

an early dependence on cliché--cliché used with the protective irony of tacit scare quotes, but cliché nonetheless.)

These senior scholars develop and extend arguments they have already made, well, elsewhere. Arguably the most original contribution to our knowledge of Waugh comes from John Howard Wilson, this journal's editor, who assembles the evidence about Waugh's negative attitudes to Winston Churchill and uses it to outline a new reading of the war trilogy as, in part, a systematic rewriting (complete with verbal parallels and allusions) of Churchill's history of *The Second World War*. Churchill turns out a signal maker of misguidedly "quantitative judgments," and Guy Crouchback, in his final confession to Mme Kanyi, finally recognizes and renounces the Churchillian in himself. Wilson develops his argument cautiously, careful not to claim too much. But his excellent discussion is not by itself enough to justify Robert Davis's hopeful introductory remarks to this book--to dissuade from the view that the best Wavians are now old.

Late and Getting Later

"Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and Other Late Novels," by Bernard Schweizer. *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel: 1945-2000*. Ed. Brian W. Shaffer. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 608 pp. \$149.95. Reviewed by Jonathan Pitcher, Bennington College

Following my review of his *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s* (see [Newsletter 36.1](#)), Bernard Schweizer was kind enough to strike up a correspondence and to send me his contribution to Blackwell's *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel: 1945-2000*, "Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and Other Late Novels" (254-65).

Of the three subdivisions, the first is a lengthy and perhaps necessary caveat on Waugh's classism, misogyny, and racism. The latter is given a more intricate airing in the lengthier *Radicals*, where Schweizer reads internal barbarism through the metropolises of *Remote People* and *A Handful of Dust*, in lieu of which the *Companion*'s brief, more acerbic introduction asks "So, why is Waugh still admired, read, and studied today?" (254). Recent biographies are dismissed as too anodyne on politics, an apparent oversight here given Waugh's escalating dependence on his own life as literary material. Such dependence receives much the same treatment as his aforementioned character flaws, with Schweizer suggesting that it "raises basic questions of creativity and literary merit" (258), as if we were reading in the wake of a unilateral, *a priori* decision regarding the constitution of lesser and more serious literature.

Having instigated a rhetorical structure in miniature that I perceive as an increasing trend in the broader field of Waughian studies, that of condemnation succeeded by apologia, in the second subdivision the predictable rehabilitation begins through the *Sword of Honour* trilogy, with Schweizer rescuing his subject as both a satirist and a war writer, only to be outdone by the final, glowing mini-chapter, almost entirely devoted to *Brideshead*. This section includes one of the piece's finer moments: "Ironically, Waugh's imagination (and hence, his income) thrived on the universal decline he lamented. *Brideshead* contains a shrewd meditation on that very paradox" (264). In the absence of modernity's barbarism, Waugh's counter-cultural critique would have lost its marginal bite. Although it would surely be hazardous to predict how his work would have changed without a prevailing atmosphere of decline, and for many society was following a logical, positivist line of sophisticated advancement as opposed to descending into anarchy, Schweizer is on the brink of revealing Waugh's present appeal through a marginality that is evermore marginalized and thus evermore mordant. On the brink, since instead of such revelation, we regress to the same terminology as before. Charles Ryder is reinscribed as a suitably modern, openly self-reflective character, "a credible anti-Catholic" (263), more "likeable" (265) before his conversion, and Julia's mettle salvages Waugh's misogyny, albeit through religion. Given Ryder's supposed post-conversion woodenness and all those prickly

Flytes, Schweizer concludes that “it is not a strategy likely to convert many to the tenets of Catholicism. But this could very well be the ultimate triumph of *Brideshead* – its refusal to yield to any doctrinaire religious complacency and instead to elevate the ‘fierce little human tragedy in which [Ryder] played’ (Penguin, 1998, 331) to the level of great secular art” (265). While this may be a laudable attempt to reassert the relevance of the past in the face of the present, to offer the book up to a more inclusive audience, unsuspecting readers may be rather taken aback when the second half of *Brideshead* proceeds to bash them over the head with its series of monolithic, overt, and indeed overriding moral exempla. Schweizer gains a pyrrhic victory, over-manipulating the book’s context in an act of cultural leveling that elides rather than accentuates difference. It may be that Waugh is still read and studied, despite some of his uglier baggage, precisely because of his lack of contemporaneity.

Waugh's View of Irish Priests Justified?

Evelyn Waugh: Brief History of a Genius, by Patrick J. Twohig. Ballincollig, County Cork: Tower Books, 2006. 58 pp. €9.95. Reviewed by Robert Murray Davis, University of Oklahoma.

Over almost forty years Paul Doyle and I have to my knowledge disagreed on only two occasions: once when I maintained, to Paul’s lasting irritation, that Ian Littlewood’s *The Writings of Evelyn Waugh* not entirely worthless, and once when, in our only physical meeting, he said that I looked like a tight end. All I could say was that standards in the east were somewhat lower than those at the University of Oklahoma.

Therefore, it is with great reluctance that I must maintain, in the face of Paul’s review in the last Newsletter (see [37.2](#)) that Patrick J. Twohig’s *Evelyn Waugh: Brief History of a Genius*, is, if not wholly worthless, almost entirely pernicious.

Leaving aside the incoherent structure and intrusion of irrelevant personal history, I will concentrate on what must, for lack of a better word, be called Twohig’s critical approach which is well the other side of idolatry. He maintains—I cannot force myself through the book again, so I rely on paraphrase—that Waugh was a genius, that every word he wrote was the product of genius, and therefore that every work is a work of genius. He also challenges the credentials of anyone who has not, as he has, read every word of Waugh and later denigrates as useless all commentary on Waugh, hostile or not.

If one is to be that self-important, one had better guard against error. Twohig is guilty of two errors by omission about Hemingway in one paragraph. First, it is clear, despite Twohig’s agnosticism on the issue, that Waugh had read Hemingway’s *Fiesta* (*The Sun Also Rises*). Second, not only did Waugh not dislike Hemingway but he publicly defended *Across the River and into the Trees* against its denigrators. Waugh did not add a different ending to *A Handful of Dust* because “The Yanks couldn’t take” the bleakness of the original—I assume that Twohig speaks of the serial version, not the U.S. edition of the novel, which is unchanged—but because he had already sold the magazine rights to “The Man Who Liked Dickens.” Not only did Waugh not deny the effect of his divorce on the second half of *Vile Bodies*, he explicitly comments on it in his preface to the New Uniform Edition—where he also says, *pace* Twohig, that the book was not one for which he had great affection.

Where Twohig is not wrong, he is irrelevant or superficial or both. To his credit, Paul Doyle is far more charitable than I, but I am surprised that he glosses over condemnation or dismissal of work that he, I, and many others have done over the years.

One further question. Is the William Boyd work that Paul says condemns Waugh the same as that which Jeffrey Manley reviews immediately below Paul’s piece? According to Manley, Boyd speaks more highly of Waugh as writer than as man. I am curious about his account of Cyril Connolly’s reading Waugh’s annotations of *An Unquiet Grave* at the University of Texas since I am the only witness, living or dead, to that unfortunate incident.