



“A Handful of Mischief”

New Essays on Evelyn Waugh

Edited by Donat Gallagher,
Ann Pasternak Slater,
and John Howard Wilson



Evelyn Waugh in his library at Piers Court in 1950. This photograph by Douglas Glass appeared in "Portrait Gallery" in the *Sunday Times*, January 7, 1951. Waugh had recently published *Helena* (1950), and he was about to start writing *Men at Arms* (1952), the first volume of the trilogy that became *Sword of Honour* (1965). © J. C. C. Glass

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*To Alexander Waugh,
who keeps the show on the road*

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Acknowledgments

THESE ESSAYS WERE ORIGINALLY PRESENTED AT THE EVELYN WAUGH CENTENARY Conference, held at Hertford College, Oxford, September 24–27, 2003. Many people contributed to the success of the conference, and we would like to thank them.

Craig Dean Willis, then President of Lock Haven University, and Roy Stewart, then Provost of LHU, both provided grants that helped to pay for planning, printing, and facilities. A grant from the LHU Faculty Professional Development Committee enabled one of the editors to travel to Oxford.

The conference began with a visit to Castle Howard in Yorkshire, one of the locations used in the 1981 television series and the 2008 film based on *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). Heather Eisenhut organized a private tour of the house and grounds, and Michael Johnston secured accommodations at the Old Lodge Hotel in Malton.

At Hertford College, Julie Dearden, the Director of International Programmes and Conferences, arranged rooms and meals for fifty people. Sebastian Perry, K. J. Gilchrist, Peter Christensen, Eulália Carceller Guilamet, Mark Dittman, and Marcel DeCoste chaired sessions devoted to film, travel, religion, modernism, *Brideshead Revisited*, and the Second World War. Patrick Denman Flanery and Sebastian Perry gave tours of the city and the university. Through Patrick's membership in the Oxford Union, confreres were able to enter the library, where Evelyn Waugh wrote part of *Rossetti* (1928), and the debating hall, where he spent many evenings as an undergraduate. Fr. Gerard Hughes, SJ, and Fr. Nicholas King, SJ, guided groups through Champion Hall, still supported by royalties from Waugh's *Edmund Campion* (1935).

Waugh wrote part of *Black Mischief* (1932) at Madresfield Court in Worcestershire, and Lady Morrison opened her home to the conference. We also visited Waugh's home, Piers Court in Gloucestershire, and the owner, Mrs. D'Arcy, refreshed us with a cream tea. That evening, at a

gala dinner in the Hall of Hertford College, Alexander Waugh gave a rousing speech; renewed his grandfather's attack on his tutor, C. R. M. F. Cruttwell; and answered numerous questions. One of Evelyn Waugh's granddaughters, Claudia FitzHerbert, also attended.

On the last evening of the conference, we dined at the Spread Eagle Hotel at Thame. The proprietor, David Barrington, served Alexandra cocktails and Mavrodaphne trifle (among other things), as in *Brideshead Revisited*.



For permission to use copyrighted material, we thank the Estate of Evelyn Waugh, the Estate of Laura Waugh, the Wylie Agency, the Orion Publishing Group, the BBC Written Archives Centre, Penguin Books Ltd, Oxford University Press, J. C. C. Glass, Jeremy Front, and Little, Brown and Company.

Abbreviations

<i>ALL</i>	<i>A Little Learning</i> , 1964
<i>ALO</i>	<i>A Little Order</i> , 1977
<i>BM</i>	<i>Black Mischief</i> , 1932
<i>BR</i>	<i>Brideshead Revisited</i> , 1945
<i>Campion</i>	<i>Edmund Campion</i> , 1935
<i>CSEW</i>	<i>The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh</i> , 1999
<i>CSS</i>	<i>The Complete Short Stories and Selected Drawings</i> , 1998
<i>D&F</i>	<i>Decline and Fall</i> , 1928
<i>DEW</i>	<i>The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh</i> , 1976
<i>EAR</i>	<i>The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh</i> , 1983
<i>EB</i>	<i>The End of the Battle</i> , 1961
<i>Helena</i>	<i>Helena</i> , 1950
<i>Knox</i>	<i>Ronald Knox</i> , 1959
<i>Labels</i>	<i>Labels</i> , 1930
<i>LEW</i>	<i>The Letters of Evelyn Waugh</i> , 1980
<i>MW&MS</i>	<i>Mr Wu & Mrs Stitch: The Letters of Evelyn Waugh & Diana Cooper</i> , 1992
<i>RuL</i>	<i>Robbery under Law</i> , 1939
<i>Scoop</i>	<i>Scoop</i> , 1938
<i>SoH</i>	<i>Sword of Honour</i> , 1965
<i>TL</i>	<i>Two Lives</i> , 2001
<i>Tourist</i>	<i>A Tourist in Africa</i> , 1960
<i>WiA</i>	<i>Waugh in Abyssinia</i> , 1936
<i>WTGWG</i>	<i>When the Going Was Good</i> , 1946

Introduction

Robert Murray Davis

DURING THE 1980s, AS VARIOUS SCHOLARS WERE TRYING TO COME TO informed if not definitive conclusions about values, structures, and meanings in Evelyn Waugh's work and about its possible place in the canon of twentieth-century fiction and, more broadly, of comic and satiric fiction, more and more material was becoming available. Since then, scholars in various countries have published hundreds of books, articles, and notes on Waugh, more than a hundred listed in the *MLA International Bibliography* since 2003 (with an unaccountable gap between that date and 1998), and one veteran Waugh scholar maintains that nothing more remains to be said about him. Fortunately, participants at the Evelyn Waugh Centenary Conference at Hertford College, Oxford, came to a different conclusion in 2003. Since Waugh's memory could not be fully honored without at least a touch of irony, the conference was organized by an American scholar, and most of the speakers were from the European, North American, and Australian continents, none held in high esteem by the subject under discussion. Meals and some sessions were conducted under the glowering portrait of C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, Waugh's disapproving tutor, whose name became a byword for incompetence or worse not only in Waugh's prose but also in the speech by Waugh's grandson, Alexander.

This selection of papers from the conference, aptly entitled "*A Handful of Mischief*," shows that there is much more to be said about Evelyn Waugh. Four papers study the contexts in which Waugh's work was written and by which it can be better understood. Another five use recent theory to illuminate and, in some cases surprisingly, to defend Waugh against tired charges of snobbery, racism, religious intolerance, and other politically incorrect attitudes laid against him by Edmund Wilson, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and a host of less talented stylists going back more than sixty years.

For at least half of that time, Donat Gallagher searched libraries all over the world to discover long-buried work like an article for *Catholic Mother* and an interview in the *Uganda Herald*, and he dug even more deeply in the archives of the Vatican and the War Office. As a result, he knows more about Waugh's life and work than all of his biographers put together. Much of Gallagher's labor has consisted of attempts to correct gross and at times seemingly willful misstatements of fact. He has been particularly diligent in trying to correct the numerous errors in Martin Stannard's two-volume biography, notably about Waugh's testimony before the ecclesiastical court that finally granted the annulment of his marriage to Evelyn Gardner and about Waugh's much-maligned war record. Waugh served with the Commandos in Crete and wrote about his experience in the *Sword of Honour* trilogy. In "Guy Crouchback's Disillusion: Crete, Beevor, and the Soviet Alliance in *Sword of Honour*," Gallagher considers whether Waugh and his commanding officer, Robert Laycock, acted legally and honorably in leaving the island, thus avoiding capture. Gallagher admits, "It may seem ponderous . . . to counter this lively story with documented argument. But to answer one assertion with another is not productive." His argument is based on four issues: what Laycock did during the evacuation and whether Waugh recorded those actions truthfully in the War Diary, whether the historian Antony Beevor's charges have any merit, why Waugh reacted so strongly after the Cretan campaign in referring to dishonor, and whether or not Beevor increases our understanding of the trilogy.

John Howard Wilson's "A Walking Tour of Evelyn Waugh's Oxford" is no less detailed, but it is geographically rather than intellectually complex, literally pedestrian, since it stemmed from an actual tour during the conference. For those not familiar with Oxford, two points become apparent. First, to those accustomed to the sprawling campuses of American universities, the colleges that compose the university are surprisingly compact. To reach the Union from Hertford, Waugh would have had to walk about two blocks. The Bodleian Library is across the street, Blackwell's Book Shop just around the corner, C. M. Bowra at Wadham College half a block up Parks Road. Wilson very usefully traces the movements of characters in *Brideshead Revisited*, points out important landmarks in Waugh's university career—not all of them on the map, but easily located—and identifies people and places that Waugh used frequently—some, such as Cruttwell, almost promiscuously—throughout his career of four decades.

Richard W. Oram provides a different kind of walking tour, of Waugh's library, now at the Harry Ransom Center (known to old hands as the Hu-

manities Research Center) at the University of Texas at Austin. Waugh's taste for Victoriana seemed odd until it became fashionable just before the middle of the last century, and Oram notes the number of books that "re-late in some way to ornamentation, because this is precisely what Waugh valued so much in Victorian books, furniture, and art." Oram concludes that Waugh's love of books and other possessions was, as were his relationships with people, tempered by his fear "of being swallowed up . . . and thereby losing his identity."

As do Gallagher and Oram, Patrick Denman Flanery dives into archives—in this case of the BBC to examine Lance Sieveking's radio script for the 1956 broadcast of *Brideshead Revisited*. Both the script and preliminary publicity, Flanery demonstrates, present "the story as a chiefly secular microcosm of upper-class life, with reference neither to Roman Catholicism nor to Charles's adulterous relationship with Julia, and only a deftly inconclusive description of Charles and Sebastian's friendship and their Oxford milieu." Anthony Blanche, Celia, and less colorful secondary characters are diminished or deleted entirely; added dialogue introduces "arch class caricature." Flanery notes, perceptively, that the broadcast version plays an important part in the study of the novel's reputation. The Home Service, a middlebrow outlet between the more prestigious Third Programme and the Light Programme, gave *Brideshead* a "downward positioning in the popular consciousness," and "its further popularization at the hands of Granada Television's ITV-broadcast adaptation has aided its construction, at least in Britain, as rather mediocre melodramatic entertainment: a window on the eccentricities of the English upper-classes, and specifically on that even smaller minority of the Catholic upper-classes."

General readers and more advanced students of Waugh may be attracted to essays that offer new or more complex interpretations of his work by using new or neglected critical approaches. Peter G. Christensen's "Homosexuality in *Brideshead Revisited*: 'Something quite remote from anything the [builder] intended'" offers a provocative new interpretation of the relationship between Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte, and readers who become fully engaged in his argument will find themselves surprised and enlightened. Christensen argues that whereas Sebastian is gay, Charles is not; that Charles's narration is guided by unconscious "homosexual panic"; and that Sebastian's apparent withdrawal from Charles is due less to his alcoholism than to depression resulting from his awareness that "Charles [has] escaped from Sebastian's 'solitude,' his feeling of isolation as a young gay man." Furthermore, Charles's journey

to faith occurs not through his successive loves for Sebastian and Julia but through Lord Marchmain's deathbed conversion, facilitated by the celibate Father Mackay. It is clear that the end of the novel, in which there will be no dynastic heir to Brideshead Castle, supports Christensen's case that "conversion, not procreation, ensures the survival of the Christian church."

The concept of conversion includes not just formal submission but also spiritual awakening; it can also be a thematic and structural device, as in John W. Mahon's "A Later Development': Evelyn Waugh and Conversion." *Brideshead* is only a small factor in Mahon's argument that conversion is central not only to this novel, *Helena*, and *Sword of Honour*, but also to Waugh's biographies of Edmund Campion and Ronald Knox, to Waugh's own conversion to Catholicism, and indeed to his view of the church as providing not a refuge from the outer world but a whole new universe in which the world and the individual can be transformed. Mahon shows that Waugh presents the actual process of conversion only for secondary characters, normally preferring to show the effect in characters' lives.

Both Irina Kabanova and Marcel DeCoste maintain that *Helena* offers clues to reading Waugh's work as a whole. Using Michel Foucault as a starting point for analyzing institutions of power, Kabanova examines Helena's statement about "Power without Grace"—who better qualified than a Russian to do so?—in light not only of that novel but also of *Edmund Campion*. Her analysis of the marionette/dummy metaphor can be applied not only to Queen Elizabeth and Constantine, foils to Waugh's eponymous saints, but also to characters such as Professor Otto Silenus in *Decline and Fall* and in much of Waugh's later work. DeCoste argues that *Helena* "seriously challenges the simple equation of Waugh's faith with elitist nostalgia" and that its "flagrant and obtrusive anachronisms foreground an historical sensibility at odds with this equation," showing not decline and fall but recurrence relieved only by incursions of the divine into the temporal.

DeCoste concludes that *Helena* "offers us a Waugh interestingly at variance with portraits, not excluding his own, depicting *him* as an anachronism, a Jacobite lost in the twentieth century and mourning the irreparable passing of a worthier culture, a truer civilization." This project of redeeming Waugh, even from himself, is continued in Lewis MacLeod's "That Glittering, Intangible Western Culture': 'Civilizing' Missions and the Crisis of Tradition in Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*" and Dan S. Kostopulos's "Eyes Reopened: *A Tourist in Africa*." Unlike many critics,

who view Waugh's travel books as revealing racial and class snobbery—an attitude analyzed and, as far as possible, refuted in Baron Alder's "Violence, Duplicity, and Frequent Malversation: *Robbery under Law* and Evelyn Waugh's Political Critique"—Kostopulos concentrates on what he got right in his trips to Africa. Oddly—Waugh would no doubt have thought so—he anticipates some observations of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said about the effects of colonialism on the colonized and, in the words of recent postcolonial theorists offering a definition of their approach, "foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle, and problematizes the key relationship between centre and periphery." One can imagine Waugh's Pinfoldish reaction to "problematizes." Kostopulos concludes that *A Tourist in Africa* should "be thought of as a significant work of postcolonial discourse because it demonstrates a shift in consciousness, a new awareness that the relationship between the colonized subject and the colonizer is in the midst of a profound transformation."

Lewis MacLeod draws even more widely on postcolonial theory to illuminate Waugh's view not only of Africa but also of the traditions of England's landed gentry: "Both must deal with the fallout that results from an under-considered effort to 'modernize' the cultural and physical spaces they once considered their own." Seth's desire to modernize Azania stems from "self-loathing" and the belief that the closer it moves to "the universalist dimensions of modern thought, the more civilized the country becomes." But as MacLeod demonstrates, *Black Mischief* refuses to equate modern with civilized and primitive with barbaric, and "Tradition, even African tradition, earns Waugh's respect; modernity arouses his suspicion."

The longest critical essay in the collection, Ann Pasternak Slater's "Waffle Scramble: Waugh's Art in *Scoop*," interweaves factual material drawn from Waugh's nonfiction, letters, and diaries with analysis of literary sources and recurrent situations that become structural devices holding the novel together. As in *Labels*, where the author observes a honeymoon couple clearly based on Waugh and Evelyn Gardner, Waugh divides himself into the fashionable novelist John Courtney Boot and the naïve countryman William Boot, and, as Pasternak Slater indicates, the confusion of one with the other initiates the plot devices of mistaken identity and reversal used throughout the novel and embodied rhetorically in anagram and metathesis.

Students and even more casual readers of Waugh will find in "*A Handful of Mischief*" much to stimulate rereading and reconsideration not only of Waugh's work but also of long-held, even ossified, attitudes toward it.

The hope I expressed twenty years ago for new approaches to Waugh has been answered beyond my expectations and certainly beyond my fears. But like many wishes, it cannot be finally fulfilled, and we can look forward to new and provocative readings of a writer whose work has survived him and his century.