice and sees that it does not support Byrne's description, and then challenges Byrne's scholarship (91, 348, n. 6 and 7).ⁱⁱⁱ

Some additional academic sparring might have provided a solid basis for Eade to claim to have completed a progression from literary journalism to the embattled ranks of academic scholarship, but this seems to be the only instance where he takes off the gloves and wins the round on his own research (aided by that of Hastings). It is not clear whether this absence of controversy speaks well for the generally high quality of previous scholars' work or merely reflects the fact that Eade prefers not to be too aggressive.

Eade also takes issue with previous biographers in his treatment of Waugh's war record. Here, however, he has allies in Donat Gallagher and Carlos Villar Flor in their recent study *In the Picture: The Facts behind the Fiction in Evelyn Waugh's Sword of Honour* (2014). Gallagher puts to rest the two charges of several earlier biographers that Waugh (1) was unfit to be an officer, and (2), that he had retreated from Crete before he should have, contrary to orders. Eade relies extensively on the Gallagher text for his rebuttal of the Crete arguments and, though he doesn't cite his book specifically on the fitness issue, comes to the same conclusion based on the same or similar sources, and acknowledges Gallagher's research. Gallagher goes on to argue that Waugh was correct in his judgment that the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia did not collaborate with the Nazis. Aside from recognizing its existence, Eade stays out of that argument, which is the least convincing part of Gallagher's text.

To go back to our original question of whether this book was "necessary," the answer is probably not. It adds little to Waugh scholarship besides demonstrating that newly available material does not require any change in previous conclusions (except with respect to Waugh's military career, which has been adequately covered in Gallagher's book). On the other hand, the book is very accessible, despite its scholarly format, is well organized and is entertaining to read. It is, perhaps, more balanced than some of the previous biographies, and this may be due to some extent to the new archival materials. Eade's book certainly serves as a good introduction to Waugh's life and, to a lesser extent, his work.

Several U.K. reviewers expressed disappointment that the book devotes relatively little attention to Waugh's work. They argue that Waugh's reputation is based on his success as a writer and that it is his written work, not his life story, for which he will be remembered. Eade does not claim to have written a "critical biography" that reassesses Waugh's achievements as a writer (xxii), but he does offer a bit of information about each of Waugh's books, especially as they were informed by some part of his life. He provides just enough information to make those seeking more to resort to one of the many critical works listed in the detailed bibliography. In any event, Waugh's life has become an increasingly important part of his legacy and was worth a new biography that explored the previously unavailable materials, even if they do not change much that was written before.

If the book has a fault, it is in passing over some important features of Waugh's life. These would include his career as a journalist, his attitude toward religion, and some of his travels, particularly to Africa and the post-Hollywood trips to the U.S. Such matters are touched upon, but only superficially. The text is well documented, accurate and well edited. The index is thorough and helpful. For the most part, the text is well written, and in some cases the prose is outstanding. For example, the passages on Waugh's libel litigation with the *Daily Express* and the marriages of his children are nothing short of brilliant. This may be due to the author's experience in drafting legal briefs. Eade does have one annoying habit, though, that is almost a stylistic tic. He tries to connect two sentences with a comma followed by "however," and this usually ends up jarring the narrative flow as one tries to discover the contrast suggested by this

conjunction where there is none. At least two U.K. reviewers were also annoyed by this habit, and one suggested that Eade could have made sense out of such connections if he had substituted “although” for “however.” It might have helped in some cases, but a better practice would have been to leave most of such sentences unconnected.

Notes

i Eade also offers bits of information from the correspondence of both Pansy Lamb and Shevelyn with their friend John Maxse, indicating that there were signs of problems in the Evelyns’ marriage. Pansy was Shevelyn’s roommate at the time she and Waugh met. Why the enigmatic Maxse was a correspondent of both Shevelyn and Pansy in which they shared with him intimate details at this critical time is not explained. This must be John Herbert Maxse (1901-78), ed. Eton and Sandhurst, m. Dorothy Mary Thorne (1931), served WWII in Coldstream Guards achieving rank of Major. Both Hastings and Eade rely on Maxse as a source in this period (Eade more heavily than Hastings), citing his correspondence that is archived at Columbia University, but neither of them tells us anything about him or how he came to receive these letters.

ii Hastings (*Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, London: 1994, 294) says that Waugh told Mary Lygon that he took Teresa out to dinner to make his proposal, but the letter to Lygon reporting the event does not mention where it took place (*Letters*, 81). From the context of that letter, the proposal was not in writing.

iii Byrne (*Mad World*, 62) places a similar reliance on quoted statements she asserts were made by Prof. A. L. Rowse with respect to Waugh’s relationship with Lygon. Again, Byrne offers no source for her quotes. Rowse was also interviewed by Hastings (*Evelyn Waugh: A Biography, supra*, Acknowledgements, xi), and one suspects that the assertions by Byrne based on Rowse’s statements are derived from that interview and are as questionable as those made with respect to Tamara Talbot Rice. There is ample, well documented, circumstantial evidence that Waugh may have had (or wished to have) a more than platonic friendship with Lygon, and it is probably preferable to leave matters at that.

Brideshead Revisited: A Play

Adapted by Bryony Lavery from the novel by Evelyn Waugh, London: Faber & Faber, 2016, 160pp., £9.99.

Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Manley

This latest stage adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited* was written and produced in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Evelyn Waugh's death.¹ It opened at the Theatre Royal in York in April 2016. The English Touring Theatre then organized a road trip of the production around the middle and south of England, concluding at Richmond-on-Thames in July 2016. The book, published by Faber, contains the script by Bryony Lavery, as well as the list of the cast and crew of the original production, together with biographical sketches taken from the program notes for these performances.

Lavery has written widely for the stage. Included among her works are several stage adaptations such as *Precious Bane*, *The Wicked Lady* and *Treasure Island*. Most of the principal characters from the novel are included in the play, although some do not survive, such as Cousin Jasper and Boy Mulcaster. There are a total of 16 characters in the script. In the 2016 production, the cast consisted of nine actors, with several taking on multiple roles.

The script in the book is almost exclusively devoted to dramatic dialogue and contains very few stage directions or notations. It follows the story of the novel but eliminates most of what is in Waugh's narrative. Inevitably there was much that had to be cut out. Even so, several of the reviews complained of the play's length. Oddly, some reviewers thought the first half moved along well and lagged after the intermission; others thought just the reverse.

There was much moaning in the reviews about the elimination or curtailment of favorite scenes but that is the unavoidable result of any adaptation. Unfortunately for this one, it was compared to the 1981 Granada TV adaptation that was able to include virtually the whole novel in its 11 episodes that extended over nearly 11 hours. That version was not designed to be viewed in one evening, and only the keenest *Brideshead* fanatics are likely to binge-watch the entire production at one sitting.

In trying to compare the dialogue of the novel with that of the play, one is faced with problems created by the rearrangement and consolidation of dialogue from different scenes in the novel. So, just as one thinks one has found a favorite piece of dialogue missing from where it should appear, it pops up in later scene. All in all, I would have to conclude that Lavery has preserved about as much of the crucial dialogue as was possible within the time allotment of a stage production.

The printed script can give one only a very minimal idea of how the production would have been received by a live audience. The dialogue is altered for the stage version, mostly by clipping out phrases. It's difficult to know how well this works from reading it on the page.

Here's an example comparing the script with the novel in the scene at the beginning of Book One, Chapter 4, where Charles and Sebastian are discussing the architectural design and history of Brideshead Castle:

Ryder: *I adore the dome.*

Sebastian: *Oh Charles, don't be such a tourist.*

Ryder: *Is it by Inigo Jones?/It looks later.*

Sebastian: *What does it matter when it was built/If it's pretty?*

Ryder: *It's the sort of thing I like to know.//The fountain is extraordinary.*
(Lavery 33)

'Is the dome by Inigo Jones, too? It looks later.'

'Oh, Charles. Don't be such a tourist. What does it matter when it was built if it's pretty?'

'It's the sort of thing I like to know.'

'Oh dear, I thought I'd cured you of all that—the terrible Mr Collins.'

...in the center dominating the whole space rose the fountain; such a fountain as one might expect to find in a piazza in Southern Italy; such a fountain as was, indeed, found there a century ago by one of Sebastian's ancestors; found, purchased, imported and re-erected in an alien but welcoming climate. (Waugh, 1960 ed. 92-93)

This passage in the script follows the novel but adds Charles' "adoration" of the dome. At the same time it truncates his description of the fountain and its history into the word "extraordinary." Waugh's reference to "Inigo Jones, *too*" is altered in the script to eliminate the "too," which suggests a previous reference in both the original and revised editions. But then the "too" should have been deleted from that line in the 1960 revision as well because Waugh had eliminated the earlier reference to Inigo Jones on the preceding page of the 1945 edition. The Penguin edition, revised in 1982 (77-78), tracks the 1960 Waugh edition and includes the now superfluous "too."

One scene that caused considerable comment among the UK reviewers of the play was the death of Lord Marchmain that comes at the end. As in other cases, the reviewers could not agree, with some declaring that the scene was too long and spoiled the ending and others

declaring it to be among the best scenes in the play. The script for the concluding scenes follows the book fairly closely up to the point where Julia and Charles say goodbye. After they part, the play ends with this soliloquy summarizing Charles's situation, rather than following Waugh's Epilogue with a return to the military encampment and Lt. Hooper:

Ryder:

Brideshead/They made a new house with the stones of the old one/The builders...Perhaps that's the pleasure of building/Like having a son/Wondering how he'll grow up.../I don't know,/I've forfeited the right to watch my son grow up/I'm homeless/Childless/Middle-aged/Loveless/I've never built anything/No house/No chapel.

(The chapel./Ryder regards the flame burning there.../He genuflects. /He prays./Lights fade.)

End of play. (146)

Most of these phrases are taken from Waugh's Epilogue (although not the genuflection), but we learn nothing in the script about what became of Julia, Cordelia, Bridey and his wife, Rex, Nanny Hawkins or the house itself.

Lavery's script certainly follows the story more closely than did the similarly time-limited 2008 theatrical film. There are no major changes to the storyline such as those in the film where, for example, Julia accompanies Charles and Sebastian to Venice and they schedule their visit to coincide with Carnival festivities. Whether Lavery omitted more or less of the story than the 2008 screenwriters is more difficult to say. The play depends on the stagecraft elements such as sound, lights and scenery to suggest settings and action where in the film these are simply photographed. So additional dialogue may be required in the play to describe actions or places that can be filmed with fewer spoken words on the screen. It is possible that this may have required more of the dialogue to have been lost from the stage than the film version.

Most of the reviews were more positive about the lighting, sound and scenery than they were about the script. From this, one assumes that these elements helped to make the relatively complicated storyline comprehensible. Although there are more parts than there are actors, there was little complaint about differentiating the multiple characters. Most of the reviewers found more to praise in the actors than to criticize. Whether the play will be performed in the West End is not known to this reviewer at the time of writing (Autumn 2016). The London critics who reviewed the 2016 performances were distinctly cooler than those writing for the provincial papers or theatrical blogs.

As noted, it is difficult to form a judgment of the text merely from reading it. Like all theatrical adaptations, it was written to be performed, not read. The dialogue on the page is

based on that written by Waugh and contains exact quotes clipped out of some of his dialogue. But the script does not read like Waugh's dialogue and would undoubtedly not sound like Waugh on the stage. By contrast, the 1981 Granada TV adaptation took much, perhaps most, of the dialogue right off the page. Since that will not work for a shorter stage adaptation, what we have with Lavery's version may be the best we can expect, in that it attempts to preserve as much of the original story as possible.

The published paperback version is well produced. The attractive cover has a photo of Castle Howard at the bottom. Inclusion of the notes from the theatre programs is a valuable addition to the text of the play. There were no obvious typos, although given the truncated nature of the dialogue, there may have been some that went undetected. Those interested in the TV and film adaptations of the novel will no doubt find the script interesting for purposes of comparison. It is doubtful, however, that the casual reader will come away from the script with a deeper understanding of the book, whereas attendance at a live performance of the play might well make a contribution.

Notes

i There is a record of at least once previous stage adaptation of the novel. This is by Roger Parsley and was published in 1994 by Samuel French Ltd. According to an internet search, there were performances of that adaptation by UK touring companies in the 1990s and by several regional theatres (including one in Sydney NSW) in 2006.

NEWS

John H. Wilson Jr. Evelyn Waugh Undergraduate Essay Contest

Submissions are still welcome for the John H. Wilson Jr. Evelyn Waugh Undergraduate Essay Contest. Essays (normally limited to 20 pages or 5000 words) are invited on any aspect of Waugh's life or work and will be judged by the *Evelyn Waugh Studies* editorial board. The winning essay will be published in the journal, and the author will receive a prize of \$500. Deadline: 31 December 2016. Email submissions to jpitcher@bennington.edu or Patrick.Query@usma.edu

Graham Greene Studies

The inaugural edition of the journal *Graham Greene Studies* is to be published before the end of the calendar year by the University of North Georgia Press.

<http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/ggs/>

100th Anniversary of *The Loom of Youth*

Rachel Hassall, the school archivist at Sherborne, has kindly informed *EWS* of some material she has made available online about Alec Waugh's novel, *The Loom of Youth*, which celebrates the 100th anniversary of its publication next year on 19 July 2017: <http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/alec-waugh-and-the-loom-of-youth/>

Catalogue of EW Items

In July, Forum Auctions included what was billed as "one of the finest and most complete Evelyn Waugh collections to come to the market in recent years."

<http://www.forumauctions.co.uk/Fine-Books-and-Works-on-Paper-Day-1/13-07-2016?gridtype=listview>

***Decline and Fall* Adaptation**

As noted in 47.1, to air on BBC Two: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/06/12/eva-longoria-to-star-in-bbcs-evelyn-waugh-adaptation-decline-and/>

Waugh and the Latin Mass Society

On July 8, as mentioned at the end of the article, Pontifical Vespers were held to commemorate Waugh's death: http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2016/07/08/evelyn-waugh-forgotten-battle-to-preserve-the-latin-mass/?utm_content=bufferd4573&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Gerard Kilroy's *Edmund Campion*

Don Gallagher's review of *Gerard Kilroy's Edmund Campion: A Scholarly Life* appeared in the Australian journal, *Quadrant*, July-August 2016, 81-87.

Evelyn Waugh Society

The Waugh Society has 175 members. To join, please go to <http://evelynwaughsociety.org/>.

The Evelyn Waugh Discussion List has 78 members. To join, please visit

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, 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.

End of *Evelyn Waugh Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2

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