Revisiting *Brideshead* By Way of Rome:

Reading Waugh's Central Novel as a Story of Changing Catholicism

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I. INTRODUCTION

Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder has long been recognized as a pivotal work in the writing corpus of Evelyn Waugh. While critical reception of the 1945 novel – in its own and subsequent decades – has varied greatly in appraising the book's overall artistic merits, the novel has been almost universally acknowledged as a turning point in Waugh's authorial career. For example, in A.A. DeVitis's study of Waugh, *Roman Holiday*, DiVitis borrows from philosopher Jacques Maritain's criticism of Andre Gide in an attempt to characterize *Brideshead Revisited* as a shift in "altitude" for Waugh – from a lower, "profane" period in his earlier writings, to a 'higher,' religious phase in the later works (DeVitis, 15-18). Pre-eminent Waugh scholar Robert Murray Davis, while using the same classification as DeVitis for much of his own work on the novel, has also noted a prevailing focus on *Brideshead* as a shift from Waugh's "comic" phase to one more "serious" (*cf*. Davis, "Introduction," vii). And in a similar but distinct vein, Marston LaFrance has seen *Brideshead Revisited* as the culmination of a gradual progression throughout Waugh's earlier six novels, from a mode of satirical and surreptitious comedy toward a more sober and conventional form of social criticism (LaFrance, 62).

In any case, it may be suggested that one major reason for *Brideshead Revisited* provoking more discussion and attention than any of Waugh's other works is the great divergence in opinion among Waugh critics and scholars as to what is to be made of this particular book. From its initial publication in 1945, through countless republications and two film versions, the debate has attracted Waugh scholars in every generation, even to the present day – all still agreeing that *Brideshead Revisited* is the centerpiece of Waugh's literary output; and most still disagreeing as to how it is, or why.

In the following pages, some of the ways that *Brideshead Revisited* has been read over the years will be outlined, and certain points of contact and divergence highlighted among the various schools of thought. In particular, the notion of Waugh's novel as a "Catholic" tome will be explored in detail, and suggested as a starting point for a promising avenue of future research. Specifically, it will be urged that reading *Brideshead Revisited* in light of historical developments within the Catholic Church during the Twentieth Century furnishes a fruitful focal point of inquiry for scholars in the field of Waugh Studies, as well as for interdisciplinary researchers in Modern Church History and in Catholic Cultural Studies.

II. A Survey of Various Approaches to *Brideshead*

The vexing legacy of *Brideshead Revisited* is perhaps best exemplified by Waugh scholar William Cook, Jr., in his 1971 study, *Masks, Modes and Morals: The Art of Evelyn Waugh*. Cook very admirably proposes to eschew the prevailing preoccupations in Waugh scholarship at that time, namely the interests in Waugh's "philosophy – personal, political, social, [and] religious" (Cook, 28). Instead, Cook maps the choate development and trajectory of Waugh's literary "mode" over time; accordingly, he names the chapters of his study, 'the establishment of mode'; 'variation in mode'; 'extension of mode'; 'adaptation of mode'; and 'the finality of mode'; each of which categories he assigns to particular works from Waugh's corpus which epitomize the respective phases in his development as a writer (Cook, *passim*). Significantly, the chapter on *Brideshead Revisited* stands out from the overarching motif of Cook's table of contents. With the name "Mode Suspended" (Cook, 193-235), Cook indicates the difficulty of categorizing *Brideshead*, as even the very syntax of this chapter title breaks from the grammatical pattern of the others! In his discussion of the novel, Cook argues that *Brideshead* is not quite "an aberration but a progression both in theme and artistry;" but admits that it does "reach the

extreme in both technique and theme and pushes slightly beyond the borders which are respected universally by great art" (Cook, 234). The ambiguity here of Cook's terminology itself finely encapsulates one's general impression of his entire chapter: he seems listlessly unable to identify the distinguishing 'mode' of *Brideshead's* narration – as, for example, satire, *apologia*, anamnesis, etc. – and ends up meeting the same problem that defines most critical studies of Waugh's novel.

The thematic and artistic projects which preoccupied Waugh throughout his career, and of which Cook admirably traces the development across the entire body of his works, may or may not "reach the extreme" in *Brideshead Revisited*. However, as Cook discovers in his chapter, these preoccupations of the author impose themselves as the same preoccupations of his critics, even those like Cook who would escape interpretations founded upon Waugh's sundry 'philosophies.' Accordingly, interpretations of *Brideshead Revisited* inevitably distinguish themselves from one another based on what kind of 'modal' shift a given critic determines to be taking place in that novel. To outline what seem to be the major schools of interpretation, then, the most useful approach may be to follow the taxonomy indicated earlier: critics have variously read *Brideshead* as: first, the shift to a 'serious' mode of writing from the 'comic;' second, the shift from base 'satire' to higher 'social criticism;' or, third, the shift from a 'profane' to a 'religious' form of art.

As typical of the first school, one may take the often-cited review of Waugh's first American edition of *Brideshead*, penned by Edmund Wilson for *The New Yorker* in June of 1946. Wilson's is perhaps the most scathing contemporary review of Waugh's book. He admits to having first approached the book with enthusiasm, saying that "[he] was excited at finding that [Waugh] had broken away from the comic vein for which he is famous…. The new story… is a

'serious' novel, in the conventional sense" (E. Wilson, 245). Wilson goes on, though, to say that he found his enthusiasm "to be cruelly disappointed," lamenting that "what happens when Evelyn Waugh abandons his comic convention… turns out to be more or less disastrous" (E. Wilson, 245). Wilson felt Waugh's new style to be bathetic, and recommended that Waugh "revert to his earlier vein" (E. Wilson, 248). Wilson's interpretation of *Brideshead* discovers it as "a Catholic tract," as well as a kind of *apologia* for a "cult of the high nobility" (E. Wilson, 246). Alluding to Waugh's well-known sympathies for the artistic tastes and sensibilities of the English gentry, Wilson notes that this "snobbery" was "hitherto held in check by [Waugh's] satirical point of view;" in *Brideshead,* however, that snobbery "emerged shameless and rampant" (E. Wilson, 246). Wilson connects Waugh's newly-rediscovered Catholic faith with "the only real religion in the book," namely his love for the old English aristocracy; and the results Wilson finds to be far from appealing. What is crucial to note here is how Wilson's review relies entirely upon his presupposition that the work is indeed 'serious,' particularly in its portrayal of the Catholic aristocratic Flyte family living at Brideshead.

On the other side of the Atlantic, responding to the first British edition of *Brideshead* in 1945, an unsigned review in *The Times Literary Supplement* serves as a useful complement to Wilson's, as it adopts the same categorical distinction between the comic and the serious, arriving at a very similar interpretive conclusion. The *Times* reviewer quotes from a 'warning' Waugh had issued in the dust-jacket of the first British edition, wherein he insisted that the novel was "*not* meant to be funny" (qtd. in "Unsigned," 234). While the critic takes care to note that comedy does seem frequently to emerge throughout the narrative, he ends up affirming *Brideshead's* "high seriousness," noting that "its comedy is always engulfed in the last resort in the author's asseveration of Catholic doctrine, [and] in his sentiment of the aristocratic or

oligarchic English past" ("Unsigned," 234). Similar interpretations prevailed among subsequent reprints of the book, with one reviewer of the 1960 revised edition boldly claiming that "[Waugh's] essential view of society is indeed based upon a belief in the inherent superiority of one section at the expense of all others" (Pryce-Jones, 274). In fact, eminent Waugh scholar and bibliographer Robert Murray Davis could write in 1969 that this distinction between comic and serious phases in Waugh's career had consistently crowded out other useful and competing notions from the field of Waugh Studies up until that time (Davis, "Introduction," *passim*). In place of such a distinction, Davis suggests the categorical shift from the 'profane' to the 'religious'; this school will be discussed momentarily, but first a word must be said of the intervening school, namely that which sees 'social criticism' emerging from 'satire' in *Brideshead Revisited.*

In the second school of interpretation of Waugh's novel, there is a certain amount of overlap with the first. Here, however, two distinctive elements emerge. First, this school tends to focus more on the humor of *Brideshead* as a continuation from his earlier writing, only now directed to more lofty goals of social commentary. Second, the presupposition of the category of 'social criticism' leads to interpretations of the novel which differ drastically from those of the first school. For example, Adam Piette, in his study of 1940s British literary culture – *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945* – reads *Brideshead* as a "defence of fine architecture against wholesale suburban planning and military utilitarianism" among other things (Piette, 97). As evidence of this objective, Piette points to the vicious lampooning of Waugh's character, Mr. Hooper. Aide-de-camp to *Brideshead's* narrator, Capt. Charles Ryder, Hooper is described by his superior officer as a kind of philistine bred by military efficiency:

> Hooper had wept often, but never for Henry's speech on St. Crispin's Day, nor for the epitaph at Thermopylae. The history they taught him

> had had few battles in it but, instead, a profusion of detail about humane legislation and recent industrial change. Gallipoli, Balaclava, Quebec, Lepanto, Bannockburn, Roncesvalles, and Marathon - these, and the Battle in the West where Arthur fell… called to me irresistibly across intervening years with all the clarity and strength of boyhood, sounded in vain to Hooper (*BR*, 9).

In this passage, one can easily see where members of the former school might tend to focus, on the haughty tone and romantic sentimentality; whereas Piette would more likely center in on Ryder's snide appraisal of Hooper and the description of the latter's schooling in "humane legislation and recent industrial change."

Another notable example of interpretation that might be classified in this school is the work which has been done on *Brideshead* by various Queer theorists, who read a cultural commentary into Waugh's presentation of a young homosexual romance between Charles Ryder and the charming Sebastian Flyte. An example of such a treatment can be found in Martin Pugh's 2008 study, *'We Danced All Night': A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (cf. Pugh, 158). A final example of interpretation arising from the school of *Brideshead*-as-social-criticism can be found in Paula Byrne's recent work, *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead*. Byrne urges a reading diametrically opposed to that which has been demonstrated above as typical of the first school, even referring specifically to Wilson's review as "a wilful misreading" (Byrne, 331). In contrast to Wilson, Byrne suggests that Waugh – far from romanticizing the aristocracy – is actually casting ironical derision upon them in *Brideshead*, particularly through his portrayal of Bridey, the eldest Flyte son, as "a pompous fool" who is symbolically sexually impotent (Byrne, 330; cf. 332). Waugh's own son, Auberon, is quoted in support of Byrne's reading, as having claimed that Evelyn's "supposed romantic

attachment to the aristocratic idea was employed *chiefly to annoy people*" (Byrne, 330; emphasis added).

Before continuing on to consideration of the third school, it is worth noting once again that the divergent approaches to *Brideshead* covered thus far all admit to some degree Waugh's continuing preoccupation with the aesthetical and cultural values of the upper class within British society. Whether *Brideshead* is read as a nostalgic romance about the British gentry which was disappearing from society amidst the cultural changes between the wars, or whether the novel satirically considers that disappearance as a good riddance for modern Britain, it must be acknowledged that Waugh is concerned with the passing away of an old order in society and grappling with an uncertain future. None of the critics covered here overlook this central thematic concern, perhaps least of all the ones in the third school, who see *Brideshead* as primarily a novel about religion.

The year after Edmund Wilson's famed criticism of *Brideshead*, Donat O'Donnell gave indications of a third way of looking at the novel in the pages of *Bell.* O'Donnell's review, entitled "The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh," is interesting for its many similarities to Wilson's, while it goes further in its analysis of the religious thematicity of the novel. To begin with, O'Donnell notes Waugh's seeming sympathies for the old aristocratic order with the same distaste as Wilson had done, calling this fascination a kind of "religion" for Waugh (O'Donnell, 401). O'Donnell wrote that, "[I]n his later books, Mr. Waugh's snobbery has taken on a different emphasis. As he becomes *more serious*, his veneration for the upper classes becomes more marked than his contempt for his social inferiors" (O'Donnell, 404; emphasis added). Similarly to Wilson, O'Donnell perceived Waugh's presentation of the Flytes as "[an] almost idolatrous reverence for birth and wealth" culminating in "a loving patience among the aristocracy and an

unchristian petulance toward the minor foibles of the middle class" (O'Donnell, 404). For O'Donnell, there was no cynical comedy and only detestable sincerity in the characterization of Lady Marchmain (Mrs. Flyte), who defends her high-born wealth with a religious/moral argument. O'Donnell hears Waugh's own voice behind the Catholic matron as she says, "the poor have always been the favourites of God and his saints, but I believe that it is one of the special achievements of Grace to sanctify the whole of life, riches included" (O'Donnell, 407). O'Donnell calls this a central tenet of Waugh's 'theology': "[T]he love of money is not only not the root of all evil, it is a preliminary form of the love of God" (O'Donnell, 407). In short, O'Donnell observes a change in the novel just as Wilson had done, and sees that change achieving much the same result; for O'Donnell, though, the change from comedy to seriousness is not primary, but a result of Waugh's shift into a 'religious' phase (cf. O'Donnell, 401).

A similar reading in the same school came the following year in *The Irish Monthly*. W. Gore Allen argued that Waugh's newfound piety transformed his earlier, boyish fascination with the richer classes into a religious conviction of central importance: "Waugh… allow[s] his readers to assume that the future of the Church in England depends on the survival of that class which was its greatest strength throughout the Penal Times" (Allen, 263). In Allen's reading, "[Waugh] equates Catholicism with one class, and imagines that their futures are in some way interlinked" (Allen, 264). Accordingly, he argues,

> The Catholic life which [Waugh] describes is still centered on a large estate [i.e., Brideshead], whose landlord is responsible for the maintenance of priest and chapel. There is no suggestion that such a man as Hooper could ever be converted, or, beyond him, of Catholic faith and zeal amongst the English workers (Allen, 264).

Noteworthy here is that Allen seems to focus more purely on the religious aspect of Waugh's work than O'Donnell had done, and that he does not call attention to a comedic/serious shift as a

result of Waugh's conversion. On the contrary, Allen points to the manifestly comedic character of Hooper as an example of Waugh's technique in the novel; unlike Byrne, he reads *Brideshead* as satirizing the poor and celebrating the rich.

Another critic, T.J. Barrington, responding specifically to O'Donnell's review, objected in strong terms to what he called "the snob-Catholicism-religious snobbery argument" and to O'Donnell "overplay[ing] the Hooper card" (Barrington, 264). For his own part, Barrington gave a much more sympathetic reading of the novel, essentially arguing that Waugh's point was not that the Flytes' riches could in any way be their salvation, but rather that, if they would be saved, it would be *in spite of* their riches (Barrington, 265). Subsequent studies of *Brideshead* have followed this approach of seeing the shift from Waugh's previous writings as a religiously motivated one. A.A. DeVitis devoted a chapter to "Roman Catholicism and *Brideshead Revisited*" in his 1956 study, *Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh*. DeVitis reads the novel as "a considered and mature evaluation of the place of religion in the modern world" (DeVitis, 52). He does go on to note, however, that "there are elements which at times intrude – Waugh's snobbery and his preoccupation with the aristocracy" (DeVitis, 52). While DeVitis's study is the most emphatic and extensive positive argument for a religious reading of the novel at that early date, his approach does not attribute any satirical undertones to the work, which results in his inability to see Waugh's ostensible snobbery as anything but an 'intruding' element.

Finally, as has already been mentioned, Robert Murray Davis compiled a small anthology in 1969 for *The Christian Critic Series* at Saint Louis University. The anthology, simply titled *Evelyn Waugh*, presented several essays which touched upon *Brideshead Revisited*, and for the most part viewed the book as primarily a development from a 'secular' or 'profane' phase of

writing to a 'religious' one.[1] Central in these scholars' works, as with previous readings, is the concern of what is to be made of Waugh's continuing topical focus on the rich gentry of England, as well as to what extent – and precisely where – irony and satire operate within the narrative. Davis, for example, while foregrounding religion as the central concern shaping the novel, still observes a resulting shift from the comic to the serious. Similarly, D.J. Dooley (Dooley, 51-56) sees *Brideshead* as first and foremost a 'Catholic' novel, but the weakest of Waugh's religious books precisely because of its dire seriousness.

From this brief outline, it may be concluded that for current and future investigations of *Brideshead Revisited* to be successful, they will need to attend to some extent to the central questions which have shaped readings of the novel thus far. Current and future readers also have the opportunity to note the points of connectivity between previous approaches to the novel and to proceed synthetically in advancing new ways of treating the book. For example, approaches to the novel which recognize its primary determination as a 'religious' book divide precisely over the question foregrounding in the first school discussed, namely the question of the place of irony. It is also worth noting how the thematic concerns of Waugh's earlier novels, such as the place of the aristocracy and their aesthetic values, tend to become the primary and even overdetermining interpretive keys to *Brideshead Revisited.* Paula Byrne's *Mad World*, the most recent book on *Brideshead*, is exemplary in this regard. For Byrne, *Brideshead* is fundamentally rooted in Waugh's youthful experiences at Oxford and shaped in many ways by his jealousy of the "Old Etonians" – the more aristocratic alumni of a better public school – who were his classmates. This becomes Byrne's source of explaining why Waugh ultimately satirizes the upper class in this novel. But this approach cannot account for there being any kind of *shift* with *Brideshead,* whereas it is almost universally recognized as a turning point in Waugh's writing.

[1] A notable exception is Marston LaFrance's essay, which I mentioned in my introduction.

Another prominent Waugh scholar, John Howard Wilson, has similarly suggested that criticisms of his central novel which draw their interpretive keys from Waugh's earlier works largely miss the point of *Brideshead Revisited*. For Wilson, the chief concern of *Brideshead*, and the context demanded for discussion of the novel, is Roman Catholicism. Wilson writes, "Waugh *had* wanted to believe in the inherited grace of the aristocracy, but he had often found it lacking, and he had had to look elsewhere for meaning, finding it in Roman Catholicism in particular. *Brideshead Revisited* is largely about this fundamental change of heart" (J.H. Wilson, *Vol. I*, 163). For Wilson, *Brideshead Revisited* truly is an *apologia*, but not for the naïve defense of aristocratic privilege; rather, it is a defense of the Catholic faith. Central to this *serious* defense, though, is the narrative device of *comic irony,* as well as the thematic concern of *social criticism*. As Wilson argues, Waugh exposes the shallowness of England's high-born at the same time as celebrating the depth of their faith – a paradox (J.H. Wilson, *Vol. I*, 168). According to such a reading, the lines quoted earlier from Lady Marchmain's blessing of riches are rife with irony: when she says that "one of the special achievements of Grace [has been] to sanctify the whole of life, riches included," Wilson reads Waugh, the satirist, ridiculing Marchmain's own worldliness while at the same time paying homage to the power of Grace.

III. A Suggestion for a New Approach to *Brideshead*

Wilson's challenging reading, which finds a reversal of thematicity but a consistency of formal approach in *Brideshead*, suggests an avenue of approach to future fruitful study. While former historicist studies of *Brideshead Revisited* have focused upon Waugh's developing methodology and philosophy, influenced the changing politics of Great Britain and of the world during the Second World War, less attention has been given to the historical tendencies of Catholicism at the time of the novel's construction. That is, even while some studies have

acknowledged Catholicism as an undeniable influence within the novel, these have tended to approach this through the interpretive lens afforded by Waugh's previous work and his fascination with the high-born families of England. Yet it is significant that Waugh's second edition of the novel, released in 1960, coincides historically with a major development in Catholic history, namely the beginning of the Second Vatican Council.

In mid-Twentieth Century Europe, the theology of the Roman Catholic Church was undergoing fundamental changes amidst the horrors of two World Wars, shifting class identities within society, the emergence of a new worldview of economics, and various other currents of modernity. Church historian James R. Lothian, in his book, *The Making and Unmaking of the English Catholic Intellectual Community, 1910-1950*, succinctly describes the kinds of questions which predominated amongst Waugh and his contemporary Catholic intellectuals at the onset of World War II, when Waugh began writing his novel: "Most contributors to the English Catholic intellectual community has concerns about both the way the war would be fought and the world that would emerge after the war. Was it a war in defense of Western civilization? Was Christianity an element? Who was the enemy?" (Lothian, 326). Waugh in particular, Lothian argues, "emphasized that Catholicism represented civilization in the looming battle against chaos and barbarism" (Lothian, 220). Looking back on this period, Waugh himself would write – in the introduction to the 1960 revision of *Brideshead* – that it was "a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster…. [I]n consequence [*Brideshead Revisited*] is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendors of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language" (qtd. in J.H. Wilson, *Vol. II*, 105).

At first glance, these points do not seem to undergird any new reading of *Brideshead*. Waugh's own words, especially in light of Lothian's characterization of the mindset of the time,

indeed seem to indicate a kind of conflation between the manners and ideals of 'old society' in the face of changing society. In that case, these observations would only serve to support W. Gore Allen's reading quoted above, according to which Waugh "equates Catholicism with one class, and imagines that their futures are in some way interlinked" (Allen, 264). However, another possibility exists, one which appreciates the potentials of irony to be found within the novel. The choice of Waugh's word to describe the novel – a "gluttony" – may be an important key. For the Catholic Waugh, gluttony was one of the seven capital sins; as such, it is something which seeks redemption and conversion, which is precisely what the novel's protagonist, Charles, discovers at the story's conclusion.

Returning by chance to Brideshead manor during the War, the estate having been abandoned by the Flytes and requisitioned for the Army's use, Charles reflects upon the grand old house, and his significant musings are worth quoting at length:

> The builders did not know the uses to which their work would descend; they made a new house with the stones of the old castle; year by year, generation after generation, they enriched and extended it; year by year the great harvest of timber in the park grew to ripeness; until, in sudden frost, came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing; *Quomodo sedet sola civitas.* Vanity of vanities, all is vanity (*BR*, 351).

It was not only in 1960 that Waugh recognized a kind of gluttony in his novel; here, his fictional narrator Charles, already voices that observation with his Biblical quotation, calling Brideshead a place of "vanity." As one scholar has described the terminus of Charles's character arc, "he knows and delights in the achievements of the past but is powerless to preserve them as anything more than occasions for 'an insubstantial pageant' of pretty memories" (McCartney, 97). But there is an irony here in Charles's final visit to Brideshead, which he notes when he stops in the

old family chapel: “Something quite remote from anything the builders intended has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played… : a small red flame – a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design, relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle” (*BR,* 351). Charles has discovered ugliness where he formerly found beauty, loneliness where he formerly found companionship among the elite; but he has found a new beauty at Brideshead which he never recognized while the Flytes were in residence there: their Faith – the one thing aspect of their aristocratic lives which he had always formerly thought to be “of deplorable design.”

As a useful sidelight for the reading proposed here, another Church historian may be invoked. Theologian Richard McBrien, in his landmark work *Catholicism*, contends that the Church underwent a seismic shift in the middle decades of the Twentieth Century, wherein Catholicism gradually “assumed a new shape… as it assimilated not only the advances of twentieth-century New Testament scholarship, but also the newly emerging evolutionary, ecumenical, liberationist, feminist, and ethnic consciousness” (McBrien, 493). Particularly, McBrien notes a new emphasis in Catholic theology, moving away from “one’s… institutional relationship to the Catholic Church,” to a focus instead upon “one’s… personal relationship to God and to Jesus Christ” (McBrien, 924). Another way of putting this might be to say that the Church’s theology sought to emphasize throughout this changing era what was constant and essential about the proclaimed Faith, and to deemphasize aspects which were proving to be transient and superficial.

When the Second Vatican Council finally did convene in Rome in the 1960s, the Bishops from around the world gathered with a very specific agenda in mind, which had already been in development throughout theological schools in American and Europe. The Bishops would

construct a new "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World" (*cf. Gaudium et Spes*) to address various aspects of Church discipline and doctrine in light of developing theologies and – perhaps most significantly – to reform the Liturgy. This latter change is most significant for the present discussion. In the document of the Council wherein the liturgical reformation was decreed, the Bishops wrote:

> The liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 21).

Among the many changes which eventually would be effected by the Council's decrees were the remodeling and restructuring of altar spaces for Mass facing the people; the allowance for the Liturgy to be translated from Latin for celebration in the vernacular languages; the provision of greater opportunities for the participation of the laity in the Mass as lectors, servers, etc.; and the simplification of the celebration of the various rites, including more restrictions upon performed actions such as bell-ringing and ritualistic postures. In the end, the Mass looked and sounded very much different in its post-Conciliar form from the centuries-old celebrations to which former generations had grown accustomed. And yet, the Church's leaders and theologians emphasized that such changes did not disrupt the "immutable elements divinely instituted" upon which the Church claims liturgical practice to be based.

By analogy, the same sort of theology seems operational in the conversion experience of Charles Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited*. Waugh seems to have had his finger on the pulse of Catholic theology in his age, and to have recognized that the Church would soon be exorcising certain elements that had "become unsuited" to Catholicism in the modern world. Reading *Brideshead Revisited* in light of these historical developments opens up new avenues of

interpretation and provides opportunities for further research not only in the field of Waugh Studies, but in Church History and Catholic Cultural Studies as well. Confusion over the nature of Waugh's turn in *Brideshead Revisited* may be found to result from his attempt to bring together and sift through the comic and the serious, the satirical and the critical, the sacred and the profane, the essential and the superficial. The work, therefore, merits more careful consideration alongside contemporary theological works and other Catholic art of mid-century Britain. Undertaking such a study, scholars will determine the extent to which this new reading really is suggestive or tenable; furthermore, the results of such a renewed reading could enter fruitfully into conversation with the many existing treatments of Waugh's pivotal novel, as well as help shed light upon the changing face of Catholicism in the Twentieth Century.

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