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At Least a Little of What We Know: Robert Murray Davis and Evelyn Waugh

Jeffrey Manley

It seems appropriate on the occasion of the death of Robert Murray Davis to review his career as a Waugh scholar. As it turns out, he had recently done just that and published the results in a memoir, *Levels of Incompetence: An Academic Life* (Beaumont, TX: Lamar UP, 2014). What follows is a summary of the chapter entitled “Career” with some quoted excerpts and a few additions of things Bob left out.

Bob cites his first work on Evelyn Waugh as something written as an undergraduate at Rockhurst College in Kansas City. The teacher of a course on John Milton offered to allow him, as an alternative to a paper on Milton, to write one on Waugh. Bob selected *The Loved One* as his topic. His instructor also suggested that he enter the paper in a local book review competition. He did, and it won.

Bob next encountered Waugh in a drugstore book rack where he found a copy of *Vile Bodies* but thought the book “thin and tedious” (116) and added that years later he “was gratified to find out that Waugh felt the same way” (116).

In graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Bob explains that, after he had become something of a specialist on Ronald Firbank, one of his professors (Nicholas Joost) proposed that he write an essay on Waugh following Waugh’s death in 1966. The essay became “Evelyn Waugh and the Art of Fiction,” published in a journal edited by that same professor: *Papers on Languages and Literature*, 2 (Summer, 1966). It was not Bob’s first Waugh essay published in an academic journal but must be the first he thought worth mentioning. Joost also put Bob in touch with another emerging Waugh scholar, Charles E. Linck Jr. This led to a collaboration that resulted in joint publication of an article, “The Bright Young People in *Vile Bodies*,” *Papers on Language and Literature*, 5 (Winter, 1969).

About the same time, both Bob and Charles Linck became fairly frequent contributors to the *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter* that had been started by Paul A. Doyle in the spring of 1967. Bob

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had an article in the second issue, “Some Textual Variants in *Scoop*,” and Charles in the third, “Waugh Letters at the Texas Academic Center.” Bob continued to contribute until shortly before his death. He was consistently quite straightforward and opinionated in his articles and reviews and recalls that Paul Doyle once “complained that I cost him a subscriber every time I reviewed a book for him...” (123).

After teaching in Chicago and Santa Barbara, Bob took a position at the University of Oklahoma in Norman where he remained for the rest of his academic career. This must have been about 1969-70. Shortly after his arrival there, he attended an MLA regional meeting in Houston where he met Warren Roberts, director of the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, Austin. Bob was already aware that UT had acquired the “Waugh collection” but was unaware of its extent. When Roberts asked Bob if he would like to prepare the Oklahoma contribution to a national survey of literary manuscripts, Bob replied ““Why not?” and added ‘Would you like me to catalogue the Waugh collection?’ ‘Why not?’” was the reply. The decision wasn’t obvious. Although Oklahoma and Texas are neighbors (the residents of the former sometimes refer to the latter as “Baja Oklahoma”), Norman, OK was 400 miles from Austin, but his employers at OU were cooperative and made it possible for him to spend large chunks of time there.

Bob admittedly knew nothing about cataloguing or bibliography but wrote that he learned from others as he went along. He could see that the project had some considerable advantages: “...I was being given a five-year lead--this was well before the authorized biography or editions of Waugh’s diaries or letters were published--to examine unique materials that could lead to publications far more important than the catalogue” (120).

It turned out that there was a lot in the Waugh collection besides manuscripts, books and other written records. This later became a bone of contention between UT and the Waugh Estate who tried to negotiate a return of the non-literary materials, but that was not a problem for Bob, who writes:

In looking at the Waugh material, I was gratified and a little surprised to find evidence that I had known what I was doing in earlier speculations; about Waugh’s inability to identify with other people and his tendency to classify, analyze, separate and

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judge; about the nonsensical reading in the serial version of one of his novels that must have depended on a misreading of his increasingly execrable handwriting. I was fascinated and sometimes touched to see Waugh's habit of ruthless analysis applied to himself. And I was frustrated not only at having to flatten Waugh's barbed and lucid phrases but also at the impossibility of putting something more succinctly than the most precise and economical writer of my century. (121)

When Bob thought his cataloguing of the Waugh collection was finished, he was told by the HRC staff that they had just acquired the A. D. Peters files. They included correspondence between Waugh and his literary agent between 1928 and 1963:

This extended my task as well as my knowledge considerably. Aesthetically, I came to regard it as an extraordinarily loose and baggy epistolary/documentary novel, with a central character exhibited in various moods and modes of action [...]. I was delighted to see this material, but I was beginning to wonder if the HRC would ever stop buying more.... What I had seen was enough to use for the next two decades of my career.... One day a reading room assistant came to my table to tell me that he had just seen an even larger set of boxes full of Waugh material. I wasn't supposed to go into the stacks, but I was so obviously unsettled that he led me back to see what he had found. It was, I thanked God, the files for Alec Waugh. (122)

Bob goes on to describe several of the other Waugh scholars he was able to meet in Austin while he was at work on the catalogue. After a brief summary, he concludes this discussion: "...there has been relatively little jealousy among us. Waugh was more famous for his wit than for his sympathy, but his work attracts a number of people generous enough to tolerate his vagaries, and for that matter mine" (123). He explains how he met Australian scholar Donat Gallagher at the HRC and how they worked through the files together: "I was using the manuscripts to study the way in which Waugh composed his novels and he was working on the intellectual background of the non-fiction" (123).

His work on the catalogue brought him to the attention of the Whitston Publishing Company that specialized in bibliographies. They put out an enquiry, and he told them he was in a position to produce a book-length bibliography of Waugh. According to Bob, "In fact, I

couldn't, but by this time I knew people who could" (123). The latter included Charles Linck and Paul Doyle, as well as a German scholar, Heinz Kosok, all of whom collaborated with Bob on *Evelyn Waugh: A Checklist*, published in 1972. This was expanded fourteen years later into the more complete *Bibliography of Evelyn Waugh* with the added editorial participation of Donat Gallagher and Canadian academic Winnifred Bogaards, both also contributors to the *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter*.

As Bob describes the 1986 edition, it "was more than twice as long as the *Checklist*, not merely because of fifteen additional years of secondary material but because Gallagher had discovered 240 new items by Waugh and the Canadian scholar Margaret Moriss had found over 1000 additional items about Waugh published within the span covered by the *Checklist*" (124). Bob goes on to explain that he continued to update the *Bibliography* after 1986, but "knew that I would rather build a barbed wire fence barehanded than prepare another edition. So, with the help of a Waugh enthusiast in California, I uploaded the material onto the Internet, where younger scholars can use it as they will" (124). Where Bob's uploaded bibliography supplement may be posted is a mystery that I was unable to solve with a Google search.

Another result of Bob's research in the Waugh collection was published by Whitston in 1981. This was his *Catalogue of the Evelyn Waugh Collection at the Humanities Research Center University of Texas Austin*. It includes descriptions of the manuscripts, typescripts, printed proofs and published editions of Waugh's works as well as of diaries and individual letters he wrote that are archived in both the Waugh and A. D. Peters correspondence files. There are also a few letters to Waugh from other correspondents. Various drawings and marginalia are catalogued but not the furnishings, statuary, wall hangings, etc. that the HRC had secured in their acquisition, or the many hundreds of books in Waugh's library in which there were no marginalia.

After he had completed the catalogue, Bob realized that "the HRC material could be exploited for a book on Waugh's habits of composition" (124-25). This was delayed for several years by attention to academic duties but finally appeared in 1981 as *Evelyn Waugh, Writer*. He regarded the book "as the peak and, I sometimes feared, the end of my career, [as I] prepared to study Waugh no more, went through a divorce, and tried to think about what to do with the rest of my life" (125).

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Bob's Waugh career did not come to its expected end, however:

It turns out that Waugh was as difficult to get rid of as Tar Baby. Catholic University of America Press asked if I could produce a book for a series they were publishing and, with some 'scissors and paste,' [this became] *Evelyn Waugh and the Forms of his Time* (1989) [...] Not long after, Twayne wrote to ask if I'd write a monograph on *Brideshead Revisited*, and after spending a month in a mountain cabin in New Mexico, I emerged to clean up the manuscript and myself. (125)

This was published in 1990 as *Brideshead Revisited: The Past Redeemed*.

Things didn't end there. When Penguin asked him to edit and annotate *A Handful of Dust*, he was able "to draw upon textual study I had done more or less incidentally over the years" (125). This appeared in 1997. He had also planned a book to be written jointly with Hollywood scriptwriter Sam Marx about Waugh in Hollywood but when Marx died, that went on hold. Bob tried a fictional version on his own, but that found no takers. He then "retrofitted the story into factual narrative" (126) for *Mischief in the Sun: The Making and Unmaking of The Loved One* (Troy, NY: Whitston, 1999). He doesn't say much about it, but it may be the most enjoyable and entertaining of his Waugh books because it is written for a more general readership than his academic studies.

Bob doesn't mention *Evelyn Waugh, Apprentice*, a book published in 1985; this contained his annotated edition of Waugh's unpublished or uncollected early writings, some it from the files of the HRC. Also unmentioned is a small paperback collection of essays on Waugh, edited and contributed to by Bob, *Evelyn Waugh in The Christian Critic Series* (St Louis, 1969).

Bob concludes his discussion of the Waugh books he has written with the following: "...there wasn't any money in any of these books, and very little fame. For example, Valentine Cunningham, who teaches at Oxford, complained that there was no annotated edition of *A Handful of Dust* even though Blackwell's had some copies of my edition at their Oxford store" (126).

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After that came the conferences, though, beginning with two in 2003, Waugh's centenary year. Bob attended both (Spain and Oxford) and presented papers that were later published as books, one of which he also helped to edit: *Waugh Without End: New Trends in Waugh Studies* (Bern: Lang, 2005). So far as I can recall, he has attended and spoken at every Waugh conference since then, including the one in San Marino in 2017. He also "dribbled out notes and some queries for the resuscitated *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies*" (126). In what is now called *Evelyn Waugh Studies*, Bob most recently reviewed Donat Gallagher's first volume of collected journalism in the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*, v. 26 ("The Forest for the Trees," *EWS* 49.2, Autumn 2018), and commented on an article about the serialization of *Brideshead Revisited* ("Something that May Not Matter", *EWS* 50.2, Autumn 2019). He was also co-editor with Lewis McLeod of the OUP's *Complete Works* edition of *Brideshead Revisited* that will be published in due course as v. 9. His presence will certainly be missed.

He leaves two pages of advice for future Waugh scholars. These are roughly summarized as follows:

1. Careful reading and rereading of both Waugh's published writing and manuscripts affected Bob's writing 'more by immersion than imitation.'
2. Never take one's own words as inviolable and take pride in working carefully and promptly.
3. Hard work produces opportunities to travel and 'to meet a wide variety of stimulating and agreeable people.'
4. Never say never.
5. Scholarly life, while producing 'undeserving poverty...is the only life that has any spice to it.'
6. It is never a mistake to share your findings with other scholars.
7. He hopes that he has done his best to repay all those who helped, encouraged and criticized him and became 'a kind of extended family who get a different kind of jokes from his biological family.'

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8. He is pleased to have met and learned from a new generation of scholars and hopes 'it is not too egotistical, though it may be vain, that we are at least a little of what they know.'
(126-27)

“I Am Short, Elderly and Corpulent:” A Visit to Combe Florey in 1963

John Stathatos

At the end of June of 1963 I became sixteen years old, and spent the long summer holidays of the Greek school year in England, visiting far-flung family members and friends and staying with hospitable cousins in Surrey. One morning early in August, a postcard arrived for me at the London home of Robin and Renée Fedden whose guest I was at the time. It was of the kind often used in those days for brief impersonal communications, a white card with nothing but a line headed “From...” on one side; the other side was left blank. The message, inscribed in black ink and a flowing, rapid hand, was short and to the point: “We look forward greatly to your visit. I shall be on the platform at Taunton to meet your train at 7 on Saturday. I am short, elderly and corpulent.” It was signed “E.W.”

The postcard confirmed arrangements previously made by my parents for an August bank holiday visit to Evelyn Waugh’s home at Combe Florey. Though I had never met him, the family connection went back twenty-two years, to 1941 and wartime Egypt. Between February and July of that year, Waugh found himself posted to Egypt with No.8 Commando with the rank of Captain. Except for an unsuccessful raid on Bardia in April and the famous five days on Crete with “Creforce,” he was based throughout that period at army camps near Alexandria, first at Sidi Bish and later at Mersa Matruh. Along with many of the Allied officers in Cairo and Alexandria, Waugh was entertained by members of Egypt’s cosmopolitan, multicultural Sephardic, Coptic and Greek communities, including the family of my maternal grandfather, Nicholas Vatimbella, and my mother Maro, then a young painter. My father Constantine, an equally young second lieutenant of cavalry, had fled Greece via Turkey to enrol with the Free Greek Forces in Egypt, where he met and eventually married my mother. He joined the Sacred Squadron, an elite commando unit operating under Combined Operations Command which specialised in raids against Axis-occupied islands in the Aegean. The intersection of these two social circles, artistic and literary on the one hand and military on the other, meant that my parents became friendly with many of the British officers and civilians based in Alexandria and Cairo during the war years; not only Waugh and Robin Fedden, but also Paddy Leigh Fermor,

Xan Fielding, Larry Durrell and others from the overlapping “special operations” and *Personal Landscape* worlds.

I knew who Waugh was, of course, but at that age I had only read two of his novels: *Scoop*, which I loved, and *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, which puzzled me; somebody had pressed the latter on me as being supposedly “humorous.” I was familiar with the colourful dust jackets of the *Sword of Honour* trilogy on the shelves of the enormous bookcase in the dining room of our Athens flat, but had yet to open one. On the appointed day, I embarked on the Taunton train carrying a small overnight case, and, incongruously for a weekend visit, the boxed set of Georg Solti’s recording of *Siegfried* which I had just acquired and from which, with teenage fetishism, I could not bear to be parted. I was going through a Wagner phase at the time, which culminated later that summer with a memorable performance of *Götterdämmerung* with Nilsson and Windgassen under Solti, watched from the perilously near-vertical heights of the gods in Covent Garden.

Waugh did indeed meet me on the platform at Taunton, with a formality which impressed me but which I somehow took in my stride; generously, neither then nor at any time during my stay did he express astonishment at my strange Wagnerian encumbrance, once it had become thankfully clear to him that it was not some unusually bizarre species of house present. The passage of a great deal more than half a century has blurred my memory of his physical appearance; inevitably, what comes most easily to mind is a set of variations on the wonderful Cecil Beaton portrait of 1955. But an online search has uncovered a colour photo of Waugh “in his study at Combe Florey, 1963” by Mark Gerson which must have been taken a handful of days before or after my visit, since the view through his study window is clearly that of an English garden in high summer. Waugh is wearing a heavy three-piece brown hound’s-tooth suit with a vividly red flower in the buttonhole, a red and black striped tie, a keychain and an expression of barely restrained outrage. The interior of the study and my host’s choice of clothes, uncomfortably warm though they must have been at that time of the year, do indeed chime with my memories.

The household, though of course utterly strange to me, was a source of great fascination; Mrs Waugh benevolent but distant, Waugh remote but omnipresent, the children friendly but oddly subdued. I think the two youngest at least must have been present, Septimus certainly and

probably Harriet. I was intrigued by Septimus' name, only much later learning that his baptismal name was Michael. Were he to acquire a younger sister, I wondered idly, would she be called Octavia to save trouble; but I had the good sense to keep this witticism to myself. The next day I accompanied the entire family on a visit to some neighbours, causing Waugh some small distress due to the informality of my dress. The whole subject of formal dress in 1960s England had of course been a potential minefield, which I mostly treated with adolescent insouciance; an elderly friend of the family who generously invited me to hear *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Glyndebourne was slightly taken aback by my turning up in a regulation dark blue suit and white shirt, marred only by the addition of a necktie in place of the apparently *de rigueur* bowtie.

The receipt of one of Waugh's magisterial snubs could reasonably be regarded by the recipient as one of life's more devastating but memorable experiences, rather like finding oneself in the path of a stampeding rogue elephant, and it was an experience I was not to be spared that bank-holiday weekend. At dinner on my second evening, the conversation between Mrs Waugh, Septimus and me somehow turned to Byzantium, and then, inevitably perhaps, to the separation of churches of 1054. Fatally, this happened to be a subject about which I had recently acquired a smattering of knowledge (I think I must have been reading Runciman), and I chipped in with some footling but innocuous comment about the *filioque*. Waugh, who had been quiescent throughout the first part of the meal, suddenly came alert. Casting a basilisk look upon me, he delivered with crushing and deliberate finality the reproof, "We know *all* about our own religion, thank you." The conversation never really recovered.

This was, I thought to myself once I had stopped figuratively rocking back on my heels, rather an excessively heavy broadside to turn upon a sixteen-year-old, let alone upon a guest. But I was interested to note that the family appeared unperturbed, showing not the slightest sign of surprise, except for Septimus who after a couple of seconds gave me a covert but encouraging grin. I was a resilient child, and didn't stay crushed for long, though I remained curious as to the reason behind this unlooked-for attack. There had been, I eventually decided, neither malice nor animus behind the snub; clearly spontaneous, it had also been oddly impersonal, like a snake striking quickly through thick grass and then instantly vanishing. I thought of Aesop's fable about the scorpion, and its inherent and therefore innocent nature. Decades later, I stumbled across an account by Waugh's nephew Peter which chimes with this otherwise highly superficial

speculation: “My sister,” he recounted, “once asked [Evelyn] about the pre-Raphaelites and he said, 'Do you know anything about painting?' and she was only a young girl and didn't, and he said, 'Well, I won't bother then.'”

The weekend drew to its conclusion with no further drama. But as I prepared to leave for Taunton station, Waugh asked me to step into his study, hitherto unknown territory and barred, I had been given to understand, to his own children except under special dispensation. There, he thanked me courteously for my visit, adding slightly hesitantly, “I thought you might like a small souvenir of your visit. I think this might amuse you,” placing into my hands a copy of *Black Mischief*. When I opened the book in the taxi taking me to the station, I found that he had inscribed the flyleaf in advance of our farewell meeting: “For John Stathatos. Souvenir of Combe Florey, August 6th 1963, from Evelyn Waugh.” I was touched, for it was kindly meant, and it cannot have been easy for my host, already at the time in poor health and intolerant of strangers, having a doubly strange alien adolescent under his roof. I still remember my visit with pleasure and interest, for while the scorpion sting had been dispassionate, the kindness was aforethought.

REVIEWS

“Hora e sempre”

Kingsley Amis: Antimodels and the Audience, by Andrew James, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2013. 280pp. \$110.

Reviewed by Jonathan Pitcher

I apologize for the tardiness of this review, some eight years later, not least to the author and his publisher, but it is the last book John Howard Wilson ever sent me, and the usual post-it note on the dust jacket morphed from a few kind words into a no doubt overly sentimental and yet inescapable nostalgia, for someone I knew all too well on one level and not nearly enough on all the others.

The book itself is an apology of sorts, too. Andrew James is a keen reader, drilling down on “facts in the form of textual evidence” (13) rather than the slogans and attitudes that tend to dog Kingsley Amis, rereading the novels from his own angles and reproductions of scrawled manuscript revisions in the Huntington Library, the Harry Ransom Center, and the Bodleian. Some will of course have an immediate, visceral aversion to any such process of recontextualization, but if nothing else the scratchings do confirm a dedication to the English language, along with the centerpiece of James’ thesis, that the antimodels in question, secondary characters, “sham artists” (33), the odd “self-serving romantic” (81), personifications of “inauthenticity” (26), should be perceived as counterweights in the balance of a novel’s argumentation as opposed to the direct textual manifestation of the author’s own personality. Instead, these shady figures stake out an “artistic position through negative example” (210), a tactic vaunted as early as Amis’ BLitt thesis, along with respecting one’s audience and the number of copies sold. The negative, from James’ perspective, should not be contorted into the position, thus avoiding “the confusion of the man with his works” (18).

It’s a sticky proposition. The rehabilitation, though initially plausible, in the opening chapters, gradually becomes more compelling for the contradictions to its rule, even within James’ context, because Amis, both as a man and in his fiction, despite the aforementioned

balance, whatever you may think your belief system is, will eventually get your proverbial goat. If you'll forgive a laughable, Borgesian list, which is by no means exhaustive, and I am not oversimplifying here, the author and the works are against "neutrality" (32), "pretension" (36), "cultural nostalgia" (51), Wales, particularly in its revivalist or bilingual modes (7, 55, 133, 172-74, 197), "linguistic barriers" (56), "foreign expressions" (201), "abroad" (59), travel books (60), "snobbish intellectuals" (69), "unintentional repetition" (71), "folk art" (92), "critics who fail to limit themselves to clarifying textual meaning" (85), "academic knowledge" (122), "arts council grants" (153), "yobbos and berks giving away England to immigrants" (191), any and all forms of ostracizing "monolingual Anglophones" (202), the "wealthy, who are able to make up the rules as they go along" (135), Proust (202), "what he perceived to be cultural acquisitiveness" (203), Joyce's *Ulysses* (213), "dramatic, emotional women" (80), "the psychiatric profession, women, and socialism" (7), "paradigms" (108), in the broad sense of gleaning anything from the past, "lessons learned through art" (169), "too much talk" (205), "theory" (206), "philosophy" (212), "bad left-wing literature" (189), "politicizing art" (185), and anyone who dodges "paying for his round" (49). He verifiably wallows in "objectionable opinions" (17), "indifference to other civilizations" (56), the notion that "men do not need women and are better off without them" (141), "misogyny" (161), the "superiority of the English way" (198), "cultural imperialism" (198), fear that readers "would identify him with [*Difficulties with Girls*'] homosexual narrator" (10), "masculine jokes and anti-homosexual remarks" (181), judging anyone who learns English as a second language "by how natural he sounds to an Englishman" (199), and "did come to enjoy causing offence" (208). These are James' words, not mine, and they offer a hint of the size of the task that he sets himself, the point of the book. One wonders if there were ever a moment, perhaps around halfway through, in the wake of all the claims of balance while simultaneously drowning amidst the sea of negativity, when rather than forcing Amis' round pegs into more acceptable square holes, oscillating between defense and admission of the Sisyphean nature of said defense, they may have been allowed to float along in their roundness, or to sink to the bottom forever.

Another chronological, structuring narrative in the book, linked to the distaste for paradigms, is the process that Amis referred to as "horse-pissing" (19), which could otherwise be described as one of literary supersession, an initial engagement with other authors, whether direct or indirect, that is subsequently rejected and then parodied. "Chaucer had failed the

reader” (26). The inner audience provided by Philip Larkin is soon outstripped. John Wain becomes “conceited and rapacious” (34). Reading Dylan Thomas is then “responsible for delaying [Amis’] artistic development” (34). Graham Greene’s ““strict subordination of mood to story”” (62) meant that *The Legacy* is “a novel with a dominant mood that focuses on language at the expense of plot” (62). Frustration with ambiguity became *Take a Girl Like You*, in which “he employs a distasteful protagonist and an unsatisfying ending as a challenge to William Empson, another of the formative influences that Amis felt he had outgrown” (75). Charles Algernon Swinburne is chewed out for “theatrical self-promotion” (93), and T. S. Eliot for “Europeanism” (106). Despite some overlaps with Rudyard Kipling the latter ““developed early and he went off early”” (151). *Difficulties with Girls* “reject[s] the way of Maugham” (183), who “wrote ‘All about not doing things they very much wanted to do because they thought they had an obligation to someone else’” (182). *You Can’t Do Both*’s “Robin Davies rejects artists such as D. H. Lawrence and W. H. Auden [. . .] by the Amisian method of negative comparison” (196). Even Martin Amis becomes a second Larkin “as literary competitor” (211). It is all neatly summarized in James’ first chapter by the position “that if the reader finds the parody of *Beowulf* more entertaining than the original then Amis has succeeded where the original author failed” (26), but again it also offers the reader the impression of a typical post-Romantic or Modernist who is fiercely convinced by the inadequacies of his contemporary milieu and rails against them, a non-ideological ideologue, if you will, while simultaneously hinting at the future via a vague reinvention of a jingoistic, English nation-state or a flawed individualism or the briefest glimpse of a cheap newness, which is tough going.

As James himself explains, particularly in his conclusion, Amis was of course against his own dubious version of Modernism as well (212-13). Despite “the endorsement of idiosyncratic individualism” (123), he was also “decidedly anti-romantic” (82), underscored near the beginning of the book by James’ coopting of T. E. Hulme’s ““I object even to the best of the romantics”” (18), when purportedly “he could have been speaking for Amis” (18). The Hulme quote is from his essay “Romanticism and Classicism,” which, perhaps due to its broad division of the world into two *modi vivendi*, is often willfully elided and thereby misinterpreted. As Hulme *himself* wrote, before Amis and long before James, “Put shortly, these are the two views, then. One, that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent” (70).

Given the slew of examples above, regardless of Amis' opinion, to claim him as a Classicist under such definitions or even as generally at odds with the secular flux of Hulme's Romanticism is a stretch.

In amongst the “anti-,” or the tension in the dialogue between the antimodels and the models they implicitly reference, there are moments when the models themselves are made explicit, with James ceding, by fits and starts, to a more definitive sense of purpose. Amis “at his highest level . . . entertained the reader while offering a balanced, hopeful perspective” (152), and was ““writing *for* the man in the street”” (23; emphasis added), “the needs of the audience” (93), “to sell a lot of books and become anthologized” (25), “language use” (164), “competition” (101), provincialism (51, 56, 108), “the individual Englishman’s right to go forward” (100), ““Buildings free from all grime of history”” (110) “self-improvement” (205), “creation . . . above all else” (205), “direct experience” (193), “individuality” (134), “deviant sexual behavior” (95), the ““incoherence of the self”” (66), “experiments in genre” (138), and “change [as] essential” (157). You may now be able to hazard a guess at where we’re heading. James certainly knows his subject, which, in and of itself, is worthy of mention these days. Through detailed readings and broader contexts, he even manages to morph the curmudgeonly guffaws, sundry slurs, and Movement squabbles into a persuasive case for the possibility of a more complex, Amisian take on modernity than most of us had ever realized. This is 2013 going on 2022, though. Apparent truth, meaning, ethics, realism, stasis, identity, rationalization, the act of narration, authorial control, morality, epistemology, and love are all up for grabs, “anti-truths” (45), and it wouldn’t be a proper rehabilitation without rounding up a few of the usual suspects of a similar theoretical bent. The novels are therefore said to “fit Roland Barthes’s concept of the blissful: they are rooted in the present, easily swallowed, though harder to digest” (56). *That Uncertain Feeling* prompts a quote from Jonathan Culler on ““unreliable narrators”” (48), and another from Gerard Genette on dissimulation: ““pretending to show is pretending to be silent”” (50). *Take A Girl Like You*’s thwarted quests for love are filtered through Vladimir Propp’s rendition of ““lack”” (79), or “variable motivations” (79), ““the most inconstant and unstable elements of the tale”” (79). James is fond of the term “aporia” (31, 44, 88, 137, 207, 208), “a textual knot that resists untying” (31), which in turn ushers in Jacques Derrida’s ““it’s the condition of proceeding, of making a decision, of going forward. The aporia is not simply a negative step”” (88). All of these figures are accepted rather too unquestioningly, for my taste, part of an at times kinetic, ironic

reduction of the world to the same conception of *différance*, to the same handful of tertiary texts. Herein, however, chances to recast him as contributing to a “postmodern pattern” (240), or “something like what would become known as postmodernism” (118), are rarely missed. Quite whether Amis would care to think of himself as a proto-poststructuralist-structuralist is surely debatable, but that is probably irrelevant or unreliable too.

Evelyn Waugh, along with the rest of us, is no exception in this aporetic, homage-mockery machine. While “Waugh’s brand of satirical comedy influenced Amis strongly” (52), along with Gilbert Pinfold’s negativity (96), and *One Fat Englishman* is described as “a deliberately Waughian satire” (97), “Roger Micheldene’s [the protagonist] vision is essentially a parody of Waugh at his vitriolic worst” (97). History, religion, class, institutions, indeed any form of collective meaning-making, are all subject to the same treatment. Amis preferred a “suspension of moral judgments” (105), and “did not lament the waning influence of the English aristocracy” (98). It should therefore come as little surprise that here at best “the typical Waughian hero . . . [is] ‘At odds with the modern world, longing for certainties of a past age which are chiefly preserved in the public school, bitterly romantic or . . . neo-Jacobite’” (97), and at worst “he and his heroes are better than everyone else” (98), “burdened by wankerish pride” (102). Guy Crouchback “refuses to work” (98), which is beyond the pale, ensuring that Amis “was unable to see him ‘as a man trying in vain to find a place for himself in the great battle of our time’” (98). In his review of *Officers and Gentlemen*, he asserted that “[i]f one is really going to satirise army life, in all its confusion and arbitrariness, then sooner or later one has got to start satirising the army itself . . . Mr. Waugh’s attitude to the army is much too serious to permit that” (52). Similarly, in James’ words, “religion . . . prevented Greene from laughing, blunted Waugh’s sharp, satiric tone, and led to convenient, comforting conclusions in Chesterton’s mysteries” (137). He even cites Amis citing Marilyn Quennell to drive the point home: “She says of Waugh: ‘Horrible little man. What I couldn’t bear about him was the way he arse-crept rich and important people’” (204). Waugh, in turn, “privately sneered at Amis. He considered the Angry Young Men to be boorish representatives of the clamouring lower-middle class” (96), who “‘all read English Literature for schools and so take against it, while good critics & writers read as a treat and a relaxation from Latin & Greek’” (96). While the to and fro may seem personal, solipsistic, or petty, James takes pains within the context of his more extensive argument to recast it as a confrontation between two forms of dogma, one veering toward

postmodernism through a procession of seething subjectivities and the other protecting a peculiarly British form of medieval Catholicism.

With all such supersessionists, however impervious to criticism and immune from future supersession they may always consider themselves to be, eventually the carping from the sidelines catches up to them. Carping itself proves ephemeral, while there is little left to replace it, and even if there were the act of replacement would be inconsistent from the off. Amis' gods, in other words, are fickle. Neil McEwan's take on *I Like It Here* is that "even British decency could no longer be relied on" (75). James includes Andrew Sinclair's assertion that in "post-Second World War Britain [...] 'There was a failure of morals and of caring, but not of dreaming'" (106), if only to confirm that in "Amis's poetic world [...] the dream is denied. Refusing to look forward at a fanciful dream or glorify the literary and cultural past, Amis poetic stance is firmly rooted in the present" (106). He "place[s] his narrators outside the work as witnesses, rather than participants, who find fault without providing any concrete solutions for improvement" (107). *The Anti-Death League*, a novel in which "[n]o one can explain suffering, and religion provides little consolation (129), reshapes Chesterton's God's "twitch upon the thread" into a fantastical disc, and "we must each make our own way towards the disc's centre" (130). *Russian Hide-and-Seek* is "a cry of despair against the random forces controlling human destiny" (163). Literary markets and audiences are equally transient. Hermione Lee suggests that Amis "had only been tolerated for so long because of the English weakness for the elderly" (89). In order to circumvent these impasses, although James does not suggest the development of anything quite so grandiose as a social conscience, there is a softening of the edges, a series of muted inclinations. Amis' "concern for humanizing the antimodels becomes increasingly apparent in his post-1970 novels" (128), when they receive at least some "positive characteristics" (149). He became "disillusioned by willful misinterpretations of his craft" (165), which meant that the audience's influence, once championed, could also be pernicious, and readers needed to be educated (165). Another shift is an acceptance of "reasons for creating bad art" (157). One of James' finer recognitions of such paradoxes is his conclusion to the analysis of *Russian Hide-and-Seek*: "While his persistent railing against the politicization of art makes sense in a critical essay or in relation to a petition signing, it is somewhat self-contradictory in an attack on socialism that pleads for the separation of politics and literature" (194-95). Thus, the book's closing chapters give the impression of a lamentable child who has tossed all of his toys

out of the pram and can no longer quite reach them, reliant upon the gratuitous kindness of a passer-by to hand a few of them back.

Here, in this ambivalence, finally, is the England I also recognized as a child in the late seventies and eighties, and the one I ultimately escaped. It is easy to accept Amis' versions, to inhabit James' perceptions of the work, internally, literarily, and to forget that at some point amongst all the critique Amis also becomes responsible for forging the tawdry reality he supposedly derides, while simultaneously leaving you with very few tools to mediate it. Yes, perhaps it's his "fear of death" (212) that forces a softer, more antithetical approach, or if you prefer a shinier spin then there's James' "the reader cannot help but admire Amis for attempting the impossible, for his literal representation of the incongruities all artists face" (195). Less sanguinely, his cherished satellite or "new" towns were quick to ooze grime, both real and figurative, while obliterating history. Monolingualism or a fear of the foreign eventually meant yobbery, UKIP, and Brexit, and Amis' nowt-taken-out, warts-and-all bullying would become replicated *ad infinitum* under the guise of social media. Taking a beating is one thing, but it's quite another to pretend to like it.

Writers at War

Writing in the Dark: Bloomsbury, the Blitz and Horizon Magazine, by Will Loxley, London: Weidenfeld, 2021. 400pp. £20/\$47.45.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Manley

This is an entertaining, informative and well-written book about literature and literary journalism in wartime London. It is intended not as literary criticism or historical scholarship but as a non-academic account of how three editors contributed to the war effort and to the literature of that period. It is disserved by its subtitle and so-called list of characters.

All three of the subjects listed in the subtitle are discussed in the book, but it differs from other studies of this period by focusing primarily on the three men who promoted publication of high quality writing in this period in two literary magazines: John Lehmann, Stephen Spender and Cyril Connolly in *New Writing* and *Horizon*. Their story has been told before; that of Connolly and *Horizon* more often than the others. But these are good stories in an interesting time, and a new narrative describing how they related to each other is welcome.

The book opens with a list of “characters” and their brief introductory backgrounds; not a bad idea in a book of this sort, but in this case, misleading. The 12 characters are listed in order of appearance in the text, rather than their relative importance. The three prime movers are well described, but it would have been helpful to name them at the top as principals and list the others below as “participants.” It is an impressive list and includes most of the names one would expect, as well as a few surprises such as Julian Maclaren-Ross and Evelyn Waugh.

Indeed, given this review’s venue, we might as well start by questioning why Waugh’s name is even included among the cast. Aside from some random, isolated, quoted comments scattered throughout the text, only a few paragraphs are devoted to his wartime writing career. These relate briefly to the writing of *Put Out More Flags* during his transport home from North Africa and to his request for leave to write *Brideshead Revisited* in early 1944 after finally realizing that the Army had no use for him.

A bit more attention to Waugh's experience in wartime London, limited though it was, could have helped justify his position as a "character." He was away from London for most of the war on Army duty and missed most of the Blitz and the flying bombs. He did, however, pass through London briefly during both those episodes. The heavy Blitz raids on London started in September 1940 and continued until about May 1941. In October 1940, on the way back from his participation in the aborted raid in West Africa, Waugh writes: "All letters from home were about air raids. Bobbie Longdon blown up at Wellington. Henry Yorke no doubt fighting fires day and night" (*Diaries* 484). While on leave at Pixton, after his return in November, he again mentions: "Talk is all of air raids" (*idem* 485). During his visit to London, on 9 November, he stayed with his parents, noting "Highgate has been heavily bombed. My father fears nothing but my mother was rather more disturbed. There was considerable firing during the night but no bombs near us." The next day: "Much firing at night but no bombs near us." And the day after: "Air raid warnings all day. [...] The talk was mainly of bombs" (*idem* 486-87). Shortly after that (12 November 1940), Waugh left London to rejoin his unit in Scotland. His next diary entry from London is over a year later in December 1941, by which time the Blitz had ended. During the interim, he was with the Commandos training in Scotland, participating in the Battle of Crete, stationed on the fringes of the battles in North Africa and returning to Britain via Cape Town and the Caribbean.

The closest Waugh comes in his novels to a description of the Blitz is the direct hit on Turtle's Club across the street from Bellamy's (more a farce than a disaster) in the opening scene of *Officers and Gentlemen* (London, 1955). This occurs just after Guy's Marine unit has returned from West Africa: "'Most exhilarating,' said Guy." Ian Kilbannock responds: "'Ah, you're new to it. The bore is that it goes on night after night. It can be pretty dangerous too with those fire-engines and ambulances driving all over the place [...]' On the pavement opposite Turtle's a group of progressive novelists were squirting a little jet of water into the morning room" (1-2). The timing of that scene could coincide with Waugh's own trip to London in November 1940 during the Blitz, as quoted above in his *Diaries*, but it seems unlikely that he witnessed anything of the sort during that visit since he wrote that he was never near any actual bombing.

The V-1 and V-2 flying bombs were yet to come. Waugh was in Yugoslavia during most of that campaign but includes a diary reference to the very beginning of the V-1 attacks on 19-20

June 1944. He witnessed this while in London delivering the typescript of *Brideshead Revisited* to his publisher (“I heard one flying near and low and for the first and last time in my life was frightened.” *Diaries* 568). In a letter to his wife written from his military post in Scotland, Waugh explained:

The danger is negligible but the annoyance grave and almost incessant. The bombs make a noise like a motor-car and then stop & fall with a pop. One gets into the habit of listening to motor-cars & wondering if that are bombs, which distracts one from rational pleasure during the day and keeps one awake at night. (Letter to Laura Waugh, 23 June 1944, qtd. in Stannard, Martin. *Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years*, New York: 1992, 111)

He left for Yugoslavia on 4 July.

In *Unconditional Surrender* (London, 1961, 253-60) the deaths of Guy’s wife Virginia and his Uncle Peregrine are caused by a flying bomb, and Waugh also describes how these weapons affected the work in the *Survival* magazine offices of Everard Spruce. He returned to London on 15 March 1945, just in time to witness the final attacks of the flying bombs during the following fortnight: “Rocket bombs fall two or three times a day within hearing distance; one took out the windows of our sitting room [at the Hyde Park Hotel] on Sunday morning falling at Marble Arch” (*Diaries*, 623).

Waugh also was a friend (if that term is used loosely) of Cyril Connolly. He admired and was more than a bit jealous of the success of Connolly’s work at *Horizon* magazine. Waugh and a few others with more conservative credentials than Connolly and his staff had contemplated a similar, less political magazine at the war’s beginning. This was to have been called *Duration*. But when they found Cyril’s plans were already well advanced, they backed off. Several contributions from Waugh appeared in *Horizon*. During the war, this included an excerpt from his book fragment *Work Suspended* as well as several letters. Postwar, he allowed the entire text of *The Loved One* to be included in a single issue (February 1948) in return for the price of his yearly subscription. This was at the time *Horizon* was struggling to survive. Later that year, an article he wrote on Ronald Knox appeared.

Waugh had a history with Stephen Spender, as well as other members of the Auden-Isherwood coterie. Loxley’s book contains a brief reference in an early chapter to Waugh’s

comments in a letter on the departure of the latter two to America in anticipation of the war. But the book makes no mention of his more noteworthy parody of the pair as Parsnip and Pimpernell in *Put Out More Flags* and later in *Love Among the Ruins*, *inter alia*, where Waugh even contributed a drawing. He considered Spender to be guilty by association with those two. He wrote a scathing review of Spender's 1950 autobiography *World Within World*. An earlier jab had appeared in a 1939 letter in *The Spectator* relating to the Auden-Isherwood travel book *Journey to a War*. Those would have been well worth a mention. Waugh seems to have had little to say about John Lehmann.

Waugh also parodied Connolly and *Horizon* in the final volume of his war trilogy, *Unconditional Surrender*. Loxley would surely be aware of this from having read DJ Taylor's recent book about *Horizon*, *The Lost Girls*. But Loxley misses the opportunity to include Waugh's parodies of Connolly himself as Everard Spruce as well as of Connolly's book *The Unquiet Grave*. There is also a self-parody of Waugh's own *Brideshead Revisited* that appears as the novel written entirely without revision by the mad Cpl Ludovic; this was entitled *The Death Wish*. *Brideshead* was subjected to parody after the book had embarrassed Waugh by becoming a huge commercial success in America for all the wrong reasons.¹

One almost gets the feeling that Loxley, by including Waugh as a character, intended a more extended discussion of his wartime life and work but ran out of his space allocation and had to settle for a much briefer version. In the event, Waugh's story is limited to a 3½ page spread in a chapter shared with yet another discussion of Stephen Spender. The other "characters" in the list (with the exception of Maclaren-Ross) receive considerably more attention than Waugh. Much of what there is has been written before, particularly as regards Orwell, Connolly, Dylan Thomas, Auden and Isherwood, and the Woolfs. Loxley does not pretend to be offering newly researched material but rather is presenting what is already available in a new context. This works very well for the most part, but not always.

For example, I groaned as I read yet again the painful story of Dylan Thomas's neglectful marriage and excessive drinking. Some of that could probably have been better summarized or

¹Some of the foregoing discussion appeared previously in a different context and format in *EWS* 50.1 (Spring 2019), in a review of *Blitz Writing* (a reprint of two short works by Inez Holden).

even dispensed with. But when Loxley gathers Thomas and Maclaren-Ross together on a script-writing venture in wartime Soho, he makes a cracking story of it. And later he returns to Thomas and makes a case for his status as a major (perhaps the greatest) British poet of this war, even though Thomas managed to miss most of it. I had not previously realized how Thomas was able to avoid active service as well as living in London during the Blitz and the flying bomb periods.

It is hard to imagine that anyone could find anything more to write about George Orwell's wartime experience. Again, that narrative could probably have been shortened. But when one arrives at the story of Orwell's dilemma as a BBC writer/presenter where he is tasked with supporting preservation of the empire in India after having written hundreds of pages to the contrary, the story comes to life.

Similarly, there can't be much more to add to the story of the Auden-Isherwood exit, but Loxley ends that discussion with something I had never realized. When Auden stopped in England in 1945 on his way to Germany as an officer in the US Army of Occupation, he behaved badly toward his former close friends Spender and Lehmann. Loxley describes Lehmann's having forgotten how

egotistical [Auden] could be. 'I'm the first major poet to fly the Atlantic,' Auden declared, as if [the English] had not been through half a decade of war. Also, he bragged, the American Navy had ordered 1,100 copies of his collected poems. All came flooding back as Lehmann sat and listened to this 'Uncle Sam Auden' declaring the death of Britain and the superiority of American civilization. It was the last thing anyone needed to hear. (317)

That posturing may be well known among Auden scholars, but Loxley has used it quite effectively in the limited context he is describing. Isherwood, on the other hand, was far more polite and circumspect in his post-war relationships with his British colleagues.

It's difficult to think of a 20th-century writer more written about than Virginia Woolf, but Loxley adds his bit to the Woolf story. Most of his discussion is devoted to her difficulty in writing her biography of Roger Fry. This was due to her close personal relationship with him. Loxley also makes rather a meal of the writing of a lecture Woolf delivered to a working men's association in Brighton, later published as "The Leaning Tower," in which she considers how the

new generation of English writers compares to those of her own generation. This is another passage that would have benefitted from some trimming. Finally, he discusses at some length the writing and reception of her final novel *Between the Acts* and how her concerns regarding this book may have contributed to her suicide in 1942. On the other hand, the chapter devoted to Woolf's suicide is by far the best thing I have ever read about that rather fraught episode.

The discussion of these "characters," however, is secondary to the book's major theme that is the publication during the war of the literary magazines *New Writing* and *Horizon*. Much has been written about *Horizon* and Connolly but relatively little about *New Writing* and Lehmann. Loxley gives relatively equal space to both, and he tries to explain how Stephen Spender worked with both editors as a contributor and as a sub-editor. Indeed, Spender ends up being the book's primary "character," despite the apparent drawbacks that his literary output is rather nondescript and he never made much of a mark as the leader of any movement or primary editor of an influential publication.

One thing I had not realized was that Spender, along with Isherwood, was working extensively with John Lehmann on *New Writing* before the war. This was published between 1936 and 1939 in book format under the ownership of various book publishers, beginning with Allen Lane and ending with the Woolfs' Hogarth Press. Lehmann was struggling in 1939-40 to keep it going. Loxley explains that during Hogarth's involvement in *New Writing*, starting in 1938 (which was denominated a "New Series"), Lehmann hoped that he, along with Isherwood, Auden and Spender, could buy the Hogarth Press and, as a team, would edit and publish individual authors as well as *New Writing*. Virginia Woolf referred to this group as "the Brainies" and thought them mildly comical.

In the end, only Lehmann could come up with the money, and he bought Virginia's share, leaving Leonard with the remainder. But Lehmann still thought the other three would continue as more than just contributors, at least at *New Writing*. Indeed, Isherwood had plans to move in with Lehmann in Mecklenburgh Square, and Lehmann produced what Loxley describes as a bumper copy of Auden's work in *New Writing*'s seventh issue. Here Loxley falls down a bit because he offers no details of *New Writing*'s earlier iteration.

From Lehmann's autobiography and internet sources, it appears that the publication started in 1936 in book format and was intended to produce at least two hardback editions annually. If that pattern was followed, the Auden bumper issue would probably be the one that appeared in Spring 1939, just after he and Isherwood scarpered. There appear to have been two issues in 1939 (Spring and Christmas), and they, as well as the immediately preceding issue, constituted the "New Series" published by Hogarth. All three "New Series" issues were credited (based on my own research) to Lehmann as editor "with the assistance of Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender." This left Lehmann rather exposed as editor of *New Writing*, when one of his major partner-contributors (who was also an assistant editor and potential flatmate) took his leave. But it may be the case that Isherwood continued to provide some assistance from America. There were Knopf editions of at least two of the *New Writing* books.²

Before the beginning of the war, Spender had acquired the lease of 6 Lansdowne Terrace, WC1, on the south side of Mecklenburgh Square, intending to move in with his wife Inez. But she dumped him after discovering that a homosexual affair had continued after their marriage. Lehmann met with Spender during 1939 in the hope that he would continue his editorial and promotional support at *New Writing* and understood that Spender was willing to do so. While Lehmann was struggling to keep *New Writing* afloat, however, Spender began talks with Peter Watson, who was recruiting him to act as co-editor of a new magazine to be called *Horizon*. Watson was owner-publisher and, according to Loxley, did not trust Connolly to manage the editorial end of the operation. Spender did not advise Lehmann of his agreement to this arrangement, although he made it clear to Watson that his name was not to appear on the masthead of *Horizon* to avoid the appearance of a conflict with *New Writing*.

When Lehmann discovered Spender was going to work for the new competitor, he was, at least at first, furious. (Loxley quotes several examples of stronger language from Lehmann's unpublished diaries than he wrote about the incident in his published memoirs.) Moreover, Spender was subleasing his apartment just across the square from Lehmann to provide *Horizon's* offices, with Spender's continued occupancy of a single bedroom. Be all that as it may, Spender managed to continue to write for and perhaps share the editing of both magazines for a

²According to the British Library, in the UK edition, No. 1 was published by Allen Lane, Nos. 2-5 by Laurence and Wishart, and the "New Series" (3 final issues) by Hogarth Press.

considerable period. At some point, according to Loxley, he ended up leaving *Horizon* while continuing to work (or write) for *New Writing*. That magazine had, in the meantime, migrated to publication by Penguin with Lehmann continuing as editor. The first issue of the monthly paperback *Penguin New Writing* was issued in December 1940 after 11 issues of *Horizon* had appeared. (Again, I had to look that up myself.)

This makes an interesting story of which I was previously unaware, despite having read several books about *Horizon* and Connolly. Much of it is not entirely clear from Loxley's book, however, as he seems to eschew details such as dates, chronology, editorial responsibility, ownership, etc. To be fair, perhaps that contributes to the book's readability. But it leaves one wondering about the genesis of *Penguin New Writing* and how it compared to *Horizon*.

The original hardback *New Writing* was more overtly political than *Horizon*, but a comparison of the cover pages of the two paperback magazines makes them appear to be quite similar in content. Loxley does not explore the extent to which *Penguin New Writing* may have been influenced by the success of *Horizon* as a magazine: e.g., regular monthly paperback issues marketed through subscriptions and newsagents, rather than hardback sales by booksellers as had been the case with the earlier *New Writing*. There is probably a book to be written about Lehmann, *New Writing* and 1930-40s London, but this isn't it.

With respect to Spender, while he seems to be the book's main character (if it has one), it is not clear why. He was probably the most noteworthy of the Auden-Isherwood set left in Britain after the two leaders decamped to America, but his importance must be due to the force of his personality more than his work, not much of which remains in print and has few readers today. That is not true of Auden or Isherwood or even Connolly. They left a mark on other people as well as a considerable body of work written or edited that survived them. Although Loxley leaves the impression that Spender was disloyal to Lehmann when he associated himself with *Horizon*, in his memoirs Lehmann seems to be content with Spender's behavior. Lehmann explains that while he was making arrangements with Allen Lane in late 1940 to publish the monthly magazine as *Penguin New Writing*, Spender continued to assist as needed in the transition. This was during the first 11 months of *Horizon's* publication, when *New Writing* was dormant. Its last hardback volume appeared for Christmas 1939. So, there was probably not a lot of work needed by Lehmann from Spender in most of that period.

This book is a first effort by Loxley and was written during his coronavirus lockdown. It makes the end result very impressive indeed. There is a considerable volume of material that could have been removed to the benefit of the final product. For example, in addition to several previous references, there is more quotation from Connolly's "Comment" column in *Horizon* than is necessary. Moreover, the time shifts are not always well handled, and this is partly down to avoidance of date references. That makes for smoother reading but also causes confusion. Whether this is Loxley's fault or the editors' is impossible to say. The finished product reads very smoothly. I binged through the last 100 pages.

It is perhaps unfair to complain about what is missing from the book, but it probably will not go unnoticed that, in this time of wokeness, there aren't many women writers among its subjects. Aside from Virginia Woolf, I can't think of another, and Woolf herself could hardly be considered a war writer. There is one writer who comes to mind that might have been considered for inclusion. This is Inez Holden, whose wartime books, after years of neglect, are just now being republished: *Night Shift* (1941), *It Was Different at the Time* (1943) and *There's No Story There* (1944). While she didn't live in Bloomsbury, she was a friend of Cyril Connolly, who published one of her articles in an early issue of *Horizon*: "Fellow Travellers in a Factory," February 1941. That was a dry run for the later workplace novels. She was a close wartime friend of George Orwell (probably briefly his lover) and worked with him at the BBC. They had planned to publish their war diaries jointly, but couldn't agree on the contents, so she published hers (*It Was Different at the Time*) separately. Her story would have fit nicely into Loxley's tale of London wartime writers and would have been more interesting than some of the material that was included.

One other point deserved more discussion in the reviews of Loxley's book in the British press. Only one reviewer (John Carey in the *Sunday Times*) questioned why Loxley failed to mention another recent book on the same subject matter and explain how his book was similar or differed. This is the *The Love-charm of Bombs: Restless Lives in the Second World War* (London and New York, 2013) by Lara Feigel. Her book also set out to describe the lives of several literary figures (Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Rose Macaulay, Henry Yorke and Hilde Spiel) and how they and their works were influenced by living in wartime London.

In fact, there is very little overlap in the books because Feigel's "characters" (except for Yorke writing as Henry Green) were not much involved with the Auden/Isherwood coterie or the *Horizon/New Writing* groups of writers. Yorke is mentioned, but not prominently, in Loxley's book, Feigel does not dwell on the few articles that two of her characters, Bowen and Macaulay, wrote for *Horizon*, and Greene's contribution to that journal was minimal.

Both books are comparable in their coverage of the Blitz itself, but *Love-charm* is better on the period from 1942 to early 1944 called "the Lull" that Loxley mostly skips. *Writing in the Dark* is stronger, on the other hand, in its coverage of the Flying Bomb period. Moreover, *Love-charm* continues to follow its subjects through the postwar and austerity period up to about 1951. I cannot say that was a good idea. It makes the book half again as long as Loxley's. Those postwar sections became repetitive and told one more than was needed about how these writers, their love lives and their works were affected by the postwar austerity. Moreover, *Love-charm* is more of an academic exercise and contains more plot and character summaries than would be consistent with the lighter reading intended by Loxley's book. If one is looking for a bit of entertainment combined with informative reading on this period, opt for Loxley's. For a more serious and detailed consideration, *Love-charm* is probably the better choice. The most obvious basis of choosing between them would be the reader's relative interest in the different writers who form the focus for each book.

NEWS

John H. Wilson Jr. Evelyn Waugh Undergraduate Essay Contest

Submissions are 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 2021. Email submissions to jpitcher@bennington.edu and yuexi.liu@xjtlu.edu.cn.

The Passing of Robin French

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/latimes/name/robin-french-obituary?pid=200164898>

There Are Some Secrets

Sara Sass was kind enough to inform *EWS* of the publication of her book, *There Are Some Secrets* (Atmosphere, 2021), about playwright and writer Audrey Lucas:

Audrey was identified by Waugh's brother as Evelyn's lover in *My Brother Evelyn and Other Portraits* (1967). Her "name also appears in Waugh's 1930 bestseller *Vile Bodies*" (59). However, Audrey was more than that; she and Evelyn were very close friends with a bond developed in childhood. Audrey's father, Methuen's publishing head E. V. Lucas, wrote a book with Arthur Waugh in 1900. Audrey and Evelyn likely played together as children after Lucas' sumptuous dinner parties. Audrey and Evelyn also partied together in Soho and Wales in their wild, halcyon days. Audrey's biography of her father was found in Evelyn's library after his death.

linktr.ee/therearesomesecrets

“Collecting Evelyn Waugh”

Claire Schulz was similarly gracious in forwarding a copy of her article “Collecting Evelyn Waugh” (*Firsts: Collecting Modern First Editions*. 5.3. [1995]: 29-33). It contains summaries of the works, a handy guide to comparing prices then and now, and tips on finding the right copy: “Scoop is one of the few Waugh titles that come with the points attached. The choice copy of the British first edition is the one with the name of the newspaper on the dust jacket’s front panel and with the word *as* in the last line of page 88” (31).

On Tove Ditlevsen’s *The Copenhagen Trilogy*

The trilogy covers the years between Ditlevsen’s birth and her marriage to her fourth husband in 1951. In between these events, it covers a lot of ground, private and public: urban poverty between the wars, the menial jobs afforded to a young woman, the formation of an artist, and the trials of marriage. Ditlevsen works in a boarding house, a printmaking shop, and various government ministries. She writes and publishes several books of fiction and poetry, and even dines with Evelyn Waugh.

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/braced-disappointment>

BBC Studios First-Looks International Literary Properties

The literary management company was set up last year by UK-based production collective the Anthology Group.

It currently holds the rights to works by authors including Georges Simenon, Eric Ambler, Margery Allingham, Edmund Crispin, Dennis Wheatley, Robert Bolt, Richard Hull, George Bellairs, Nicolas Freeling, John Creasey and Michael Innes, as well as 20% of Evelyn Waugh’s estate.

<https://www.c21media.net/news/bbc-studios-ilp-strike-first-look-deal/>

Alexa Alice Joubin on Asian Women and Shakespeare

In 1930, English novelist Evelyn Waugh entertained the prospect of Chinese-American actress Anna May Wong playing Ophelia, Hamlet's love interest: 'I should like to see Miss Wong playing Shakespeare. Why not a Chinese Ophelia? It seems to me that Miss Wong has exactly those attributes which one most requires of Shakespearean heroines.' Waugh went on to say that 'I cannot see her as Lady Macbeth, but she seems to me perfectly suited for the role of Juliet or to any of the heroines of the comedies.' (*The Daily Mail* 24 May 1930)

<https://blog.oup.com/2021/07/adapting-shakespeare-shattering-stereotypes-of-asian-women-onstage-and-onscreen/>

Lapwings, Plovers, Peewits, or “Peasweeps”

Those of you who know your Evelyn Waugh will be aware that, in a now-illegal culinary context, lapwing eggs have another name. After Sebastian Flyte vomits through Charles Ryder's window in *Brideshead Revisited*, Flyte invites him to a lunch where the guests are dining on 'plovers' eggs'. It all ends with the flamboyant aesthete Anthony Blanche shouting verses from T. S. Eliot's Modernist epic *The Waste Land* across the quad.

Oxford, I'm told, is different these days.

<https://www.countrylife.co.uk/nature/the-true-meaning-of-dumbledore-chiggypig-hornywink-and-lang-lugs-and-the-other-old-english-animal-names-all-but-lost-to-us-229161>

“America’s First Couturier”

English-American designer Charles James was one of the most influential designers amongst society's elite during the 20th century. Born in Surrey, England, James attended a prestigious private school where he met novelist Evelyn Waugh and photographer Cecil Beaton, both of whom became major inspirations for the couturier. After a brief stint studying in Bordeaux, France, James relocated to Chicago, Illinois where he opened a millinery shop at the age of 19.

<https://www.lofficielusa.com/fashion/charles-james-trademark-looks-butterfly-swan-bustle-gown>

Boris Johnson’s Summer Recess Reading: *Scoop*

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-johnsons-favourite-book-scoop-by-evelyn-waugh-38mh65gr8>

The Bullingdon Club’s Ewen Ferguson to Whitehall

Sir Alistair Graham, former chair of the independent committee, claimed the appointment was ‘pathetic’ – given the friendship between Mr Johnson and Mr Ferguson.

‘It really is desperate if you have to be a university mate of Boris Johnson to qualify to sit on the committee that is supposed to examine sleaze,’ Sir Alistair said.

‘I doubt that the experience of the Bullingdon would provide any of the right qualifications. It seems like a completely inappropriate appointment.’

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-bullingdon-club-appointment-b1885184.html>

“*Brideshead Britain*”

ITV’s 1981 mini-series adaptation of Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* has a lot to answer for – including the public personas of most of Britain’s most famous politicians.

<https://bylinetimes.com/2021/07/15/brideshead-britain-boris-johnsons-entourage-of-careless-people/>

Netflix’s *The Last Letter from Your Lover*

Fittingly for a movie awash in lovely penmanship, *The Last Letter from Your Lover* announces its writerly trappings at the outset. It begins with a quote from *A Farewell to Arms* and then, a short time later, finds two of its characters sparring over Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop*. The literary references, perfunctory and obvious though they may be, do their part to signal the kind of movie we’re watching: a forbidden romance set against the hustling-and-bustling world of the British press. (The movie is based on a novel by the English author and journalist Jojo Moyes.) There are movie allusions aplenty too: You needn’t look too hard to spot the echoes of *An Affair to Remember*, down to the fateful, near-fatal car crash that derails a lovers’ reunion.

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2021-07-22/last-letter-from-your-lover-review-netflix-shailene-woodley>

Restrictions on Latin Mass

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-popes-reversal-on-latin-mass-shows-the-angry-split-inside-the/>

Edith Sitwell Sale

<https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/literary-artistic-luxury-worlds-collide-edith-sitwell-sale-1234904022/>

Edith Sitwell's Address Book Found

With more than 300 entries, the address book is a *Who's Who* of the aristocracy and celebrities of the time, containing names ranging from Evelyn Waugh and Cecil Day-Lewis to Elizabeth Arden, the Queen Mother and Gore Vidal. Sitwell included little comments to herself, whether to remember people she had liked such as “Ian, charming American undergraduate to whom I must write” and “BBC, young man (intelligent, wants to interview me)”, or those she wished to avoid.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/aug/27/cat-torturers-names-withheld-edith-sitwells-gossipy-address-book-found>

Simon Howard Charged

<https://us.newschant.com/us-news/aristocrat-charged-with-attempted-rape-of-a-woman/>

Aye Mushte Khaak* Based on *A Handful of Dust

<https://dnd.com.pk/ay-mushte-khaak-a-reunion-of-feroz-khan-and-sana-javed/254775>

Evelyn Waugh Society

The Waugh Society has 190 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 and yuexi.liu@xjtlu.edu.cn. 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 editor's final decision within twelve weeks of submission.

End of *Evelyn Waugh Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 2

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