

## EVELYN WAUGH NEWSLETTER AND STUDIES

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## Evelyn Waugh and Cole Porter

by John Howard Wilson

Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania

In *De-Lovely* (2004), the recent biopic of Cole Porter, various artists interpret several of Porter's songs. These include "Night and Day," sung by Kevin Kline as Porter and John Barrowman, who is billed only as "Musical Performer" but who plays the role of Guy Holden in *Gay Divorce* (1932), originally performed by Fred Astaire. *De-Lovely* also features "So in Love," sung by Lara Fabian and Mario Frangoulis, who play Lilli Vanessi (Katherine) and Fred Graham (Petruchio) in *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948). After seeing these two works performed in the same film, I realized that they also coincide in the life and work of Evelyn Waugh.

In his biography of Waugh, Christopher Sykes states that Waugh, his wife Laura, and his brother Alec "went to the new musical *Kiss Me Kate*" in New York in the autumn of 1950: "Evelyn was entranced by this ingenious and admirable entertainment in which a conventional musical comedy was with great skill conjoined with a performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*" (449). In a letter written on 8 November 1950, Alec described the experience as a "gay rich evening" (Stannard 269). *Kiss Me, Kate* has been Porter's most popular musical, with memorable songs such as "Another Op'nin', Another Show," "Where is the Life that Late I Led?" and "Always True to You in My Fashion." The show opened in New York on 30 December 1948 and ran for 1077 performances until it closed on 28 July 1951 (Hutchins). Thus the Waughs saw *Kiss Me, Kate* well into its run, after it had been playing for about one year and ten months. The show's "principal backer" was Marguerite Cullman (McBrien 314), who had met Waugh on the train from Chicago to Los Angeles in February 1947 (Waugh, *Diaries* 672; Cullman 113-23; Stannard 186-8; Davis, *Mischief* 27-9), about a year before she became involved in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

After *Kiss Me, Kate* opened in London on 8 March 1951, Sykes continues, "Evelyn went to it at least half a dozen times." Waugh even took his daughter Teresa out of school to see the musical, on the pretext that they were attending a "Shakespeare matinée." Seeking "spiritual guidance" from Sykes, Waugh wondered whether he should "confess this ingenious duping of the nuns," and Sykes assured Waugh that he should (449-50). *Kiss Me, Kate* ran for 400 performances in London until it closed on 23 February 1952. Waugh's attendance is difficult to date, because he did not keep a diary between October 1948 and September 1952, and he does not mention *Kiss Me, Kate* in published correspondence. Waugh's enthusiasm is surprising, since he was not particularly musical, and he thought little of American culture. In London, moreover, reviews of *Kiss Me, Kate* were "mixed" (Eells 255), and the show closed after a little less than a year, less than half of its run in New York.

Perhaps it is only a coincidence, but in his next novel, Waugh uses a song by Cole Porter. Waugh wrote *Men at Arms* in 1951 (Stannard 292), while *Kiss Me, Kate* was playing in London. In March 1953, Waugh started *Officers and Gentlemen* (Stannard 326). The Pinfold delusions interrupted composition, but Waugh finished the novel early in November 1954 (Stannard 357). Only two weeks before, Waugh had written to his research assistant to request "a copy of the words of Cole Porter's 'Night and Day'" (*Letters* 431). In "In the Picture," Book Two of *Officers and Gentlemen*, Trimmer has fallen in love with Guy Crouchback's ex-wife Virginia. Ian Kilbannock tries to persuade Trimmer to talk to American journalists, but Trimmer prefers to sing: "'Night and day,' crooned Trimmer, 'you are the one. Only you beneath the moon and under the sun, in the roaring traffic's boom—'" (Waugh, *Sword* 440). Characteristically, Trimmer gets the words out of order. The lines after "sun" are "Whether near to me or far / It's no matter darling where you are / I think of you / Day and night...." The "roaring traffic's

boom” (one of Porter’s weaker rhymes) occurs in the next verse, the song’s second. After being interrupted by Kilbannock, Trimmer gets the next two lines right: “In the silence of my lonely room I think of you” (Waugh, *Sword* 440). Kilbannock decides to call Virginia, and Trimmer “lapse[s] into song,” the third verse: “There’s oh such a burning, yearning, churning under the hide of me” (Waugh, *Sword* 441). This time Trimmer conflates two lines, “Under the hide of me / There’s an oh such a hungry yearning burning inside of me.” Kilbannock tells Virginia that Trimmer “says there’s a voice within him keeps repeating, ‘You, you, you’” (Waugh, *Sword* 441), the last line of the introduction, which leads into the first verse of “Night and Day,” crooned by Trimmer at the beginning of this section.

Waugh’s dialogue reflects the circularity of the lyrics, as “Night and Day” is strongly linked from verse to verse. Dialogue also indicates why Virginia has tired of Trimmer: “Night and Day” is relatively long, and one critic called it a “tapeworm song” (Eells 99). Introduced in 1932, “Night and Day” became more and more popular in the 1930s, and it would have been a natural choice for Trimmer to sing in 1941, when the novel is set. The first biopic of Cole Porter was entitled *Night and Day* (1946), and Waugh may have seen the film. The song’s lyrics provide a link between two sections of the novel, as Guy goes through “Another day; another night” in the confusion of Crete, just before Trimmer croons “Night and Day.” Trimmer’s misplaced “under the hide of me” prepares for his meeting with American journalists. Kilbannock tells them that Trimmer is “a portent—the new officer which is emerging from the old hide-bound British Army,” though Joe Mulligan thinks Trimmer may be “high-bound” after all (Waugh, *Sword* 444). Waugh had taken the trouble to obtain the words to “Night and Day,” but he scrambled them to strengthen the link with the next section of the novel, to convey Trimmer’s lovesickness, and to emphasize Trimmer’s insecure grasp of details, also evident in his military training.

Waugh was not yet finished with “Night and Day.” In *Unconditional Surrender* (1961), Virginia realizes that she is pregnant with Trimmer’s child, and she tries to have it aborted. As she goes to find Dr. Akonanga, Virginia hears “sounds which could only be the beat of a tom-tom. Virginia climbed towards it thinking of Trimmer who had endlessly, unendurably crooned ‘Night and Day’ to her. The beat of the drum seemed to be saying: ‘You, you, you’” (Waugh, *Sword* 556). This passage deliberately echoes the opening lines of the introduction to “Night and Day”: “Like the beat-beat-beat of the tom-tom / When the jungle shadows fall,” quoted by Kilbannock when he describes Trimmer’s singing as “excruciating” (Waugh, *Sword* 563). After two more similes, the song’s introduction leads to the line echoed by Kilbannock in *Officers and Gentlemen*: “So a voice within me keeps repeating you, you, you.” Virginia notices, among other things, “a cock, decapitated but unplucked, secured with nails to the table top, its wings spread open like a butterfly’s” (Waugh, *Sword* 556). Dr. Akonanga refuses to perform the abortion, since he is “now in the government service” and “Democracy is at stake” (Waugh, *Sword* 557). That night Virginia has a dream: “she was extended on a table, pinioned, headless and covered with blood-streaked feathers, while a voice within her, from the womb itself, kept repeating: ‘You, you, you’” (Waugh, *Sword* 557). Waugh added the references to “Night and Day” after he had finished the manuscript of *Unconditional Surrender*, as Robert Murray Davis discovered: they not only “strengthen the Trimmer motif” but also “emphasize Virginia’s sense of doom” (*Evelyn Waugh* 316).

Virginia’s dream anticipates her death in the explosion of a German rocket. Virginia converts to Catholicism, confesses her sins, and gives birth, but Eloise Plessington was not “quite convinced that her new disposition would last.” Eloise believes that Virginia “was killed at the one time in her life when she could be sure of heaven—eventually” (Waugh, *Sword* 672). Purgatory goes unmentioned, but it is certainly suggested by Virginia’s dream of being pinned to a table, headless and bloody. In her dream, the baby in her womb is capable of speech, or telepathy, a feat that is superhuman, perhaps even divine. Virginia’s name, often said to be ironic, also recalls the Virgin Mary. The baby, eventually named Gervase Crouchback, may not be the Second Coming, but he does help to redeem Virginia, Guy, and Guy’s second wife, Domenica Plessington. Still in the womb, little Gervase keeps repeating “you, you, you,” emphasizing that the divine comedy becomes apparent through the salvation of individual souls,

in this case Virginia's (and the reader's?). As old Mr. Crouchback writes, "If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face'" (Waugh, *Sword* 491)--or head.

It seems fitting that Cole Porter (1891-1964) was the one American songwriter appreciated by Evelyn Waugh. Porter composed many memorable tunes, but he also wrote some of the most clever lyrics, and Waugh would have been attracted to Porter's words, rhymes, and humor. The two men shared several characteristics, such as fondness for the people Porter called "the rich rich" and reputations for being "a little snobbish" (Eells 35) and "easily bored" (Eells 191). Porter and Waugh also had many acquaintances in common, including Lady Diana and Sir Robert Abdy, Cecil Beaton, Lady Diana and Duff Cooper, Lady Cunard, Sir Charles and Lady Mendl, and Alexander Woollcott. It seems likely that each heard anecdotes of the other at dinners and parties. Indeed, Porter sometimes seems like a character out of Waugh's novels. Living in Paris in the 1920s, Porter invented the Fitches, an American couple supposed to be immensely rich, who appeared in gossip columns before Count Cincinnati did in *Vile Bodies* (1930). Porter visited Brick-top, who ran a night club in Paris, mentioned in *Labels* (1930), and he lived in three palazzos in Venice, like Lord Marchmain in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). Waugh passed through a homosexual phase and then married (twice); Porter married but remained homosexual. Porter's wife Linda owned a house in Paris at 13 rue Monsieur (McBrien 76-77); Nancy Mitford moved into 7 rue Monsieur in 1947 (Mosley 84), and Waugh often wrote to her there. Waugh converted to Roman Catholicism in 1930; in the mid 1940s, Porter started "to take instruction in Catholicism, but he never finished" (McBrien 395). Porter "seldom bothered to read fiction" in later years (Eells 22), and he seems not to have known Waugh's novels. Otherwise we might have had a lyric about Evelyn Waugh, but even Cole Porter could hardly have written anything more sophisticated than the use of "Night and Day" in *Sword of Honour*.

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### A Supplemental Bibliography of Evelyn Waugh, Part II

by Robert Murray Davis  
 University of Oklahoma

This is the second of three installments that supplement *A Bibliography of Evelyn Waugh* (1986), by Robert Murray Davis, Paul A. Doyle, Donat Gallagher, Charles E. Linck, and Winnifred M. Bogaards. For the first installment, see the [Newsletter 37.1](#). The numbers on the left correspond to the sequence introduced in the *Bibliography*. If anyone has more information about these or other publications, please contact the editor, [jwilson3@lhup.edu](mailto:jwilson3@lhup.edu).

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**Editor's Note:** The Newsletter has not had a Bibliographical Editor since 1998. If anyone is willing to take on this task, please contact the editor, [jwilson3@lhup.edu](mailto:jwilson3@lhup.edu).

## Book Reviews

### A Refreshing Aura

*Evelyn Waugh: Brief History of a Genius*, by Patrick J. Twohig. Ballincollig, County Cork: Tower Books, 2006. 58 pp. 9.95 € Reviewed by Paul A. Doyle, Nassau Community College, SUNY.

This is a short booklet by a native Irish priest who is an ardent admirer of Waugh's writings. This monograph is individualistic, anecdotal, digressive. Twohig, who has previously published important studies of the history and activities of the brutal Black and Tans in pre-Republic Ireland, presents some highlights in Waugh's life and devotes brief segments to discussing the novels and biographies, as well as *When the Going was Good*. There is little here that is new or revealing; the commentary would best serve introductory readers before they read the novels and then move on to the professional research studies.

Despite its prefatory aspect, there is a refreshing aura to Twohig's booklet because over the years Waugh and his work have often been unnecessarily battered from pillar to post for reasons having nothing to do with his talent.

In the 1970s, the nuns at a prestigious all-girls' Catholic college in Illinois cancelled their subscription to the *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter* because Waugh was opposed to the Vatican II changes, and they did not want their students contaminated by someone prominent who upheld traditionalism. A few years later, I learned that Notre Dame wouldn't subscribe because the then English Department chairman despised Waugh for his snobbery and discouraged students from doing research on his books. This was particularly ironic because the Notre Dame Library obtained a wonderful collection of Waugh first editions and related material as a result of a collector's bequest.

I came to Twohig's booklet fresh from reading an essay by William Boyd in the new Everyman's Library Series. With obvious irritation, Boyd belittles Waugh's talent and denigrates it to the level of a third-rate hack. Boyd appears to be totally ignorant of the excellent academic scholarship available on Waugh. Twohig is aware of the scholarship but admits he has largely ignored it and instead written a personal viewpoint. He does, however, perceptively and accurately answer the college nuns, the former ND chairman, and William Boyd in just a few words. Waugh, he concludes, was "a man of brilliance who wrote like an angel."

### Boyd on Waugh

*Bamboo*, by William Boyd. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005. 650 pp. £20.00. Reviewed by Jeffrey A. Manley.

William Boyd has never made any secret of his admiration for the writings of Evelyn



Waugh. In his recent compilation of articles, reviews, and other non-fiction, more entries are devoted to Waugh than to any other writer. These include introductions to *Labels* and *A Handful of Dust*, reviews of *Collected Travel Writing* and the *Brideshead Revisited* TV adaptation, as well as interviews and articles relating to Boyd's own TV adaptations of *Scoop* and *Sword of Honour*. There is a retrospective essay on Waugh's relations with Cyril Connolly as well as another on the occasion of Waugh's centenary. In all, nearly 50 pages are devoted to matters Wavian, published by Boyd from 1981 to 2003.

Boyd's most well-known connections to Waugh are probably his TV adaptations. He considers *Scoop* to be Waugh's "real masterwork" with "sequences of hilarious comic writing unrivalled in English literature" (610). He intended his adaptation to be very faithful to the original and was surprised when "Waugh pedants" savaged the TV play for deviating from the text (429). He was criticized for eliminating what he calls the "Badger joke," which he could not transfer to drama (429, 455).

Boyd is less defensive about his four-hour adaptation of *Sword of Honour*. The original plan was to have a six-hour version, and he wrote one accordingly. The decision to cut it to four hours actually made it better, in his opinion. Although bits were left out, in the "new format we were able to make the narrative lines more graceful and more telling" (430-1).

In another article Boyd contrasts Waugh's fictional description of the evacuation of British troops from Crete – the "big set-piece" of the TV production – with Waugh's assessment of his own role and that of his fellow officers. Waugh felt ashamed of his disgraceful flight from Crete along with his commanding officer, Colonel Robert Laycock. In the novel, Boyd finds "everything is subtly different." The Laycock character (Tommy Blackhouse) avoids doing a bunk as an injury keeps him out of action. Guy Crouchback remains on the beach, escaping at great risk in a small boat along with a few others. The blame in the novel falls on Ivor Claire, the "aristocratic warrior" Guy had previously idolized, who ignominiously flees. Notwithstanding this rewriting of events, Boyd finds that Waugh always remained "brutally honest with himself" in his own assessment of the Crete debacle (602-3).

Boyd also believes that *Sword of Honour* avoided the pitfalls of the *Brideshead* TV adaptation, where there was too much voiceover (429, 496). He considers *Brideshead* itself to be a seriously flawed novel and "in many respects [Waugh's] worst book" (490-4). The weaknesses of the novel contribute to the failure of the TV adaptation.

In the other articles, Boyd sets out his assessment of Waugh as both a person and a writer. Indeed, he does this several times, but that is the nature of such unedited collections. He considers *Labels* to be underrated and Waugh's "best and most fascinating" travel book, not least because it reflects Waugh's reaction to what was perhaps the most significant event in his life – the breakdown of his first marriage (154, 156). The impact of this event is reflected in some way in most of his subsequent works, including *A Handful of Dust*, where his portrayal of Brenda Last is so bleak as to be unbelievable, in Boyd's opinion. Boyd avers that Waugh wanted to avenge the betrayal and humiliating failure of his own marriage (224-5). Boyd finds *A Handful of Dust* to be structurally disjointed and generally overrated, in particular because the ending does not fit the story, a point Waugh himself also conceded to some extent in later editions, where he included an alternate ending used in American serialization of the novel (226-7).

In an essay on Cyril Connolly, Boyd undertakes an extensive comparison of Connolly and Waugh which does not work to Waugh's advantage. While admitting to oversimplification, Boyd contrasts Waugh's remake of himself "as a parodic Tory squire cum reactionary man of letters" with Connolly's remaining true to himself "however flawed or inadequate that self happened to be" (205). This comparison is sharply drawn and defends the vacillating Connolly against the stronger personality of Waugh. This attack on Waugh as a person seems inconsistent with Boyd's concentration on his impressive body of work. No one would suggest that Connolly left a greater literary legacy than Waugh did, no matter how much the latter may have struggled to make himself unlikeable as a person.

Boyd's centenary retrospective also contrasts Connolly and Waugh. It begins by recounting the 1971 University of Texas exhibition of twentieth-century first editions, where Connolly for

the first time saw Waugh's unflattering comments in his copy of *The Unquiet Grave*. Boyd sees this incident as a result of the persona Waugh created for himself in the later stages of his life, after the breakdown of Waugh's first marriage. This manufactured personality had many manifestations and was what Anthony Powell called "putting on a turn," something of which Connolly was also guilty but in different ways (609).

Boyd believes that Waugh's "elaborate construct" of his persona, along with publication of his diaries and letters as well as several detailed biographies, "have not helped his posthumous reputation: the man, I feel, has in recent years shouldered the work aside – the life has become more compelling than the fiction" (609-10). The religiosity of the later works (particularly the "flawed and self-serving" *Brideshead*) as well as the loss of comedic focus also contributed to a diminution of Waugh's literary reputation (611-12). Boyd declares "the four novels of 1928-38 [to be] continuously readable," excluding *Handful of Dust*. The world portrayed is "absurd and indifferent to man's fate" and the "comedy is triumphantly dark and pitiless" (611). Boyd urges readers to put aside the image Waugh sought to create for himself and recognize that his fiction contains elements that draw readers to all great novels. Waugh's work "tells truths about our human nature and the human condition." On balance, notwithstanding the reactionary "turn" he performed in later life, Boyd finds Waugh's work to show "an enduringly *modern* spirit (however paradoxical that adjective might seem when applied to Evelyn Waugh)," which "explains why the comic novels continue to beguile readers – provoking both laughter and serious reflection – and will continue to survive" (613).

While Boyd's assessment is neither comprehensive nor systematically developed, it is probably sound. What seems somewhat amiss is his failure to recognize either *Put Out More Flags* or *The Loved One* as among the most brilliant satirical novels of the twentieth century. They are perhaps dated but no more than the pre-war novels he finds continuously readable. Moreover, it is not clear why *Sword of Honour* is excluded from the canon. Aside from its somewhat superficial religiosity, which Boyd mentions, it contains some of the best narrative, characterization and storytelling that Waugh wrote. Finally, *Brideshead*, flawed though it may be as a work of literature, continues to be popular and is reported to be under consideration for another film (to be written not by Boyd but by Andrew Davies). And even Boyd seems to concede that Anthony Blanche and Ryder *père* (at least as performed in the TV series) are among Waugh's best comic creations (494). Aside from these blind spots, Boyd's assessment is well written, entertaining, and thought-provoking. And there is the bonus of nearly 600 pages of non-Wavian material that may provide equally enjoyable reading.

## Quick Fixes

*The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs*, by Marcus Boon. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002. 339 pp. \$16.95. Reviewed by Jonathan Pitcher, Bennington College.

When I first saw the movie of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, it played to a packed house at the Rialto in South Pasadena. Within ten minutes, amidst whispers bemoaning the lack of subtitles, the theater had all but emptied, with a just a few stragglers forcing themselves to make sense of the caustic language and content. Making drugs intelligible, or rather charting their principles of intelligibility, is Marcus Boon's purview here.

His process is one of breadth as opposed to depth, premised on writing at the threshold of reality and the imagination. He recognizes early and often that while drugs, in and of themselves, are perhaps mildly titillating for a few moments, it would be difficult to sustain a book-length narrative without appendages. Following Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*, in which despite our supposed sophistication prior belief systems have a habit of cropping up in the present, Boon opts for a multifarious narrative, running discourses from

several fields in parallel throughout: “What is called the Romantic attitude to drugs (usually personified by De Quincey) is in fact a much more complicated matrix of historical, cultural, and scientific developments” (6). In *Loves of the Plants*, the physician Erasmus Darwin (please assume that everyone I mention henceforth experienced at least one psychoactive substance or another unless stated otherwise) includes poems with his taxonomies, Coleridge planned an epic on medieval alchemy (91), *Doctor Syntax in Paris* “would appear to contain the earliest known record of dental anesthesia” (94), “Proust’s mind and body were constantly awash in a sea of chemicals that produced precisely the kind of cognitive movements that he describes in his books” (104), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Jekyll and Hyde* are read through their respective authors’ use of cocaine (195, 182), a paper by the surgeon William Halsted in the *New York Medical Journal* does indeed sound more like Jack Kerouac’s Dean Moriarty than science (184), Aldous Huxley--beyond his biologist grandfather, the *Doors of Perception*, and *Brave New World*--advised Timothy Leary on his psychological experiments with mushrooms at Harvard (262), only for William Burroughs to dismiss the research as inadequate, the chemists Alexander and Ann Shulgin allocate much of their books on phenethylamines and tryptamines “to a fictional retelling of the author’s [*sic*] lives, meeting, and subsequent adventures” (271), and even overtly anti-drug literary movements such as Surrealism are defined through their very opposition. With this broad, evidently plausible, hybrid spectrum in place, spanning everything from Homer to the present, from the culturally high to the low, from the Lake District’s potent laudanum brew, Kendal Black Drop, to crack in contemporary New York, the cipher in the drugs-literature-science triad is the latter, exchangeable for other apparently stable discourses with similar results. At times, it is a contextualized, political study, re-viewing the Russian Revolution through addiction in M. Ageyev’s *Novel with Cocaine*, Antonin Artaud’s trip to Mexico as both a thwarted quest for post-revolutionary, indigenous restoration and a more successful discovery of peyote, speed as the system-defying drug of choice for the British working class, stimulants as “weapons in a race war, just as they were elements of a class war for punks – part of a militarization of the body” (211), fascist ideology’s reliance on psychedelics to access some primordial past, or Allen Ginsberg’s version of “drugs as political agents capable of altering mass consciousness” (261) as “not so different from the CIA’s” (261). For politics, substitute economics, in the guise of De Quincey’s “philosophic master ... David Ricardo” (39), opium as “a product of the marketplace” (85), morphine as “a status symbol” (49), and Angelo Mariani’s cocaine-based wine as “the matrix of stimulant, exoticism, advertising, and worldwide distribution ... carried forward into the twentieth century by Coca-Cola” (179). Boon’s more extensive point in reconstructing this mythically real *mélange*, whether referring to science, politics, or economics, is that “consciousness is mutable” (273), but our “imagination materializes” (237) and vice versa. He concludes, with typical breadth, that “the biochemical mapping of all aspects of our lives will continue” (277). For now, I am less interested in argument than approach, however, and merely hope to have offered a hint of the book’s deliberately shifting *modus operandi*.

While there are many possible genealogies, Boon’s chapters are divided by drug. He proves levelheaded. The tone is expository, never sanguinely endorsing one substance or rabidly prosecuting another. Opium and its derivatives seem to induce a false transcendence and prove more hazardous than most, the anesthetics are artistically disappointing, cannabis’s danger is that it exists on the cusp of the social, the stimulant machine complies with the twentieth century’s obsession with speed, and psychedelics tempt the user to believe that the act of taking them is creative. The material, even anecdotally, speaks for itself, providing a litany of disaffected, solipsistic figures. Voltaire became enraged by laudanum on his deathbed, thus hastening his demise. Walter Scott was unable to remember writing *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Coleridge called opium a “free-agency-annihilating Poison” (36). Wilkie Collins “bragged on occasion ... that the wine glass of laudanum he was in the habit of taking had killed one of his servants who had foolishly tried to imitate him” (42). Stanislas de Guaita “was found in the toilets at the Place Maubert, unconscious, at the age of thirty, ... with a syringe in his pocket, and died two days later at the Pitié Salpêtrière” (52), Géza Csáth “hired a detective to follow his family, and

finally shot his wife with a revolver in front of their infant daughter” (59), Burroughs shot his “in a drunken game of William Tell” (78), René Daumal, surrealist and experimenter with carbon tetrachloride, “died at the age of thirty-six from tuberculosis” (113), whereas Lester Bangs’s addiction progressed from cough syrup to amphetamines and “his death, at the age of thirty-four, appears to have been the result of an overdose of the sedatives Darvon and Valium” (205). On a lighter note, Freud’s sweet nothings to Bernays include “I will kiss you quite red and feed you till you are plump. And if you are forward, you shall see who is stronger, a gentle little girl who doesn’t eat enough or a big wild man who has cocaine in his body” (183). Remarkably, the only voice of reason permeating the book is that of Michel Foucault: “‘Drugs,’ scowled Foucault, ‘have nothing to do with truth or falsity: only to fortunetellers do they reveal a world more truthful than the real’” (237). For many, and Boon makes this point on several occasions, it seems that drugs simply offered material, whether real or metaphorical, for books that would otherwise have been rather blank.

The argumentation, if the reader cares to piece it together, works paradoxically, either through drugs’ internal *aphanisis* or through their inherent connection to other discourses. Use, though apparently self-destructive, requires at least some sense of order, the discipline necessary to afford, find, prepare, and administer such substances. Baudelaire’s poetry shuns material conditions yet required drugs’ material assistance in order to write it. If the premise is to forsake the body in favor of a more transcendental self, then how does one explain away the body’s chemical mutation in order to achieve it? In the case of morphine, as Boon has it, “the body was transcended only to be replaced by another kind of body, that of a morphine addict, which, far from being freed from the repugnant qualities of the material world, was ever more reliant on precisely the set of forces that it sought to escape” (53). Once high, it seems difficult for the user to distinguish between moments of true and false (since drug-induced) gnosis. Excess stunts excess. Dr Paolo Mantegazza’s experimentation with coca leaves did indeed lead to high-speed thought, but “no corresponding complexity of mental imagery accompanied it” (178). There is even an intermittent argument suggesting that our dependence on drugs in order to flee from reality merely produces more progressive science and therefore more of the reality we were fleeing from in the beginning.

Beyond this immediate dependence, communicating the experience in the lulls between the highs is similarly self-defeating, pushing “the limits of language only to find itself within language” (242). Drugs are still in need of some form of symbology, whether we prefer *Junkie*’s glossary, Sartre’s italics, or Daumal’s absurd “Tem gwef tem gwef dr rr rr” (115). They are also reliant, contrary to the more radical claims, upon the medical establishment, which is often ahead of the writers in terms of experimentation and “can now produce *normative* states” (277). As Burroughs himself admits, “there’s not much variation in narcotic addiction itself” (84), so again, however criminal such activities may appear, they are also tied to the state’s shifting legal machinery in order to produce new material. In 1937, Harry Anslinger, the commissioner of the Federal Narcotics Bureau, references both the *Odyssey* and *Marco Polo’s Travels* in an invective against marihuana, thus institutionalizing literature as an anti-drug. The same bureau then proceeded to lambaste a series of anti-marihuana publications for being “too sensationalist” (157). Users have their own internal moral codes, via which some substances are suitable and others are either reactionary or newfangled, depending on one’s perspective. Even if we assume that we have escaped institutionalization through a neo-Nietzschean sickness-is-health argument, cunningly inverting society’s terms, it turns out that Baudelaire “chose to celebrate and even market moral failure” (46) long ago, and that a similar version of “the sublime plays a major role in a large portion of our cultural and recreational industries – from Hollywood thrillers to bungee jumping” (38). Whether any of these, and particularly drugs, satisfy a postmodern craving for a replacement for religion is debatable, but the moral awareness, the quest for even pseudo-gnosis, remains. The Asian mystery surrounding Romanticism’s fascination with opium is portrayed as but another form of reductive Orientalism, one that becomes particularly sinister from a postcolonial perspective when applied to North American xenophobia regarding Mexican immigration and marihuana. In short, Boon exposes the fallacy of drugs as a counterculture. Queen Victoria used anesthesia in childbirth, in the

twenties “the typical narcotics user ... was not a wide-eyed, thrill-seeking young person, but usually a middle-aged or elderly person who had become addicted in the course of medical therapy” (63), amphetamines were offered to U.S. troops in the Korean War, and the vice president of J. P. Morgan was on psychedelics in the fifties. As Boon avers, “the world is not a neutral space” (216).

My qualm is that all of the above is undersold. This is partly mechanical, but to such an extent that it affects the content. Boon attempts to absolve himself from critical concerns in the initial pages, warning that “Those who read this book hoping for a neatly packaged answer to ‘the drug problem,’ or a clever all-encompassing theory about the relationship between drugs and literature, will be disappointed” (14), but the random, staccato style and open-ended thought prove at best frustrating and at worst flaccid, hijacking the reader rather than constructing “an assemblage in the Deleuzian sense” (8). Where Deleuze had immanence as a unifying principle, Boon has drugs, a pathological old boys’ club, when perhaps at least a little more theoretical gravitas would have directed the arguments more convincingly. The snippets of information read like a series of embryonic ideas that never quite gel with each other and never reach fruition in their own right, which means the whole is less than the sum of its parts. There is surely a danger, given this subject, in becoming one’s material, yet we are quickly confronted with the rhetorical question “Is it possible to overdose on books?” (2). One of the reasons Foucault steals the limelight is that, regardless of how one may feel about the Foucauldian project, there is an obvious plan and highly polished prose. Boon could use more scowling himself. By no means a comprehensive history (while the reviewer from the *New Scientist*, cited on the back cover, may think that Will Self is included, he is nowhere to be found), nor a theoretical treatise, it is perhaps best described as annotated anthology, or a rehashed dissertation. Much of it would not even be considered *lit. crit.* in the conventional sense. Why not either write a longer, more comprehensive history, or a shorter, more detailed study of one of the plethora of potential arguments (on religion, morality, postcolonialism, politics and, of course, drugs) strewn across these pages? The relative and explicit absence of theory means that primary reading dominates, obscuring the secondary and tertiary fields on the subject. What was wrong with Lawrence Driscoll’s *Reconsidering Drugs: Mapping Victorian and Modern Drug Discourses*, or Eijun Senaha’s *Sex, Drugs, and Madness in Poetry from William Blake to Christina Rossetti: Women’s Pain, Women’s Pleasure*, or John Lardas’ *The Bop Apocalypse: The Religious Visions of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs*, or *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction*, by Janet Brodie and Marc Redfield, all of which were readily available when *The Road of Excess* was but a manuscript? While a cautious introduction is no doubt prudent, Boon ventures that “Iceberg Slim, Colette, and Martin Heidegger all confront being through their writings in their own ways, and I for one would have to think very carefully before I chose which one of them I would like to be my guide to its mysteries” (8), yet he is about to become our guide to this very dilemma. He sets out what he achieves and then more or less complies with it, rather than vice versa. Although we are promised a rehistoricized view of drugs that will encompass antiquity and the Renaissance, with Boon deriding the lack of criticism on drug use in Milton *et al.* (221), there are only sporadic mentions of the premodern, and De Quincey and Burroughs (i.e., an easily intelligible, recreational version of drugs) dominate the book. It is not quite enough to isolate texts where dream and reality intersect, without explaining the intersection. If we accept that Proust’s writing was influenced more by chemicals than a madeleine (104), or that Burroughs sought “a proliferation of alternative methods of attaining gnosis” (86) beyond narcotics, my questions are “so what?” and “such as?” respectively, neither of which is even remotely answered via these guerrilla tactics that ensure that no risks are taken. Is the real reason for reading merely to shock, to overdose, as the introduction implies?

On a lighter note, some of the micro-mechanics may prove irritating. From my perspective, the difficulty with apostrophes, titles in Spanish, and the misquoting of Mark E. Smith in the epigraph (Boon has it as “The palace of excess leads to the palace of excess”, thus corroborating later paradoxes, whereas it should read “The palace of excess leads to the palace of access”, yet another endorsement of self-glorification) are among the more irksome.

Sadly, there is no Waugh. The most obvious rationale would be that these characters are

more hardcore than just a tad “tight,” but I would also like to think that the irony of paradoxes would be deflated by the inclusion of the ironist *par excellence*, one who had already and repeatedly turned excess against itself long before Boon. Reading this book is more akin to catching a glimpse of the low-end dealers on the corner of your block, or at the park; mildly interesting, perhaps even suggestive at first, though ultimately just a bunch of youths in anoraks in need of a shower. It’s methadone to Waugh’s heroin.

### **Evelyn Waugh Conference**

The Evelyn Waugh Conference scheduled for 21-23 June 2007 in Montpellier, France has had to be cancelled. We are now looking for an alternate site. If you have an idea, please contact [jwilson3@lhup.edu](mailto:jwilson3@lhup.edu). Proposals for papers can be sent to Professor Joseph V. Long, Portland State University, UNST, P. O. Box 751, Portland OR 97207, USA, or [jlong@pdx.edu](mailto:jlong@pdx.edu). More details will be forthcoming.

### **Evelyn Waugh Undergraduate Essay Contest**

Through the generosity of an anonymous patron, *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* is able to sponsor the second annual Evelyn Waugh Undergraduate Essay Contest. Entries should be sent by 31 December 2006 to Dr. John H. Wilson, Department of English, Lock Haven University, Lock Haven PA 17745, USA. The editorial board will choose a winner, to be announced in the Newsletter for Spring 2007. The prize is \$250.

### **Evelyn Waugh Society**

The [Evelyn Waugh Society](#) now has 52 members. Founding memberships have been extended at least until the Evelyn Waugh Conference in June 2007. The [Evelyn Waugh Discussion List](#) has 24 members.

### **BBC Drama of *Brideshead Revisited***

The BBC Radio 4 dramatization of *Brideshead Revisited*, broadcast in 2003, can be downloaded from <http://www.audible.com> for \$20.35. CD's can be purchased at <http://www.bbcshop.com> for £15.99.

### **Paris Review Interview**

Julian Jebb's 1963 interview with Evelyn Waugh for the *Paris Review* is available as a PDF file, along with the reproduction of a manuscript page from *Basil Seal Rides Again* (1963), at <http://www.theparisreview.com/viewinterview.php/prmMID/4537>.

### **Early Film of *Vile Bodies***

On 31 July 1939, the BBC broadcast *Table d'Hôte*, a made-for-TV film based in part on *Vile Bodies* (1930). On the [Internet Movie Database](#), Evelyn Waugh is credited as one of six writers

(for the "novel Doubting Hall"), along with H. Dennis Bradley, who adapted *Vile Bodies* for the stage in 1932. Nadine March appeared as Nina, Sebastian Shaw as Adam, and Athole Stewart as Colonel Blunt (*sic*) in the Doubting Hall "section" or "segment." *Table d'Hote* was filmed in black-and-white and lasted seventy minutes. The Newsletter would welcome more information about this film.

### ***The Loved One* on DVD**

Warner Home Video has released a DVD version of *The Loved One* (1965), the film based on Evelyn Waugh's novel. The DVD is available for \$19.98.

### ***Warning Shadows* on DVD**

*Warning Shadows: A Nocturnal Hallucination*, the German film originally titled *Chatten: Eine Nchtliche Halluzination* (1923), has been released on DVD by Kino on Video. In *Brideshead Revisited*, Anthony Blanche compares Sebastian's friend Kurt with "the footman in 'Warning Shadows'" (Little, Brown, 204). By "footman," Anthony seems to mean "a servant" played by Eugen Rex. *Warning Shadows* is available from [Kino](#) for \$22.46.

### ***Fathers and Sons***

Donat Gallagher published a review of Alexander Waugh's book *Fathers and Sons* in *Quadrant*, Vol. XLIX, No. 5 (May 2005). Entitled "...and Waugh Begat Waugh...", the review is available online at [http://www.quadrant.org.au/php/article\\_view.php?article\\_id=1085](http://www.quadrant.org.au/php/article_view.php?article_id=1085).

*Fathers and Sons* will be published in the United States by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday on Fathers' Day, 17 June 2007. \_

### ***Waugh in the New Partisan***

Evelyn Waugh's life and career are reconsidered, none too kindly, in "Sponge Cakes with Gooseberry Fool? Evelyn Waugh was Odd," by Lincoln MacVeagh in the *New Partisan: A Journal of Culture, Arts & Politics*. The essay was posted on 6 March 2006, and it can be found at <http://www.newpartisan.com>. Comments can be posted.

### ***Elegantly Coarse Language***

Professor Emeritus Colin A. Baker is working on the biography of an English colonial governor (1909-1998), and he has been surprised by the governor's elegantly coarse language in private correspondence with both men and women. Professor Baker has written the biographies of three other colonial governors, and he has not encountered such language before. The first comparison that came to mind was Evelyn Waugh. At the suggestion of some scholars on the [Evelyn Waugh Discussion List](#), Professor Baker is considering the characterization of Lady Circumference in *Decline and Fall* (1928), Waugh's correspondence with the Lygon sisters in the 1930s, the controversy over upper-class ("U") language in the 1950s, and the novels of Nancy Mitford. There may be other lines of inquiry, however. Professor Baker can be contacted at [cabaker@glam.ac.uk](mailto:cabaker@glam.ac.uk).

### Interview with Charles Ryder

Professor Paul A. Doyle, editor emeritus of the Newsletter, has extra copies of David Bittner's article "After *Brideshead Revisited*: Charles Ryder Turns 102," published in the *Nassau Review* in 2005. If you would like a free copy, please contact Professor Doyle, 161 Park Avenue, Williston Park NY 11596, USA.

### Letters from the Demon Don

In "The Importance of Not Being Earnest" in the *Sunday Times* for 16 July 2006, Christopher Silvester reviewed *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, edited by Richard Davenport-Hines (Weidenfeld, £20). Trevor-Roper and Evelyn Waugh publicly argued about Catholicism in the 1950s, and Waugh dubbed him "the demon don." Silvester's review is available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2102-2264598.html>.

### Celebrity Cipher

Evelyn Waugh was part of the solution in "Celebrity Cipher," a puzzle distributed by the Newspaper Enterprise Association on 8 August 2006. The puzzle involves solving a cryptogram "created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another." The quotation from Waugh: "I put the words down and push them a bit."

### Waugh in the Lists

To celebrate their sixtieth anniversary, Penguin Classics has chosen their 100 best books and divided them into twenty arbitrary categories. Two novels by Evelyn Waugh are included. *Vile Bodies* (1930) appears in the Best Decadence, along with *The Great Gatsby*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Against Nature*. *Scoop* (1938) appears in the Best Laughs, along with *Cold Comfort Farm*, *Diary of a Nobody*, *The Pickwick Papers*, and *Lucky Jim*. The other choices can be viewed at [Penguin Classics](#).

In "Our Pick of the Perfect Penguins" on 3 August 2006, *The Times* chose *Scoop* as the best of the Best Laughs. The article can be viewed at [The Times](#).

In yet another list, *Time Magazine*'s best English-language novels since 1923, Waugh again appears twice, with *A Handful of Dust* (1934) and *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). The list was announced on 16 October 2005, and it can be viewed at [Time](#).

### Betjeman Centenary

The centenary of Sir John Betjeman, Poet Laureate and friend of Evelyn Waugh, was observed on 28 August 2006. More information is available at <http://www.johnbetjeman.com>.

**End of Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies, Vol. 37, No. 2**

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