Evelyn Waugh

Edited by
Martin Stannard

The Critical Heritage

EVELYN WAUGH: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

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EVELYN WAUGH

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

Edited by

MARTIN STANNARD

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General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality— perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

To My Mother

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Preface

The reviews are generally ordered chronologically in each section. Where several items appeared on the same day these are in alphabetical order of the author's surname, unsigned notices following these. Notices dated only by the month come last of all, again wherever possible in alphabetical order of the author's surname.

In trying to maintain chronology I have found it necessary to split two long essays which offered a book-by-book account between the various sections. Nigel Dennis's Evelyn Waugh: The Pillar of Anchorage House, 'Partisan Review', 28 July 1943, 350–61, and Rose Macaulay's The Best and the Worst II. Evelyn Waugh, 'Horizon', December 1946, 360–76 appear as Nos 84, 89, 92 and Nos 20, 30, 56, 63, 71, 79, 93, 101 respectively.

In the Introduction, reviews quoted but not included in the book are indicated by full references in parentheses. For the ease of the British reader at least, I have cited quotations from the Penguin editions of the novels rather than the expensive Uniform Edition. For the travel books and biographies, page references are to the first edition. Place of publication is London unless otherwise indicated.

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for No. 80; 'The Observer' for Nos 4, 12, 32, 126, 156, 162 and 176; 'Partisan Review' for Nos 84, 89 and 92 (© 'Partisan Review', Vol. 10, No. 4, 1943, pp. 350–61), for No. 136 (© 'Partisan Review', Vol. 19, No. 6, 1952) and for No. 179 (© 'Partisan Review', Vol. 29, No. 3, 1962); A.D.Peters & Co. Ltd for published and unpublished material by Evelyn Waugh, for No. 3, from 'My Brother Evelyn' by Alec Waugh, for Nos 20, 30, 56, 63, 71, 79, 93 and 101 by Rose Macaulay, from 'Horizon', December 1946, and for No. 42 by Eric Linklater, all reprinted by permission of A.D.Peters & Co. Ltd; David Pryce-Jones for No. 107; 'Punch' for No. 193; Peter Quennell for Nos 6, 7, 54 and 59; Deborah Rogers Ltd on behalf of the Estate of Cyril Connolly for No. 116, reprinted from 'Horizon', 1948; Alan Sillitoe for No. 170; the 'Spectator' for Nos 23, 39, 48, 53, 67, 76, 86, 96, 108, 111, 149, 153, 166, 171, 180, 184 and 195; Dr E.C.Stopp for No. 130; Christopher Sykes for Nos 143 and 147; the Editor of 'The Tablet' for Nos 44, 45, 52, 72, 139, 142, 161, 167 and 174; 'Time Magazine' Weekly News Magazine for No. 100 from 'Life' and Nos 117, 129, 134 and 159 from 'Time' (© Time Inc.); the 'Times Literary Supplement' for Nos 36, 47, 51, 66, 70, 74, 85, 91, 95, 112, 120, 138, 141, 154, 160, 189, 190 and 191; Times Newspapers Ltd for Nos 21 and 131 from 'The Times' and Nos 113, 121, 132, 140, 148, 169 and 175 from the 'Sunday Times'; the late Alec Waugh for No. 187; Auberon Waugh for published and unpublished material by Evelyn Waugh (reprinted by permission of A.D.Peters & Co. Ltd); the late Dame Rebecca West for Nos 11, 28 and 37; Angus Wilson for Nos 165 and 191.

Abbreviations

ALO	Evelyn Waugh, ‘A Little Order. A Selection from His Journalism’, ed. Donat Gallagher (Eyre Methuen, 1977)
ALS, nd	Autograph letter, signed, no date
B & B	‘Books and Bookmen’
DE	‘Daily Express’
DH	‘Daily Herald’
‘Diaries’	‘The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh’, ed. Michael Davie (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976)
DM	‘Daily Mail’
DT	‘Daily Telegraph’
DR	‘Dublin Review’
EN	‘Evening News’
GKW	‘G.K.’s Weekly’
HRC	The Evelyn Waugh Archive, Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin
‘Letters’	‘The Letters of Evelyn Waugh’, ed. Mark Amory (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980)
L & L	‘Life and Letters’
MG	‘Manchester Guardian’
NR	‘New Republic’
NS	‘New Statesman’
NYHT	‘New York Herald Tribune’
NYHTBR	‘New York Herald Tribune Book Review’
NY	‘New Yorker’
SD	‘Sunday Dispatch’
SR	‘Saturday Review’
ST	‘Sunday Times’
Sykes	Christopher Sykes, ‘Evelyn Waugh. A Biography’ (Collins, 1975)
T & T	‘Time and Tide’
TLS	‘Times Literary Supplement’

TC	‘Twentieth Century’
‘Writers’	Julian Jebb’s interview with Waugh printed as Evelyn Waugh in ‘Writers at Work’ (Secker & Warburg, 1968), pp. 105–14

Introduction

'Evelyn Waugh...,' the 'Sunday Express' once remarked, 'was quite simply exceedingly unpleasant' (Graham Lord, 28 September 1975, 6). This view of his character is not uncommon, especially since the first appearance of sections from the 'Diaries' in the 'Observer Magazine' (1973). Christopher Sykes's 'official' biography (1975) did little to rectify the impression. Despite his loyal attempt to stitch up a suit of virtue for his subject the bile still, apparently, spilled through the seams. Waugh's enemies saw in the book what they had always suspected: he had been pompous, snobbish, sadistic; there was something of the Fascist and the philistine about him. The 'Letters' (1980) offered more ammunition. 'It is impossible to imagine getting a letter from Evelyn Waugh,' wrote Philip Larkin, 'unless it were of the "Mr Waugh deeply regrets that he is unable to do what is so kindly proposed" sort. In the first place, one would have to have a nursery nickname and be a member of White's, a Roman Catholic, a high-born lady or an Old Etonian novelist' (No. 194). In an age of egalitarianism, Waugh has often seemed a redundant elitist.

The reader will find several instances of displeasure at Waugh's ostensible political and social attitudes in the post-war reviews. But he will, perhaps, be surprised that their number is not greater. In fact, the mythology of Waugh's ogreish temperament was something largely constructed, with his help, through the popular press. Certainly, he was a right-wing Catholic apologist who sincerely lamented what he saw as the rape of European culture. The real Mr Waugh, however, would never stand up before the microphone or camera. There was always a melodramatic disguise, a parodied prejudice, to defend his privacy. Two such masks are ruthlessly analysed in his fictional self-portrait, 'The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold' (1957), as the 'eccentric don' and 'testy colonel'. But while the reviewers of the private papers seem often to have confused

these personae with the real thing (see No. 192), few have attacked the novels on these grounds. Many simply stand bemused and often delighted before works whose artistry endears to them a world which they believe never to have existed. Even his literary antagonists (Philip Toynbee, Donat O'Donnell and Kingsley Amis, for instance) cannot help but admire his technical facility and comedic gifts. Graham Greene's opinion that 'Evelyn Waugh was the greatest novelist of my generation' (headnote, No. 60) is often echoed. George Orwell grudgingly recorded in his notebook that 'Waugh is about as good a novelist as one can be (as novelists go today) while holding untenable opinions'. (1) We will return to the notion of 'untenable opinions' later but it is as well to remind ourselves at the outset that, despite the acrimony surrounding the publication of his personal records, Waugh's impressive list of admirers includes many prominent figures of modern British fiction and criticism: Muriel Spark, Anthony Burgess, Angus Wilson, Anthony Powell, Henry Green, Frank Kermode, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge.

The primary object of this volume, in keeping with others in the series, is to collect a representative sample of contemporary reviews. The principal editorial problem, however, arises from the fact that in discussing Waugh's work reviewers found it difficult to escape discussion of his personality. Waugh was often directly responsible for this. In 'Labels' (1930) he wrote:

> one of the arts of successful authorship is preventing the reading public from forgetting one's name in between the times when they are reading one's books.... Now, even if you are very industrious, you cannot rely on writing more than two books a year.... So you have to spend half your leisure in writing articles for the papers; the editors buy these because people read your books, and people read your books because they see your articles in the papers.... The rest of your leisure you have to spend in doing things which other people will think interesting, (pp. 9–10)

In the early days Waugh made good use of his friends who wrote gossip columns (Tom Driberg, Patrick Balfour) and reviews (Peter Quennell, Peter Fleming, Cyril Connolly, Douglas Woodruff). It was common practice to try to direct one's work towards reviewers likely to be sympathetic. Even Orwell, who loathed the log-rolling of contemporary criticism, indulged in this. But there are two aspects of Waugh's 'Labels' statement which neatly exemplify the editorial problems involved in providing a selection here which

might adequately suggest to the reader the effect he had upon his contemporary audience. First, there is the tongue-in-cheek bravado of disclaiming serious intention; and second, there is the brutal definition of the mechanics of contemporary literary success. He both made light of his talents and exploited the media. As he said in 1946:

> I have never, until quite lately, enjoyed writing. I am lazy and it is intensely hard work. I wanted to be a man of the world and I took to writing as I might have taken to archaeology or diplomacy or any other profession as a means of coming to terms with the world. (No. 100)

Waugh's public image was enigmatic and his artistic approach baffling. To balance the selection, then, I have also provided reviews of later editions, some edited essays and, in the Miscellaneous section, three brief glimpses of him in various 'roles'. Waugh was a public figure despite his craving for privacy and it is in that context that we should read the criticism. I have, therefore, included Waugh's (and others') replies to certain notices as these formed an essential part of the critical debate and often conditioned later responses to his work. Controversy surrounded not only his 'untenable ideas' but also his artistic licence and historical scholarship. Arguments raged over 'Black Mischief' (Nos 44–6), 'Edmund Campion' (Nos 61, 62, 65) and 'Waugh in Abyssinia' (Nos 69, 71) and there was an angry debate over 'Brideshead Revisited' involving Edmund Wilson (No. 99).

It would be superfluous here to give a detailed biographical account of Waugh's career. The publication of his biography and private papers, and the continuing popular appeal of his novels (all are still in print in Penguin), have meant that the details of his life and work are perhaps the best known of any modern writer. Suffice it to say, then, that he was born in 1903, the son of Arthur Waugh, literary critic and Managing Director of Chapman & Hall, and the brother of Alec Waugh, the novelist; that he was educated at Lancing College and Hertford College, Oxford, leaving university without a degree but with copious debts; that he attempted in turn and unsuccessfully to become a painter, a printer and a carpenter and finally, in need of money (and respectable status) to marry the Hon. Evelyn Gardner, wrote a biography of Rossetti (1928) and his first novel, 'Decline and Fall' (1928); that she deserted him for another man (an experience which left an indelible impression) and shortly afterwards (September 1930) Waugh was received into the Catholic Church; that he travelled widely in Africa,

South America and Mexico during the 1930s, married again in 1937 and settled down to the seclusion of country house life in the West Country, broken only by a period of active service during the war and occasional forays to London and trips abroad. He died in 1966. (More details can be gleaned from the reviews of 'A Little Learning' (1964) and those of the biography, journalism, 'Diaries' and 'Letters'.)

It is all too easy to impose on this framework clear stages of literary 'Development'. The obvious structure would read something like: (a) 'The Balance' — 'Labels' (1926–30; early, dilettante, pre-Catholic work); (b) 'Remote People' — 'Robbery Under Law' (1931–9; light, ingenious comic novels, with an undercurrent of serious social commentary; right-wing Catholic apologist in biographical and travel writing); (c) 'Brideshead Revisited'— 'A Little Learning' (1945–64; the entrenched Catholic apologist in both fiction and non-fiction, offering in his novels a study of the operation of Divine Grace and a blanket denunciation of the Age of the Common Man). This, of course, will not do. The assumption behind it is that Waugh only became a 'serious' artist with 'Brideshead'. Several reviewers of that novel, for instance, saw him as a lightweight social satirist whose ability to control his material collapsed under the strain of attempting a more complex moral structure. But, whatever our views of that novel, the fact remains that for more than a decade he had been a sophisticated aesthetician and a scrupulous technician. Despite his jaunty self-effacement he had been a 'serious' writer since 1929 when he was completing 'Vile Bodies'.

Waugh considered himself a craftsman, a cabinet-maker of fiction who belonged to no recognizable school of the avant-garde. Little sympathy was spared for the 'conversation and biology' (2) of Huxley, the inchoate effusions of Lawrence, the didactic optimism of Wells or the linguistic experiments of Joyce and Gertrude Stein. All, he believed, suffered from subjectivity; all had failed to cut the umbilical cord between themselves and their work. His early literary heroes were Lewis Carroll, Firbank, T.S. Eliot, Hemingway, Henry Green and Ivy Compton-Burnett. Clarity, concision, the use of the 'refrain' (recurrent image) rather than the statement, a sense of fantasy and of the self-supporting reality of a work of art beyond and above the 'issues' involved—these were the tenets of his aesthetic faith, reiterated in odd, quiet corners of his journalism during the 1930s. On a specific, technical level he was interested in developing these themes through dialogue (particularly slang; see headnote to No. 196) with a minimum

of authorial intrusion. The artist should, in his view, clarify and make exact those nebulous ideas thrown up by experience; it was not his business to preach or to confess. His trade, like the priest's, was concerned with elucidation and communication, the formulation of order from chaos. 'That is what makes story telling such an absorbing task,' he wrote in 1946, 'the attempt to reduce to order the anarchic raw materials of life' (No. 100). Henry James's novels were the great (temporal) solace of his later life.

Few reviewers, however, detected this subtlety of approach in the early work. His failure to offer an essentially heroic vision of man, his refusal to stop laughing at the absurdity and cruelty of human behaviour, often led him to be classed with Saki and P.G.Wodehouse. In fact, his early novels (1930–8) represent a 'serious' Catholic apologetic by negative suggestion. The world depicted is the humanist *reductio ad absurdum,* life without (or, at least, in ignorance of) God, a point missed by most contemporary critics including Ernest Oldmeadow, the Editor of the Catholic 'Tablet' (No. 44).

'Brideshead' was a positive statement of the same reaction. Edmund Wilson's approach to it was typical of many; he saw Waugh as a delightful entertainer but, he said, when he 'abandons his comic convention' and attempts 'a "serious" novel, in the conventional sense', deserting 'two-dimensional caricature', he falls headlong into 'mere romantic fantasy' (No. 99). The justifiable argument against the book's rampant snobbery (put rather more convincingly by Donat O'Donnell (No. 102) and Rose Macaulay (No. 101)) becomes confused with technical discussion and the spectre of Waugh's public personality stalks heavily about, sometimes distorting critical evaluation.

I would suggest that there are five main groups of reviewers: 'Georgian' *littérateurs,* Waugh's generation of Oxbridge literary men, the Catholic intelligentsia, the hacks, and those novelists and academics who have given serious, detailed attention to Waugh's work. Some critics, of course, would have a place in more than one group. Christopher Sykes and Graham Greene, for instance, could be included in both the second and the third. But in an important sense their reviews are more usefully placed in the third as the defence of a co-religionist.

The first category, then, would include those older, established 'men of letters' who ruled the London literary reviews during the early part of Waugh's career: for instance, Arnold Bennett, Frank Swinnerton, J.C.Squire and Gerald Gould. Waugh's father was a similar figure. The 1920s saw the

disappearance of the professional 'man of letters' whose complacent, easy-going clubland was under attack by 1928. There is a whimsical, reflective and subjective approach in their reception of 'Rossetti': generous, paternal, but with an air of authority which often allows them to illustrate their own opinions rather than to review the book. The TLS piece (10 May 1928, 341–2) to which Rebecca West refers in her letter (No. 11) largely ignored Waugh's handling of the issues. Their reviews of the novels are fairly represented by Arnold Bennett's pieces (Nos 13 and 25). 'Decline and Fall' was warmly received but the more aggressively 'modern' 'Vile Bodies' seemed to them too brittle, often poorly constructed and in bad taste.

The second group—the new Oxbridge 'generation' —would comprehend Harold Acton, Peter Quennell, Alan Pryce-Jones, Cyril Connolly, Maurice Bowra, Anthony Powell, Henry Green, Harold Nicolson, Philip Toynbee, John Betjeman and W.H. Auden. There is no common political affiliation here, Pryce-Jones, Bowra, Powell, Betjeman and Acton 'tending' to the right, the others to the left. There is, however, the connection that all, with the exception of Auden, at various stages moved in Waugh's circle of friends and many shared his pugnacious, more businesslike approach to the arts. These were among the men (ironically, along with I.A.Richards and Leavis in Cambridge with whom they had little in common) largely responsible for storming the citadels of the *littérateurs*. They loved the pre-war fiction but were divided (largely by their political leanings) over 'Brideshead' and the work which followed.

The 'Catholic intelligentsia' would include Christopher Hollis, Douglas Woodruff, Christopher Sykes, F.J.Stopp, Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess and several 'literary' priests: Fr Martindale, Mgr Ronald Knox and Illtud Evans. These, while sometimes finding Waugh's social prejudice after the Second World War too strong, shared his mystical approach which ultimately abjured rationalist argument. After Ernest Oldmeadow's attacks in the 'Tablet' (one hesitates to include him among the 'intelligentsia'), the Catholic press was usually delighted with Waugh's work (see headnote, No. 44). With the publication of 'Brideshead' Waugh was similarly praised by rigorously academic French critics who had taken up Graham Greene as a writer in the Mauriac tradition. (3) The distinction made here between the Catholic and 'academic' criticism would not perhaps have been necessary in France (see Mr Sykes's comments, p. 36 below).

The 'hacks' worked for the popular newspapers or society magazines. The standard of criticism was generally low. These were the people who often confused Waugh's life with his work

and who delighted in the 'Diaries' as excellent 'copy'. In the early days they picked up the slang of 'Vile Bodies' and bandied it about gleefully, delighting in the rich comedy of the novels and largely ignoring their serious undertones. Ralph Straus, for instance, rather hopelessly remarks of 'Vile Bodies': 'The trouble is to know what to say about it. You cannot be given an outline of the plot for the simple reason that there is none' (No. 22). He was voicing the inadequacy of many to cope with the transparency of Waugh's technique. They knew that it worked but not how or why. Nevertheless, his fame relied heavily upon their enthusiastic vagueness in the columns of the daily papers. After the war, and especially after the Nancy Spain libel suit (see No. 197), a note of acrimony began to creep into some of their articles and reviews. Waugh had, after all, been openly lampooning the yellow press since 'Scoop' in 1938.

The final classification would group together two radically opposed factions, admirers and dissenters. First, there are those (few in number) who have successfully attempted an objective appraisal of Waugh's work based on aesthetic rather than political or religious argument: Rebecca West, David Lodge, Frank Kermode, Malcolm Bradbury, Nigel Dennis and Angus Wilson, for instance. These approach the work with the sort of critical sophistication Waugh himself brought to Firbank in his 1929 essay reprinted in Donat Gallagher's 'A Little Order' (1978). Lightness of touch is not equated with a lightweight mind; Waugh's innovation of literary form is given due credit. His novels are compared on stylistic grounds with Hemingway's and the 'waste land' imagery of futility is seen, as it should be, in the context of Eliot's notions about the decay of Western culture and the fundamental importance of 'tradition'. The serious opposition is represented by Edmund Wilson, Kingsley Amis, Donat O'Donnell, Simon Raven and Rose Macaulay, all of whom (with the exception of O'Donnell, apparently) admired the early fiction and deserted Waugh after 'Brideshead'. These objected to what they saw as a sneering, 'romantic' class-consciousness which devalued Waugh's artistic objectivity.

So much, then, for the primary object of this book. The ultimate aim, however, must be to provide an account of the vacillations of an author's reputation. With Waugh the curve of this graph is far from clear. For, despite the serious reservations expressed by several influential critics, Waugh's work was continuously popular from the publication of his first novel. Of Pinfold he wrote that he 'had been tenderly reared and, as a writer, welcomed and overrewarded early. It was his modesty which needed protection and for this purpose, but without

design, he gradually assumed the character of burlesque' (Penguin, p. 15). We need, then, to distinguish between 'popularity' (i.e. large sales) and 'prestige'. Up to and including 'Put Out More Flags' (1942) Waugh's fiction had few serious assailants. The only powerful attacks, and plainly foolish ones, came from Oldmeadow in 1932 and 1934 (Nos 44 and 52). Waugh's novels were mainly savoured as well-wrought black comedy. A few saw more serious elements, a few found them trivial or in bad taste. Largely, though, it was accepted that Waugh had carved out a style and a vision peculiar to himself for outrageously funny, pungent, serio-comic burlesque. His non-fiction after 1930 was another matter. Here his right-wing Catholic prejudices were openly on display and 'Edmund Campion' (1935), 'Waugh in Abyssinia' (1936) and 'Robbery Under Law' (1939) all initiated controversy.

With 'Brideshead' (1945) Waugh's 'political' and religious views entered undisguised into his fiction. Its publication largely damaged his 'prestige', with Edmund Wilson, Donat O'Donnell and Rose Macaulay fiercely attacking its romantic snobbery. The book seemed to present an elitist Catholic vision, fundamentally uncharitable, aligning Waugh's faith with the aristocracy against the partially educated and unkillable children of the Lower Orders, epitomized by the ranker officer, Hooper. Despite Waugh's ostensible delight at having 'shaken off one of the American critics' (Wilson) (No. 100), he later regretted the novel's subjective sensual luxuriance and completely revised it in 1959 (No. 106). He did not, however, regret the introduction of the mystical element and in 1946 stated that in future his books would have two things to make them unpopular: 'a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me, means only one thing, man in his relation to God' (No. 100).

The stylistic and thematic intentions were perfectly sincere. The reference to unpopularity, though, emphasizes the need for a division in his case between 'popularity' and 'prestige'. The bad reviews of 'Brideshead' set the tone of antagonism for much of the left-wing or liberalhumanist criticism of later work. Nevertheless, the novel became a world best-seller and he conquered the American market convincingly for the first time. Suddenly, from being a smart and well-to-do author of fashionable, distinctly 'English' novels which appealed in the USA only to a coterie, he was transformed into an international celebrity. Hollywood sought the film rights of 'Brideshead' and many similar lucrative proposals were made, even for the early work. (Waugh turned nearly all the scripts down on the

grounds of their aesthetic barbarity. The whole business of becoming the object of 'fan mail' he found profoundly repugnant, although he did not object to the financial security such fame promised.) Retreating to protect his 'modesty' (No. 184) behind the masks of burlesque, Waugh continuously baffled those unsympathetic critics who wanted to adopt the 'psychological' approach and actively encouraged the 'biographical fallacy'.

It is after 'Brideshead' then, that the reviewers divide into camps: those like Edmund Wilson, Kingsley Amis and, later, Simon Raven who found Waugh's implicit 'political' position facile or pernicious, and those who could disregard or applaud this element and still see his novels as accurate social commentary. As a bridge between these views Bernard Bergonzi and Frank Kermode (Nos 172 and 109) offer the notion of Waugh's concern with aristocratic values as a structural myth which it is largely irrelevant to oppose or support. They see it more as a Jamesian 'point of view' allowing 'saturation' in an internally consistent moral vision (No. 109). One might add that Waugh's belief in the reality of the 'supernatural' is a fundamental concept rarely considered by critics who might be perfectly happy with it from the pen of Milton or Blake. This theme is discussed below, pp. 42 and 43, and by F.J.Stopp in No. 130.

Two 'graph curves', then, would be necessary to chart Waugh's reputation, the first for sales and the second for serious critical esteem. The first would demonstrate a shaky start with 'Rossetti', climbing a little with 'Decline and Fall', rising steeply with 'Vile Bodies' and levelling off between 1930 and 1942. With 'Brideshead' it would rocket to a new peak which could not be maintained because Waugh interspersed his subsequent novels with a biography and small, select editions of minor works. Despite this, however, and the curiosities of 'Helena' (1950) and 'Pinfold' (1957), the public eagerly read everything, no matter how slight, and still does. (For figures concerning first edition sales see No. 197.)

The second curve would start high with 'Rossetti' and continue to rise steadily to 'Brideshead'. Here it would level out or perhaps drop a little until the last volume of the trilogy (1961). Critics were evenly divided over the merit of most of the post-war fiction with the exception of 'The Loved One' (jubilantly received by most) which returned to his earlier manner and contained no overt Catholic apologetic. 'Unconditional Surrender' did much to re-establish his prestige as a major writer with the more unsympathetic element.

Certainly it reclaimed Cyril Connolly as a devotee after his moderate reviews of the trilogy's first two volumes.

Interesting anomalies appear in this development. 'Punch' and the 'New Yorker', magazines whose reputation relies to a considerable extent on smart anarchic humour, paid little attention to Waugh's work throughout most of his career. His early books were noted only briefly. Similarly, a major organ of critical opinion in Britain, the TLS, rarely credited Waugh with the literary status accorded him by his peers. Another (gratifying) peculiarity is that we do not find a simple division of opinion between 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' papers which we might suspect to have been the case. The 'New Statesman' was a largely consistent admirer as was its American counterpart, 'New Republic'.

Certain attitudes are, however, predictable. Of the major literary journals, Leavis's 'Scrutiny' offered nothing but a passing remark on two occasions, 'Essays in Criticism' was at first dubious but later came to accept Waugh as an important author, and Connolly's 'Horizon' held him in high esteem. 'Encounter' was consistently generous in its appreciation. Numerous, now defunct, serious literary magazines existed during Waugh's early and middle career- 'Life and Letters', the 'London Mercury', the 'Cornhill' —and all valued him highly. Waugh, as has been said, had friends at court working for many papers; Peter Quennell, for instance (with whom he had a stormy relationship), wrote for the 'New Statesman' and 'Life and Letters' and edited the 'Cornhill'. Peter Fleming and Derek Verschoyle were literary editors of the 'Spectator' and many of Waugh's cronies wrote for the latter. Even in the early days he knew Viola Garvin, Literary Editor of the 'Observer', and several men running the Oxford undergraduate press. Cyril Connolly appears in these pages writing for 'Horizon' and the 'Sunday Times'.

Good books of criticism on (or including pieces on) Waugh have been rare. A list of the better ones is included in the bibliography, the more stimulating of which are by Frederick Stopp, Sean O'Faolain, Terry Eagleton and Malcolm Bradbury. As a straightforward critical survey Dr Stopp's book (now out of print) is by far the most sensible, accurate and thorough although it was published in 1958 before the last volume of the trilogy and 'A Little Learning'. Christopher Sykes's biography, despite its faults, is the only substantial work based on research into the private life and papers of the novelist. A much slighter 'picture book' anthology was compiled by David Pryce-Jones in 1973, 'Evelyn Waugh and his World', but it

contains some useful reminiscences and two interesting essays by David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury. It is the Americans who have engaged most earnestly in literary research on Waugh although he is gaining in popularity with British doctoral candidates every year. Several of the American theses have been rewritten as books, the best of which (not, unfortunately, a great compliment) is James Carens's 'The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh'. Three American scholars and a German provided the immensely valuable and extensive 'Checklist of Primary and Secondary Material' (1972). This is often inaccurate in detail but contains a mine of material for scholars. The year 1981 saw the publication of Robert Murray Davis's fascinating and extensive catalogue of the Waugh archive at the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Given the divergence between 'popularity' and 'prestige' and the complications which arise from this in any attempt to generalize about the development of Waugh's reputation, I have avoided a detailed schematic introduction and settled for a book-by-book account. It is only fair, after all, to treat each work as an entity.

THE BALANCE (1926)

The excerpt from Alec Waugh's book (No. 3) explains how his younger brother came to write this, his first substantial piece of published fiction. Waugh had produced other, lighter stories while at Oxford for the undergraduate papers, the 'Cherwell' and the 'Isis', but his artistic fame at the university relied then on his work as an illustrator. The 'Diaries' reveal that shortly before this Waugh had attempted a novel, 'The Temple at Thatch'. (This was destroyed after Harold Acton's 'chilling' assessment, Waugh tells us in 'A Little Learning'.) Several entries describe the composition of The Balance, which occupied Waugh from May to August 1925. (Alec Waugh appears to have dated it wrongly in saying 'Early in 1926'; cf. 'Diaries', 26 August 1925, p. 218.) It is an interesting piece, experimenting boldly with avant-garde linguistic techniques. The characters in the first section are involved in a film watched by others who periodically interrupt. Contributors to the volume in which the story was published include William Gerhardi, Gertrude Stein and Somerset Maugham. It was a considerable achievement for Waugh to be noticed among such established writers. Reviews, however, failed entirely to grasp the serious intention of the story. As Waugh remarked in the 'Diaries': 'A very silly review in the

“Manchester Guardian” this morning commends my contribution to “Georgian Stories” but for the most futile reasons.’ (4) The review mentioned is No. 1.

It should also be noted that Waugh’s early work was warmly received by the Oxford student papers which were often edited in the late 1920s by his friends (John Betjeman, for example). His woodcuts for column headings in both the ‘Isis’ and ‘Cherwell’ continued to appear for over a decade after he had gone down and his reputation as an iconoclast lived on among the undergraduate community.

‘ROSSETTI’ (1928)

Waugh wrote ‘Rossetti’ on a commission from Duckworth’s secured for him by Anthony Powell who was then on the editorial staff. The Pre-Raphaelites had exerted a powerful fascination since Waugh’s schooldays and he came to appreciate their interdisciplinary approach as painters, scribes, writers, printers and craftsmen eschewing individual indulgence for the reputation of the ‘shop’. Rossetti, in particular, intrigued him and it is arguable that Waugh saw much of himself in this erratic bohemian. Writing the book, however, was particularly hard work (the manuscript concludes with ‘The End. Thank God’) as it closed an aimless period in Waugh’s life during which he had been an art student, a schoolmaster and, for six weeks, a journalist. It did not involve original research but Waugh scoured the major authorities (particularly Holman Hunt’s ‘Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’).

Ten years earlier Lytton Strachey had shocked and delighted the public with his ‘Eminent Victorians’. The aggressive ‘objectivity’ of that work set a style for more feeble imitators, and reviewers in the late 1920s were especially sensitive to stylistic experiment in biography. Several expressed delight that Waugh had not fallen into the ‘tawdry facetiousness’ of the ‘[Philip] Guedalla school’ (‘Cherwell’, 16 June 1928, 187–8). These writers, in imitating the lighter side of Strachey’s informality, ended by providing what Roy Campbell describes as ‘the most perfect instrument that has yet been invented to enable the mediocre to patronize the great’ (No. 8). Waugh in fact begins by discussing with such confidence the complex problems involved in the presentation of biographical material that he effectively forestalls criticism on these grounds.

The book was, in general, warmly received. Reviewers appreciated his ‘acute perception of that feeling for purely pictorial values’ (SR, 21 April 1928, 499–500) and his grasp of

the practical techniques of painting. They liked even more the way Waugh 'confounds the modern school of art criticism' (L&L, July 1928, 141–2) and 'with admirable lucidity, defining his terms precisely', translates 'the technical jargon of the fashionable aesthetic doctors into language within the grasp of the general reader' (No. 10). The 'school' attacked was that of Roger Fry, Clive Bell and Hubert Waley whose Bloomsbury doctrine of 'significant form' was used as a justification of abstract art. Waugh found it interesting but inadequate to comprehend such rogue-elephant figures as Rossetti in any Great Tradition of graphic art. At this stage, though, he was not the adversary of abstract art that he was to become and talks with admiration of 'the pellucid excellencies of Picasso'. In 1928 he had no intention of becoming a professional novelist and the 'Diaries' suggest that he had begun 'Decline and Fall' while writing 'Rossetti', as light relief from the ardours of biography.

The common complaint, and a perfectly fair one, concerns the 'inadequate notice of Rossetti's poetry' (No. 4). He was far more interested in the painting and knew relatively little about the literary output. Waugh had no ear for music and, although well-read in English poetry thanks largely to his father's influence, had no genuine enthusiasm for verse.

'Rossetti', Waugh remarked in an interview with Julian Jebb in 1962, was 'hurried and bad' ('Writers', p. 108). Despite its *succès d'estime* it ran only to a reprint in 1935 in Duckworth's Georgian Library and later in life, when reissuing the novels in the Uniform Edition, he would not allow it to be republished. Waugh, however, was perhaps overstating the case. Duckworth's at last reissued it in 1975, along with 'Labels', to coincide with the appearance of Christopher Sykes's long-awaited biography. John Bryson, who wrote an introduction and corrected certain errors, still found it well-written and provocative and Orwell, reading it for the first time late in life for an essay on Waugh (never completed), was surprised by its quality. It contains distinct faults (the aesthetic argument is far from the lucid exposition admired by the contemporary reviewers and Waugh was well aware of this) but it remains a vivid, well-written account and a remarkable achievement for only six months' work.

'DECLINE AND FALL' (1928)

Waugh noted in 1957 that a review by Arnold Bennett in the 'Evening Standard' 'was believed to sell an edition in 24 hours. The claim was exaggerated as I learned to my disappointment when he kindly

noticed my first novel. The ensuing demand was, I think, something between 200 and 300' (No. 197). Although it sold many more copies than this, running eventually to six hard-back editions of approximately 2,000 copies each by 1931, this book, like 'Rossetti', failed to make much money in 1928. It did, however, establish his reputation as a bright young author and bring in commissions for articles.

'Decline and Fall' was universally applauded as light comedy of a high order. Gerald Gould, the influential 'Observer' critic, noted that 'he is an important addition to the ranks of those dear and necessary creatures—the writers who can make us laugh' (No. 12). Arnold Bennett went further: '"Decline and Fall" is an uncompromising and brilliantly malicious satire, which in my opinion comes near to being quite first-rate' (No. 13). The 'mixture of fantasy and reality' (Peter Fleming, 'Isis', 17 October 1928, 11), the creation of 'a really comic character' in Captain Grimes (No. 15), the sheer exuberance and 'Love of life', the 'natural and sparkling' dialogue (No. 16) all exerted an immediate appeal. 'A reviewer has few epithets of praise at his command', the young Cyril Connolly concluded, 'owing to the high mortality in the vocabulary of appreciation, but of "Decline and Fall" he can say that though not a great book, it is a funny book, and the only one that, professionally, he has ever read twice' (No. 16).

It was of course, mildly scandalous in its subject-matter. Originally intended for Duckworth's, the publishers of 'Rossetti', it was refused by them, amid complicated circumstances (5) on the grounds of its indelicacy. Waugh then reluctantly submitted it to his father's firm, Chapman & Hall, who published it (with substantial cuts) on condition that Waugh preface the volume with an Author's Note disclaiming lubricious intent. Nevertheless, the 'bland destructive brilliance' (No. 20) of Waugh's treatment of homosexual schoolmasters, loss of religious faith, white slaving, extra-marital sex, liberal social reform and theological training is quite blatantly subversive and it was the range and penetration of his scattered shot which allowed such wide appeal. Undergraduates saw it in the 'Zuleika Dobson' tradition of 'Oxford novels' (Fleming, 'Isis'); tough young critics saw it as a blistering, lighthearted satire of the contemporary world in the vein of Ronald Firbank or Norman Douglas (No. 20); Bright Young Things (as they always do) saw it as a novel about them (Lady Eleanor Smith, SD, 23 September 1928, 4, and Ralph Straus, 'Bystander', 21 November 1928, v). In this case, they were all correct. Even the last group, seeing it as a *roman à clef,* forced Waugh and his

publishers to alter two names. 'Martin Gaythorn-Brodie' and 'Kevin Saunderson' were clearly portraits of Eddie Gaythorne Hardy and Gavin Henderson. In the second impression they became 'Miles Malpractice' and 'Lord Parakeet'. The photographer who drives about in 'an electric brougham' (Smith, SD) was distinguishable as Cecil Beaton, and Jack Spire as J.C. Squire (see headnote to No. 4), but these, like the outrageous 'Chez Otteline' sign in one of Waugh's illustrations, remained unchanged.

A moderate scandale was precisely what Waugh wanted. He needed to make money with this book in order to support his new wife and he courted publicity. From this time his name rarely left the gossip columns. Patrick Balfour (later, Lord Kinross), writing much of Lady Eleanor Smith's 'Sunday Dispatch' column, kept the social activities of 'he-Evelyn' and 'she-Evelyn' constantly before the public. But Waugh still did not want to be a novelist. Just before leaving with his wife for the Mediterranean cruise which was to provide the subject for 'Labels' he told Balfour: 'I am really going to concentrate on my drawing during the voyage. I hope I can bring back enough sketches to hold an Exhibition in June, and, if it is successful, abandon writing for painting.' (6)

The few months before the voyage were perhaps the happiest period of Waugh's life. But it was a happiness marred slightly by the melancholy spectacle of his Oxford friend and mentor, Harold Acton, failing where he had succeeded. Acton's novel, 'Humdrum', had been published contemporaneously and reviewed by many alongside 'Decline and Fall'. Waugh's novel was dedicated 'in homage and affection' to him. 'Mr Waugh owes no homage to Mr Acton as a novelist,' J.B.Priestley stated, 'for the latter's story is a poor thing, showing us nothing but a vast social superiority to everybody and everything' (No. 15). Much had been expected of this former 'star' of undergraduate literary life, not the least by Waugh himself. It was intensely embarrassing for both that reviewers chose Waugh's work as a standard by which to condemn his friend's.

'VILE BODIES' (1930)

'Vile Bodies' was an instant success and secured Waugh's position as a prominent young writer although more reviewers expressed displeasure than with 'Decline and Fall'. Ralph Straus began his eulogy with 'Adjectives fail me.... It is a masterpiece of inconsequence' (No. 22); V.S.Pritchett admitted: 'I laughed until I

was driven out of the room' (No. 23). But Arnold Bennett was disappointed (No. 25) and Frank Swinnerton found it 'bogus' (EN 7 February 1930, 8). The critics were quick to notice the change in tone in this 'hectic piece of savage satire' (No. 23) which offered an altogether darker vision: 'he has scratched, as with a diamond, savagely upon a pane of expensive glass, a biting caricature of the Bright Young People' (A.C.E.M., 'Cherwell', 1 February 1930, 31–2). Most liked it although the more staid found the experimental structure and apparent cynicism little to their taste.

The element of bitterness in the novel (despite Mr Sykes's assertions) (7) undoubtedly reflects the depression he felt at his first wife's desertion in mid-1929. He remarked to Julian Jebb:

> I was in the middle of 'Vile Bodies' when she left me. It was a bad book, I think, not so carefully constructed as the first. Separate scenes tended to go on far too long.... It was secondhand too. I cribbed much of the scene at the customs from Firbank. I popularised a fashionable language like the beatnik writers today [1962], and the book caught on. (8)

Writing to Henry Yorke during that desperate period when he was trying to force himself back to work a few months after the catastrophe, he described the problems of composition: 'It has been infinitely difficult and is certainly the last time I shall try to make a book about sophisticated people. It all seems to shrivel up and rot internally and I am relying on a sort of cumulative futility for any effect it might have.' (9) These two aspects—the amusing Mayfair slang and the 'cumulative futility' of the characters' lives—were discussed at length by the reviewers.

Some of them, intoxicated with amusement at Waugh's compound, bathetic adjectives, imitated them in describing the book: 'the love-making...in the first chapter', said S.P.B.Mais, 'is just "sick-making"' (DT, 17 January 1930, 15). There are references,' Gerald Gould concludes, '—well, my dear, too shy-making' ('Observer', 2 February 1930, 8). More sensible linguistic criticism came from Rebecca West who suggested that Waugh's use of 'monosyllabic conversations' was as 'technically astonishing as the dialogues in...Hemingway's "Farewell to Arms"' (No. 28). Few, however, had the perception to realize that 'Vile Bodies' was a technical experiment following the tradition of those writers Waugh admired—not only Hemingway but Firbank and Gerhardi. Most concentrated on its humour and its social satire, and were baffled by the form of the work. Edward Shanks saw it less as a novel than as 'a review between covers'. Concentrating on the attack on the

'world of intellect and fashion' with 'small pebbles of wit', he notes the Gerhardi connection but suggests that 'What is lacking in Mr. Waugh at present is any capacity for design' (No. 26). Arnold Bennett felt that 'the lack of a well-laid plot has resulted in a large number of pages which demand a certain obstinate and sustained effort of will for their perusal' (No. 25). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Bennett's and St John Ervine's (DT, 30 January 1930, 6) pieces, however, is that they compare Waugh's book unfavourably with his brother's 'The Coloured Countries', a travelogue published at the same time. Alec Waugh, they considered, had the weightier, more sympathetic, mind. The 'New York Times' suggested that 'Vile Bodies' might be termed 'needlessly nasty, decadent, superficial and arrogantly, even offensively sophisticated' and thought Waugh had borrowed much from Douglas, Arlen and Huxley (No. 29).

Analysing the social satire, L.P.Hartley, Richard Aldington and Rebecca West (Nos 24, 27 and 28) offer more penetrating remarks. All were aware that, beneath the humour, Waugh wished to suggest that we 'are dancing on a volcano' (No. 24). It was a book 'based on complete despair' (No. 27), which Miss West saw as 'a further stage in the contemporary literature of disillusionment' which started with 'The Waste Land' (No. 28). Later (1946), Rose Macaulay suggested that the society depicted is characterized by pervasive philistinism, divorced from 'intellectuality, culture, artistic or literary sensibility' (No. 30).

By the time the Uniform Edition was published in 1965, 'Vile Bodies' was firmly established in the canon of Waugh's work. Waugh expressed distaste for it in his preface but reviewers still delighted in its brittle humour and 'mannered ruthlessness' (John Davenport, 'Spectator', 7 May 1965, 607). It has not died with the age it documents like Arlen's 'The Green Hat' but survives for new readers both as a mordant, fantastical satire on hedonism and as a work of 'historical interest' (Davenport, 'Spectator').

'LABELS' (1930)

'Labels' is a fascinating 'period piece' in that it was written after the breakdown of Waugh's marriage and concerns the period of his honeymoon cruise. It is the only complete work written between the separation and his conversion to Catholicism. The American title, significantly, was 'A Bachelor Abroad' and Waugh overcame

the difficulty of describing this delicate period by inventing a fictional honeymoon couple, Geoffrey and Juliet, whose intimacy he purported to find embarrassing. The couple seem to represent a portrait of he-Evelyn and she-Evelyn as they were, the implication being that he had now outgrown that softly romantic, boyish phase and become more a 'man of the world'.

Most reviewers liked it as 'piquant, entertaining and ...pleasantly outspoken' (Ralph Straus, 'Bystander', 1 October 1930, 48). Harold Nicolson detected a distinctly modern, 'post-war' consciousness, seeing Waugh as the leading literary representative of this. 'He has all the scepticism of...Huxley and none of his despair' (No. 34), an opinion reiterated by Hobhouse (No. 35). Waugh's 'impertinence' and blatant self-advertisement were emphasized by his cocksure indulgence in the cardinal sin of literary journalism: he reviewed his own book in the 'Graphic' (No. 31).

Serious attention was paid to his ancillary discussion of the Englishman's 'sense of period' (No. 34) and the aesthetic discussion of the Tutankhamen relics and Gaudí's Catalan art nouveau architecture (Nos 34 and 33). With the exception of Edgar Holt, the critics were intrigued by Waugh's ingenuity in making an entertaining spectacle of a tourist route. Edgar Holt, however, found the book devoid of 'original thought or material', a 'farago of longitude and platitude' ('Bookman', November 1930, 140).

It sold well for a travel book, running to at least two editions. When excerpts from it were reprinted in 'When the Going was Good' (1946), many of the passages expressing that post-war consciousness and nearly all the illuminating, facetious asides were cut by Waugh. The full text was reprinted by Duckworth's in 1975 with an enthusiastic introduction by Kingsley Amis.

'REMOTE PEOPLE' (1931)

'Remote People' documents Waugh's first visit to Abyssinia in 1930. He was 'The Times' correspondent covering the coronation of Haile Selassie and continued his journey at his own expense down through Rhodesia to South Africa.

It received a mixed reception but no notices which, like Holt's on 'Labels', were wholly damning. Some expressed intense enthusiasm. Frank Swinnerton thought that 'the sincerity of this book, its candour and originality, the quality of its perception, and the engrossing interest of its narrative, cause me

to regard it as the best book of travel I have read for years' (EN, 30 October 1931, 11). Peter Fleming saw it as 'the very best possible sort of book about this journey' (No. 39). But the 'Observer', after praising it, noted that Waugh's knowledge of local affairs 'is necessarily external and trivial…. It follows that the "political" parts are the least readable' (22 November 1931, 5). Rebecca West was disappointed after her delight in the novels and 'Labels'. 'Remote People', she considered, was 'well beneath his proper form' and she compared it unfavourably with Norman Douglas's 'Summer Islands' (No. 37). The 'New York Times Book Review' was impressed by Waugh's ability to describe this 'pilgrimage of ennui' in amusing fashion but detected racial and antiAmerican prejudice (No. 38).

'BLACK MISCHIEF' (1932)

Reviews of this novel varied enormously. L.A.G.Strong thought that 'Mr Waugh's note deepens in this brilliant book' and found it 'amazingly well-written' and entirely original ('Spectator', 1 October 1932, 420). Howard Marshall also noted the increased seriousness and saw it as 'a transitional stage in his work' (No. 40). Eric Linklater, like Rose Macaulay on 'Vile Bodies', saw it in the 'Waste Land' tradition of Eliot alongside Bates, Nicolson and Muir: 'The manner in which Mr Waugh controls his widely varied matter is admirable. His narrative is swift and picturesque, and his cutting…is masterly. "Black Mischief" …shows an all-round growth of strength' (No. 42).

The 'New Statesman' suggested comparison with Saki but found the work largely distasteful (October 1932, 380). James Agate thought it would be 'deemed wildly funny by the intelligentsia' but found little sense in this 'yarn' (No. 41). The TLS, ostentatiously yawning, thought it an 'extravaganza written largely about, and presumably for, the bright young people' which was 'insubstantial for its length' (13 October 1932, 736). Geoffrey West thought the Book Society might have done better for its October choice of the Book of the Month and saw the novel as another 'absurd' exercise in the tradition of Firbank's 'vapid fatuities' (No. 43).

Adverse criticism rarely bothered Waugh. The Book Society selection ensured wide circulation and his novels after 'Vile Bodies' always sold well whatever the critics said. In this instance, however, one reviewer deeply offended him. Ernest Oldmeadow with his remarks and then his review in the 'Tablet' provoked a literary controversy in the pages of that sober

Catholic periodical. As Editor and Book Critic he noted that a novel by Waugh had appeared but refused to name either its title or publisher as it was 'a disgrace to anybody professing the Catholic name'. Waugh was travelling in British Guiana at the time but his friends defended his good faith and artistry in a vigorous open letter. Oldmeadow responded with monumental superciliousness by suggesting that publication of their letter 'must lower more than one of the signatories in public esteem'. In the same piece (No. 44) he then reviewed 'Black Mischief' in a fashion which must have made him a laughing stock among intelligent Catholics. It was clearly intended as the final word in this unsavoury debate, offering a bald statement of what he saw as the novel's obvious moral lapses. But still the arguments ran on week by week under the title of A Recent Novel. In the end, Oldmeadow found it necessary to reply yet again and at even greater length by summarizing the entire discourse (No. 45).

On his return, Waugh was embarrassed and outraged. He immediately wrote an Open Letter to H.E. the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster (set up in print and dated May 1933, but never published until included in the 'Letters', 1980) replying to the accusations and suggesting that Oldmeadow be sacked.

No American reviews are included because none could be found which offered anything more than an account of the plot.

'NINETY-TWO DAYS' (1934)

This is Waugh's account of his travels in British Guiana and Brazil during 1932. It was his most adventurous excursion, partly in unmapped country (where he almost lost his life), and the one on which he met the religious maniac, Mr Christie, 'up-country'. Christie was to form a partial model for the character of Mr Todd in 'A Handful of Dust' (1934), the lunatic who imprisons Tony Last in the Brazilian jungle.

The book was generally liked. V.S.Pritchett saw it as 'a deep improvement on "Labels" and the book on Abyssinia ["Remote People"] in which farce and satire had become *farouche* in order to conceal a sentimental *malaise*'. He thought Waugh was emerging from a Noël Cowardly phase and exchanging his 'sophistication for a pleasing collection of sympathies, prejudices, fusses, worries and patient determinations' (No. 49). The 'New Statesman' also disparagingly noted 'Labels" adoption of 'the manner of Noël Coward' and was pleased to see a more mature Waugh 'less sentimentally savage', depending

less on 'that querulous little stock of sophistication and smartness' (17 March 1934, 420, 422). Gilbert Armitage likened Waugh to Godfrey Winn as a representative of Youth (cf. No. 196) and to Jane Austen as a novelist. Eventually, he expresses admiration for the '*absence* of prejudice' in 'Ninety-Two Days'; Waugh is seen as 'the "pure" observer' ('Bookman', May 1934, 12). Blair Niles in the 'New York Times Book Review' was perhaps the most enthusiastic, linking Waugh's name with D.H. Lawrence, Douglas and Tomlinson as one of an elite who 'had led the way back to high standards in travel writing'. Niles saw it as a welcome relief from 'the distortion of truth and the tawdry self-exploitation of the travel books of the recent degenerate era' (No. 50).

'A HANDFUL OF DUST' (1934)

This novel is now widely regarded as Waugh's masterpiece. One might expect there to have been a plethora of jubilant contemporary criticism but, strangely, this was not the case. Most praised it but the extraordinary power of the work and its superiority to Waugh's earlier fiction was not widely recognized. The rather sad little collection included here does little justice to such a novel. Of the contemporary reviewers, only Peter Quennell and William Plomer would rank as 'critics'. Where were the rest of Waugh's powerful literary backers? The enigma is perhaps partly explained by the fact that 'A Handful of Dust' was first published in five monthly instalments in 'Harper's Bazaar' in both Britain and America) with a different ending in which Tony returned from Brazil. Had the story become too well known before the novel was published? Certainly it did not burst upon an eager public as had the earlier works.

The first edition appeared in September 1934. Waugh's trip to British Guiana had left him short of money and 1933–5 was a period of unusually intense literary activity. After grinding out 'Ninety-Two Days' in the winter of 1933 he wrote some stories to raise money quickly. Then he was free to write a novel which included the South American background. His story, The Man Who Liked Dickens, had been written at Boa Vista, Brazil, and posted home for publication and, as he explained much later in Fan-Fare, he had become intrigued by the theme and 'wanted to discover how the prisoner got there' (No. 100). The novel, he noted, 'began at the end', and the manuscript actually includes a typescript copy of much of this story with small alterations (Last was 'Henty' and Mr Todd 'McMaster').

He was pleased with the book. A note originally enclosed with Tom Driberg's copy reads:

> Here is my new novel. I hope you will like it. I think it is better than the others. At any rate the frontispiece might amuse you. I instructed the architect to design the worst possible eighteen-sixty [Gothic] and I think he has done well. (10)

The frontispiece was of Hetton Abbey and Waugh's leitmotif of 'Englísh Gothic' was something which the contemporary reviewers unfortunately ignored. 'Unfortunately' because it was clearly seen by Waugh as a fundamental structural device. As he says in his letter to Henry Yorke: 'The scheme was a Gothic man in the hands of savages…' (No. 55). But it was more subtle than this for the 'Gothic' of Tony Last's world of 'arrested development' is distinctly second-rate. One sentence deleted from the manuscript describes Hetton as 'a huge building conceived in the late generation of the Gothic revival when the movement had lost its fantasy and become structurally logical and stodgy'. (11) Not until Professor Kermode published his essay Mr. Waugh's Cities in 1960 (No. 109) did the architectural imagery and Waugh's notion of 'the Catholic City' receive serious critical attention.

Peter Quennell thought it 'the most mature and the best written novel that Mr. Waugh has yet produced' (No. 54) and criticized Oldmeadow's review which had continued the campaign of vilification in the 'Tablet' (No. 52). But neither Quennell nor Plomer does much to help us understand the book, concentrating their attention on stylistic concerns: Waugh's 'economical method', the realism of his apparently 'far-fetched' scenes (No. 53). James Agate, having complained about Waugh's last two books, exudes enthusiasm but does little more than reveal himself as a prey to sentimentality (DE, 6 September 1934, 6). The TLS once again expressed a certain weariness mixed this time with admiration for the novel's technical expertise: 'Whether his study of futility is worth doing—and doing at such length—is a matter of opinion; but there can be nothing but praise for his consistency of outlook' (No. 51). Twelve years later, Rose Macaulay described it as 'a social novel about adultery, treachery, betrayal, tragic and sordid desolation'. But even she, while acknowledging it as 'a brilliant and terrifying *tour de* force' found it 'up to a point more ordinary' than 'Black Mischief'. 'A Handful of Dust', she says, 'seems to reach the climax of Mr. Waugh's view of life as the meaningless jigging of barbarous nitwits. Pleasure, sympathetic or ironic, in their absurdities has vanished: disgust has set in' (No. 56).

Yet when the Uniform Edition appeared in 1964, Professor Bergonzi could remark that 'After thirty years, "A Handful of Dust" remains in the first rank of Mr Waugh's novels' (No. 57). Brigid Brophy, reviewing the same edition, terms it 'a major work in the canon. It is the most open of Waugh's books about having a tragic intention' (No. 58). Miss Brophy, as an authority on Firbank, is perhaps the subtlest of the literary journalists. Her use of the term 'baroque conceit' reflects Waugh's own phraseology in his letter to Henry Yorke: 'I think I agree that the Todd episode is fantastic. It is a "conceit" in the Webster manner' (No. 55).

The most enthusiastic and stimulating comments of contemporary 'critics' appear in Waugh's private correspondence (see Sykes, pp. 141–3). Desmond MacCarthy, Hilaire Belloc, Rebecca West, Lord David Cecil and Maurice Baring all expressed unreserved admiration. J.B.Priestley and Henry Yorke, however, had complaints. Priestley did not think it a better book than the others (although it had 'a bitter force beyond anything that appeared in the others') and felt that 'the people in the book are altogether too light weight'. Yorke's objections centred on his disappointment at the unreality of 'the Demerara trip'. Waugh's reply (No. 55) is equally intriguing and demonstrates the seriousness with which he approached the design and social commentary of his book.

There was, of course, a strong, if oblique, element of autobiography in it. This was the first time he had explored in detail the delicate subject of a wife's desertion and his pain and disgust at such infidelity spills over from his experience into the novel. It was a particularly frustrating period in Waugh's emotional life. Although divorced, his Church still considered him married. Effectively he was isolated by his faith, prevented by what he believed to be true from developing a supportive sexual relationship with another woman. He was not chaste but casual encounters only irritated his wounded self-esteem, emphasizing solitude. 'A Handful of Dust' was written at a time when Waugh was sensing this frustration intensely. He was deeply in love with Teresa Jungman, a Catholic confidante who was devoted to him as a friend but refused to enter into an affair. She is the 'Teresa' the diary records Waugh's having left as the boat set sail for British Guiana. (In the manuscript the frustrated shipboard 'romance' with Therese was originally with 'Bernadette'.) The glamorous public image of a boisterous and brilliant adventurer was a long way from the sad, *déraciné* figure, homeless and loveless despite many 'friends', who really only wanted one thing: a safe Catholic marriage.

Whether or not these contingent factors are thought relevant, recent criticism seems to agree that the novel displays increased emotional intensity which sets it apart from the ingenious fantasy of Waugh's other pre-war fiction. Angus Wilson thinks that 'throughout "A Handful of Dust" ...we have moved beyond the realm of great talent into that of genius' (No. 191).

'EDMUND CAMPION' (1935)

This biography of the Jesuit martyr was Waugh's first work of overt Catholic apologetics. After completing 'A Handful of Dust' he travelled with Alexander Glen and others to Spitzbergen, above the Arctic Circle, a bleak and depressing experience for Waugh. He returned in August 1934 and by October was at work on 'Campion'.

Mr Sykes's biography deals briefly (pp. 145–9 and 151–2) with the book, noting Waugh's debt to Fr D'Arcy (then Master of Campion Hall, Oxford) and the dubious nature of some historical generalizations. He reviews it from the standpoint of a contemporary Catholic, praising its literary facility, but he fails to note, first, the amount of research Waugh put into the book and, second, that Waugh's concept of Campion was as much that of artist as theologian.

On the first point the contemporary reviewers were gnerally more perceptive. Fr Martindale noted that it was clear Waugh 'had studied seriously' (GKW, 19 September 1935, 450–1). Despite Waugh's disclaimer that 'This book makes no claim to all that is known, still less all that diligent research might discover, about the life of Edmund Campion', it was clear to most historians (including Peter Quennell, No. 59) that Waugh had examined most available authorities. His correspondence confirms this and also his concern with the smallest detail. At one stage he wrote to Penelope Betjeman asking to stay at her house so that he might conveniently visit the grange where Campion had been arrested. Rose Macaulay's accusation in 1946 that Waugh had not read the relevant State Papers and correspondence had been refuted by the author at the time of publication in answer to similar criticisms from another quarter (No. 62). As Mr Quennell noted, however, 'the Catholic point of view underlies every paragraph' (No. 59) and it was Waugh's interpretation of the evidence, inverting the traditionally 'heroic' vision of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, which provoked controversy. J.A.Kensit, on behalf of the Protestant Truth Society, reacted violently to an enthusiastic radio review by Desmond MacCarthy and this initiated a debate lasting several weeks in the

pages of the 'Listener' (see No. 61). Waugh replied to the accusations at some length in the letter reproduced as No. 62.

The second point, that of Waugh's view of Campion as an artist-figure, was scarcely picked up by anyone. Many offered the sort of observation made by Graham Greene: 'Mr. Waugh's study is a model of what a short biography should be. Sensitive and vivid, it catches the curious note of gaiety and gallantry...of an adventure' (No. 60). But none articulated the fact that the book is more novel than biography in places and that it throws an interesting light on the relationship which Waugh saw between aesthetics and religion. Oxford is described as emerging from the Middle Ages 'into the spacious, luminous world of Catholic humanism' (p. 13). With the Reformation the Church, which while 'in undisputed authority...could afford to wink at a little speculative fancy in her philosophers, a pagan exuberance of taste in her artists', was now 'driven to defend the basis and essential structure of her faith' (p. 14). This is, surely, the fundamental concern of the book. The thesis propounded is that, thanks to Campion and his fellows, Catholicism remained 'something historically and continuously English, seeking to recover only what had been taken from it by theft' (p. 54).

The Protestant aggressors are depicted as dull-witted barbarians, sacking Duke Humphrey's library, smashing the great reredos of All Souls, lying, informing, reduced to inflicting torture where they were found intellectually deficient in debate. The Catholics are sincere, zealous and cultured men. Campion's 'The History of Ireland' is taken as a demonstration that 'had... [he] ...continued in the life he was then planning for himself, he would, almost certainly, have come down in history as one of the great masters of English prose' (pp. 37–8).

There can be no doubt that 'Campion' was an extremely important book to Waugh. He looked to it to re-establish his integrity in Catholic circles at a time when Oldmeadow's vendetta in the 'Tablet' continued unabated. Oldmeadow had reviewed 'A Handful of Dust' harshly (No. 52) and refused to notice 'Campion'. He even went so far as to 'protest' against the 'Daily Mail's' 'choice of correspondent to send messages from Addis Ababa'. (12) It was possibly the first book to which Waugh was wholly committed. During his next visit to Abyssinia he wrote to Katharine Asquith (Lady Horner): 'I am very excited about the reception of "Campion". Just like a spinster with a first novel.' (13) Later he wrote to Henry Yorke:

> I am very pleased about the [Hawthornden] prize because personally it takes the taste of the 'Daily Mail' out of my tongue and generally,

> which you won't sympathise with, because I am glad that a prize of that kind should go to a specifically Catholic book. (14)

Clearly, and this the reviewers missed entirely, Waugh suggests in the biography an analogue with the situation of all Catholics since the Reformation. Its attitudes are essentially those expressed in a newspaper article explaining his 'conversion to Rome' in 1930: 'Civilization… has not in itself the power of survival. It came into being through Christianity, and without it has no significance or power to command allegiance.' (15) 'Christianity', of course, meant only 'Catholicism' for Waugh. Civilization and faith were seen as interdependent.

Thanks to the Hawthornden and the generally warm reception of 'Campion' by Catholics and Protestants alike, the book sold well. A new edition was eventually printed for American circulation in 1946 to capitalize on the success of 'Brideshead'. Edmund Wilson reviewed this sceptically, antagonism having already been established between himself and Waugh over 'Brideshead' and other issues (headnote, No. 65). 'Mr. Waugh's version of history…', he suggests, 'is, in its main lines, more or less in the vein of "1066 and All That". Catholicism was a Good Thing and Protestantism was a Bad Thing' (No. 65). But other Americans were more generous. Richard Sullivan wondered 'if this excellent little study of the Elizabethan priest did not…fore-shadow the profound eschatological concerns which much later the author was to exhibit in his fiction' (No. 64) and 'Time' thought it done 'skilfully and with full respect' (1 July 1946, 39). The year 1962 saw a handsome third edition incorporating revisions. The 'Tablet' collated the texts of this and the 1935 version and concluded that the changes were 'very slight, being the result of scrupulous care rather than further research' (7 April 1962, 332), and David Rogers wrote to correct some bibliographical errors in this assessment (5 May 1962, 42).

SHORT STORIES: 'MR LOVEDAY' ETC. (1936); 'WORK SUSPENDED AND OTHER STORIES' ETC. (1949); 'TACTICAL EXERCISE' (1954)

Most of Waugh's short stories were written in the 1930s and the three hard back volumes largely reproduce the same material. It is sensible to deal with them here under a single heading, although in this book the reviews appear in their correct chronological order. 'Mr Loveday' included the following: Mr Loveday's Little Outing, By Special Request (alternative serial ending to 'A Handful of Dust'),

Cruise, Period Piece, On Guard, Incident in Azania, Out of Depth, Excursion in Reality, Love in the Slump, Bella Fleace Gave a Party and Winner Takes All. 'Work Suspended and Other Stories Written Before the Second World War' obviously adds Waugh's unfinished novel (first published in full in 1942) to the list but also deletes Love in the Slump, including instead An Englishman's Home. 'Tactical Exercise', the second American edition of stories (the first appearing simultaneously with the 1936 volume), reprints all of this adding a piece of Waugh's juvenilia 'The Curse of the Horse Race' and 'Love Among the Ruins'.

Almost invariably Waugh wrote his short stories for magazines like 'Vogue', 'Harper's Bazaar' and 'Nash's Pall Mall' as a means of raising money quickly. Sometimes, however, they represented a pre-publication glimpse of a section of a forthcoming novel. 'Harper's Bazaar', for instance, printed Waugh's The Hire-Purchase Marriage as a short story (December 1929, 22–3, 98, 101) and it appeared shortly afterwards as Chapter Five of 'Vile Bodies'. Such 'extracts' were excluded from Waugh's selection in these volumes.

There can be little doubt as to Waugh's attitude to all these pieces excepting 'Work Suspended' and 'Love Among the Ruins'. They were not conceived, as were the novels, with serious artistic intent. The stories were seen as well-wrought entertainments, amusing, occasionally suggestive of serious themes, but essentially lighthearted. Usually, they represent the working out of a 'conceit' for comic effect. Their reviewers accepted them as such, often over-praising them as ingenious 'miniatures'. James Agate, for instance, saw Winner Takes All as 'a tiny masterpiece of suave, polished and cruel irony' (DE, 2 July 1936, 8). Roger Pippett, aware that the first volume 'will not prove… one of its author's major works', still appreciated its sophisticated belligerence and found Waugh's 'imitators' 'thin' satirists by comparison (DH, 2 July 1936, 17). The TLS apparently preferred the stories to the novels:

> He has the wit and the sense of style to hold the floor unsupported by his subject when the short, sharp shock is but twenty pages away, whereas when he expands themes of no more general significance to 300 pages his nonentities may fail with the reader to sustain the burden of the deferred catastrophe. (No. 66)

Maurice Bowra, however, was unreserved in his praise. 'Mr. Waugh,' he wrote, 'like Mr Maugham, succeeds at every kind of writing he attempts…. He manages the short story with the confident touch of an accomplished master' (No. 67).

Reviewers of the second volume (1949) concentrated on 'Work Suspended'. They knew most of the stories, and the unfinished novel was making its first appearance since the 1942 limited edition. The American critics of 'Tactical Exercise', however, saw the book in the context of Waugh's huge surge in popularity with 'Brideshead' (1945) and the subsequent parody of American material values in 'The Loved One' (1948). 'Helena' (1950) and the first volume of the war trilogy, 'Men at Arms' (1952), had also appeared. Waugh was established as a serious novelist of ambiguous political and distinct religious affiliations. Most of the stories seemed either slight by comparison or revealed a fundamental insincerity and snobbery in the entire *opus*. 'A coterie loved him seventeen years', wrote Donald Barr in the 'New York Times Book Review',

> for being a heartless and light-minded satirist of the ruling classes. In 1945, the general public discovered that he was a snobbish and sentimental bigot who hated the common people, and they at once made him a bestseller.... The three abiding qualities of Mr Waugh are his barbarousness, his charity and his snobbery.... (17 October 1954, 6, 36)

Frank O'Connor, the Irish short-story writer, considered that

> The short story was never a form in which Mr Waugh excelled. Apart from Work Suspended, the rest of the book consists of tales rather than stories, and the rigidity of the formula almost suggests that the author had taken a correspondence course in story-telling. (No. 144)

Louis Coxe thought that 'satire' like Waugh's, 'without a moral centre is not satire but at best the protracted sneer' (No. 145), clearly oblivious of the fact that Waugh had disowned the title of satirist in Fan-Fare (1946, No. 100).

'Waugh in Abyssinia' (1936)

This book documents Waugh's life as a war correspondent and his brief flirtation with Italian Fascism as an alternative political system. He had travelled to Abyssinia in 1935 to report on the Italian invasion for the pro-Mussolini 'Daily Mail' and then returned in 1936 to examine the effects of the newly established government. The enthusiasm with which he greeted this disgusted many writers.

Rose Macaulay dubbed the book 'a Fascist tract' ten years later (No. 71) and when it first appeared David Garnett complained of the biased omissions: 'He does not tell us', he wrote, 'how many of [the natives] that "most amiable and sensible man", Graziani, is hanging and shooting every day' (No. 69). The TLS complained of Waugh's apparent ignorance of Abyssinia's complex customs, faith, traditions (No. 74) and Donald Attwater in the 'Dublin Review' similarly noted his 'sneering references to what he does not understand' (January-June 1937, 174–5). The right-wing and Catholic papers were, however, generally more sympathetic to Waugh's use of his experience as political and religious propaganda. The 'Tablet', for example, stated without qualification that 'Mr Waugh describes the deadly and hopeless system which the dominant Abyssinians imposed on the areas they conquered. They represented Imperialism devoid of a single redeeming element' (14 November 1936, 674).

The book, then, is ultimately a justification of the redeeming elements of Italian imperialism. Waugh argues that the invaders represent order, culture and Catholicism. During the period 1935–9 it may fairly be said that Waugh toyed dangerously and often foolishly with the political implications of his faith and that this indulgence in politics was something he later regretted. Corresponding with his agent in 1937 (during the composition of 'Scoop') he proposed writing a guide book to 'the most interesting parts of Europe.... Ideology—part Belloc belief in the permanence of Roman conquest, part anti-pacifist. I see a *very good book indeed* on this subject'. (16) But it was never written. The enthusiasm of this brief period as a pugnacious, militarist Catholic apologist did not outlast the Second World War. After that, military action appeared corrupt and often cowardly. Editing his travel writings in 'When the Going was Good' (1946) he dropped the controversial, pro-Fascist, concluding chapter about The Road, the symbol of Roman civilization and religion made manifest.

Waugh's ostensible 'political' position during this period is easily misinterpreted. His interest in the Italian invasion was principally the result of his aesthetic and religious predilections rather than political ones. He was more interested in the symbolic significance of the events than in their intrinsic complexity. In 1938 he wrote: 'Those of us who can afford to think without proclaiming ourselves "intellectuals", do not want or expect a Fascist regime.' (17) He always despised Hitler. It was the culture represented by the Italians, and the chance for Catholicism to regain lost territories, which appealed in his

weaker moments. Ultimately his argument was abstract and theological.

'SCOOP' (1938)

The reviewers of 'Scoop' were uniformly delighted with this extravaganza demolishing the pretentions of the popular press. In the same essay which had condemned 'Waugh in Abyssinia' as a 'Fascist tract' Rose Macaulay remarked: 'With it Mr. Waugh re-entered his peculiar world; it was a relief to those of us who had begun to fear that we were losing him, that the wit was being slain by the propagandist and the partisan' (No. 79). This feeling was expressed by many. Here was Waugh back in his old form. 'I like Mr. Waugh best', wrote Desmond Shawe-Taylor, 'when he remains within his own territory, which I take to be the circles radiating outwards—not too far—from the lunch-table of Lady Metroland' (No. 73).

This limitation, however, to a form he knew he could execute with professional ease, was beginning to prove irksome to Waugh. He was, like John Plant in 'Work Suspended', reaching a 'climacteric' in his career as a novelist. He described 'Scoop' to his agent as 'light and excellent' but he was all the time thirsting for a new fictional approach which could include the dimension of 'supernatural' reality. 'Work Suspended' (written 1939) marks the first tentative step towards a fuller prose style but the transition was only completed with 'Brideshead'. (I have written an essay on this transformation, Work Suspended: Waugh's Climacteric, 'Essays in Criticism', October 1978, 302–20.) 'Scoop' was to prove almost the last in that sequence of anarchic 'fantasies' which had so endeared Waugh to his large British audience and American coterie. Only 'The Loved One' (1948) and 'Basil Seal Rides Again' (1963) were to revert to the earlier style.

Reviewing the Uniform Edition in 1964 Brigid Brophy remarked that '"Scoop" has always struck me as a mere, though entertaining, after-flutter of the fine imaginative flight which had produced "Black Mischief"' (No. 58). However, as a satire on journalism, indeed on the mass media in general, it remains a pungent and relevant document. The underlying notion of the absurdity of the rationalist viewpoint, implicit in the concept of a newspaper, that disparate events may be reported as reflecting an understandable 'whole', is another rendering of a continuous theme in Waugh's fiction. The world is not, he suggests, as Lucas Dockery or Seth would suppose, a

composite of discernible facts; without the dimension of 'spiritual' experience, human behaviour is seen to be unreasonable (see Fan-Fare, No. 100).

Waugh, however, made no claim for the potential philosophical complexity of this work. In a 'memo' turning down a film scenario of the book in 1957 he wrote:

> This novel is a light satire on modern journalism, not a schoolboy's adventure story of plot, counterplot, capture and escape. Such incidents as provoke this misconception are extraneous to the main theme which is to expose the pretensions of foreign correspondents, popularised in countless novels, plays, autobiographies and films, to be heroes, statesmen and diplomats.(HRC)

'ROBBERY UNDER LAW' (1939)

While writing 'Scoop', Mr Sykes notes, Waugh was approached by 'Clive Pearson, the younger son of Lord Cowdray, acting as a representative of the extensive Pearson commercial interests in Central America' (p. 181). Pearson's family had lost considerable assets through the expropriation of foreign holdings in Mexico by the socialist regime led by General Cardenas. The idea was that Waugh should travel to Mexico at the Pearsons' expense and write a book defending their case. He agreed and, after finishing 'Scoop', travelled with his second wife, Laura, in July 1938, returning in October of the same year.

The brevity of the visit underlines the inescapable faults of the book. Waugh takes it upon himself to write an overtly political tract about a country of which he has little more than a tourist's knowledge. This was a different matter entirely from the literary use he made of his experience in Abyssinia, a country of which he had acquired considerable knowledge between 1930 and 1936. He came and left as a 'Conservative' (No. 84); his preconceptions preclude the objectivity demonstrated by Graham Greene's Mexican book 'The Lawless Roads', published a year earlier. Some reviewers condemned Waugh on these grounds. Harold Nicolson, a former admirer, described the work as 'a short but dull book.... He cannot forgive the Mexicans for having confiscated the large estates' (No. 80). 'Mr Waugh's professional intuition', said the TLS, '...is handicapped by the prejudices with which he approached the country' (1 July 1939, 382). Gerald Vann disliked the ease with which Waugh passed judgment on 'the goodness or

badness, the success or failure, of men's rationalizations of their desires', despite Waugh's ingenuity in depicting the political situation as 'the writing on our own wall' (No. 83). But a surprising number found the book convincing. William Gower for the conservative 'Spectator' saw it as 'very brilliant, sad though its story is' (21 July 1939, 103). The liberal 'Manchester Guardian' was equally sympathetic: 'His book is admirably written, and few could have set out more ably this view of Mexico' (No. 81). R.L.Martin, offering an American view which perhaps reflects a certain nervousness as to the proximity of this socialist revolution was deeply impressed by 'the calm logic' of Waugh's argument (No. 82). By the time the American edition had been published, of course, five months later, the Second World War had been declared.

In later years Waugh clearly regretted this somewhat hysterical document. He omitted it entirely from 'When the Going was Good', saying in the Preface that he was 'content to leave [it] in oblivion, for it dealt little with travel and much with political questions.... So let it lie in its own dust'. It has not, however, been forgotten. Anthony Quinton, reviewing the 'Letters' in 1980 was clamouring for its republication ('Listener', 4 September 1980, 307–8).

'PUT OUT MORE FLAGS' (1942)

This novel, like 'Work Suspended', marks a transitional stage in Waugh's career. It was written on a troop-ship returning from South Africa (No. 100) and deals with the period of the Phoney War or, as Waugh puts it: 'The Great Bore War', 'that odd, dead period before the Churchillian renaissance' (Dedicatory Letter to Major Randolph Churchill, Penguin, p. 7). Unlike his earlier fiction, it is locked firmly to a specific historical period and is, in one sense, an historical novel. Waugh, of course, thought it 'historical' in more ways than one. The characters described, some still from the circle of Lady Metroland, he considered to be 'a race of ghosts' (Dedicatory Letter). They no longer existed and his attitude to their (final) 'disappearance' is ambivalent. For the most part, though, he was glad to see the back of the woolly-minded, liberalpacifist, rural-and-pansy-aesthetic sets he lampoons. Waugh was at the height of his enthusiasm for the heroic possibilities of the war, the enemy was 'at last plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off'. (18) And the 'enemy' was not only the military opponent. Here we see the fifth column of the weak-minded and decadent whose subtle subversion is itself undermined by the ruthlessness of the irrepressible Basil Seal.

The reviewers were generally enthusiastic although Kate O'Brien felt that they were too close to the historical situation and its blunders, the country plunged as it was in the darker days of the war, to appreciate facetious 'group-presentations of the inept' (No. 86). Most others, however, found it a brilliant affair and noted a new seriousness in Waugh's tone. 'Time' remarked that 'he has become one of the most deadly serious moralists of his generation' (25 May 1942, 90–1) and Alan Pryce-Jones likened the 'logic' of his world-view to that of Kafka (No. 87). Pryce-Jones may also lay claim to being one of the earlier literary journalists (he was, after all, a friend) to detect the 'Romantic' in Waugh, a word much used later to describe the retrospective analysis of 'Brideshead' and the war trilogy. Even the left-wing 'New Republic' found itself complimenting Waugh on successfully, if only 'for a moment', engaging the reader's attention and interest in the 'embarrassing' collection of 'frozen pretty boys and exhausted glamour girls' (Dunstan Thompson, NR, 13 July 1942, 60–1).

Waugh, then, was beginning to claim respect as a 'serious' novelist at last although none of the contemporary reviews noted the shift in prose style, moving gradually away from the flickering images and cinematic 'cutting' of the earlier work, towards the more 'conventional' novel of detailed description and character analysis. A year later, Nigel Dennis wrote an excellent essay centring on 'Put Out More Flags', largely reprinted as No. 89. In this he also takes note of the fragment of 'Work Suspended' published in 'Horizon' in 1941 as My Father's House and assesses Waugh's position as a social critic in comparison with the left-wing writers (Auden and Isherwood were overtly satirized in the novel as Parsnip and Pimpernell) of 'New Signatures'.

Today, the novel appears less important. Few would now agree with those who considered it Waugh's finest achievement of the period 1928–42. Although still entertaining, the specific contemporary relevance perhaps leaves it with the flavour of a 'period piece' relying for its maximum effect upon a detailed knowledge of events beyond the text.

'WORK SUSPENDED' (1942)

The publishing history of this piece is complex. Briefly, Waugh wrote most of it in 1939 and then abandoned composition on being called up for the Marines in December. In November 1941 Cyril Connolly published the first part as My Father's House in 'Horizon' (see No. 92). Late in 1942 a Limited Edition of 500 copies of the complete

work (i.e. both parts) was printed by Chapman's. The first notices here (Nos 90 and 91) are of that limited edition. Few reviewed it. It was first brought before a wider audience with the appearance of 'Work Suspended and Other Stories' (1949) although the Americans did not see it until 'Tactical Exercise' (1954) again included it in a collection of short stories. The 1949 and 1954 texts correspond but both are substantially different from the 1942 limited edition. Waugh, for instance, has added the Post-Script to the later version and altered those names and dates which located the story earlier in the 1930s than its ultimate 'date' of 1939. The later text, of course, is the one read now, first published by Penguin Books in 1951. (A detailed analysis of the revisions and their significance is included in my piece in 'Essays in Criticism', see p. 30 above.)

For reviews of 'Work Suspended', then, the reader should also look ahead in this volume to the 1949 and 1954 editions of short stories and remember that the text described there is not that which baffled the TLS critic in No. 91. In 1949 the issues seemed clearer. 'Brideshead' and 'The Loved One' provided a perspective within which to interpret the action of a 'narrative hanging between the death of an old world...and a new world viewed with displeasure' (No. 26). In 1954 the generally unsympathetic Donald Barr noted that it 'makes the transition to the later manner. The "psychology" there is more copious and explicit, with traces of the very firm, very explicit treatment of love, marriage and adultery as questions in moral theology' (NYTBR, 17 October 1954, 6, 36). The misunderstanding about 'adultery' here is implicitly repeated on the cover of the current Penguin volume, which describes the hero as 'seeking inspiration through a highly illicit love affair with his best friend's heavily-pregnant wife'. It is a 'love affair' but there is no question of adultery as it is taken for granted by Waugh that the pregnancy suspends sexual relations. (19)

The misreading is not surprising. No reviewer attempts a detailed thematic discussion. 'Work Suspended' is a complex and suggestive work with large areas of oblique semi-autobiographical reference. As I argue in my essay, it is perhaps only possible to analyse it in detail in the context of Waugh's biography. The 1942 text was a more overtly 'personal' document which the later revisions have successfully disguised and objectified.

'BRIDESHEAD REVISITED' (1945)

'Brideshead' was written while Waugh was on leave from the army during 1944 and the corrections were finished while he