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Anglo-American Impasse: Catholic Novel and Catholic Censor

In looking at the moral standards of earlier periods, we are tempted not just to easy condescension towards people more concerned with, say, nocturnal emissions than those from exhaust pipes but to hasty generalizations about the unanimity of belief in and enforcement of those standards. Anyone who has tried to teach Graham Greene's Catholic novels to a generation accustomed to unexpurgated Henry Miller, *Playboy*, and 900-number sex-talk ads realizes that this applies as much to the 1940s as to any previous century.

One task of the cultural historian is to provide evidence that things were a lot more complicated than they seem. The fate of a consciously Catholic and pious novel at the hands of a Hollywood censor, a Catholic of a very different sort, indicates the very complicated ways in which morals, ethnicity, nationality, class, and finance converge in practice.

The story begins with a coincidence of which neither major party was aware. In mid-July 1946, two leading Catholic laymen and fathers of large families had come to London on separate, and secular, errands. There is no record that Joseph Ignatius Breen of Hollywood and Evelyn Waugh of Piers Court, Gloucestershire, encountered each other. Probably each did not hear of the other until months later and thousands of miles away when their nationalities as much as their professions brought them into an irresolvable conflict that typifies the moral and artistic confusions of postwar America.

America was still adjusting to the fact that, like it or not, it had become the leading and by far the most solvent nation in the world.

Politically it was hesitating to meet those challenges. But in moral and financial terms, and not necessarily in that order, Americans were eager to dictate terms to people in no position to bargain.

The British Film Producers Association, anxious to learn the conditions under which its films could be shown in the U.S., had invited Joseph Ignatius Breen to guide them through the maze of Hollywood's Production Code's "General Principles" and, more puzzling, the "Particular Applications," both primarily the work of Catholics.

Breen was quite able to do so. In 1934, he had been an industry ambassador to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Committee on Motion Pictures and played a major part in deflecting the wrath of the Legion of Decency. Since that time, he had been director of the office of Production Code Administration, with the power to grant or retain for every picture released in America the Seal of Approval necessary for all but the most limited and seedy distribution.

Breen did not look or act like the typical American censor or grand inquisitor. Ruth Inglis, author of *Freedom of the Movies* for The Commission on Freedom of the Press, acknowledged his "fairness, reasonableness, and courage," adding that "He is generally liked as an honest, witty Irishman, whose enjoyment of life disqualifies him for the usual censor stereotype" and noting that he tries hard "to think up ways to circumvent the Code, that is, to preserve both the entertainment and the moral values in pictures" (152). The son of an Irish immigrant, he was educated by the Jesuits at St. Joseph's College in Philadelphia, and in his glosses on the Code, as the discussion of the various gradations of suicide and moral culpability indicate (Moley 105), he was capable of quite subtle, if rather Thomistic, analysis of issues.

In England, despite attacks from British journalists miffed by fancied Yank moral superiority or confused by differing standards, and from American journalists embarrassed by apparent provincialism, Breen kept his sense of humor, remarking that "The difference between me and most people in Hollywood . . . is that I know I am a pain in the neck" ("Cleavage" 98).¹

Evelyn Waugh, just back from a junket to Spain, was spending the London season waiting for his wife to recuperate in the country after the birth of their penultimate child. He had long delighted in being a pain anywhere he could manage, at the moment to Cyril Connolly, whose

outline of the ideal society Waugh ridiculed as "a plan so full of internal contradictions that it epitomizes the confusion of all his contemporaries," most of whom supported a government which declared its intention "to exterminate the nobility, gentry, yeomanry, burgesses and vagabonds, and to produce the modern two-class State of officials and proletariat" (*Essays* 312). He was so pleased with the attack that he instructed his agent to try to get it published in America to discredit Edmund Wilson for praising Connolly—and perhaps for attacking Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* as "a Catholic tract" earlier that year (Wilson 65).

Waugh was becoming conscious of America in other ways. Film producers had been asking about rights to his novels, and though he was not anxious to relinquish control, he did want to escape the austerities of the Attlee regime and what, echoing the French term for German occupation troops, he called "the grey lice" of its officialdom (*Mr. Wu* 92). Only in the United States could he even hope to get the quality and amount of food and drink he craved.

Although some producers expressed interest in his novel *Scoop*, published eight years earlier, *Brideshead Revisited* was the real bait. It had been a bestseller and Book-of-the-Month Club selection in America. It had abundant "amor and glamor," as a writer puts it in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*—or, in Waugh's more elegant phrasing, it was "a very beautiful book, to bring tears, about very rich, beautiful, high born people who live in palaces and have no troubles except what they make themselves and those are mainly the demons of sex and drink which after all are easy to bear as troubles go nowadays" (*Letters* 180).

Moreover, though Waugh had converted to Catholicism in 1930, written a biography of the Jesuit martyr Edmund Campion, and never made a secret of his religion, *Brideshead* was his first overtly religious work of fiction—Wilson was correct about the content, if not the method—and as James K. McGuinness of MGM was to say, "a religious approach puts an American audience on your side" (*Diaries* 673).

The novel was both glamorous and religious. Charles Ryder, the narrator, falls in (questionably platonic) love with Sebastian Flyte and then with his whole family. After a ten-year estrangement and a failing marriage, he meets Sebastian's sister Julia, even more disastrously wed. They have an affair, plan divorces, marriage, and an idyllic retreat to Brideshead Castle. But the deathbed repentance of her father recalls her

to Catholicism, and by the end of the novel the lovers are separated but on the way to redemption.

In July, Waugh was between books and enjoying himself as well as austerity regulations permitted. If he noticed the *New Statesman* poem attacking Breen's comments on cleavage in British films (ending "Our censors keep our films as clean / As any whistle ever seen. / So what is biting Mr. Breen?" [Sagittarius 42]), his conscience would have been clear because much of *Brideshead* was set in the 1920s, when cleavage, and the wherewithal to make it, were unfashionable. The MGM moguls were enthusiastic enough to offer Waugh and his wife a luxury trip to Los Angeles on the chance that they could come to an agreement about the rights. Despite his agent's misgivings—he had reason to be wary of Waugh's intransigence and odd sense of humor— Waugh accepted the offer with unprecedented enthusiasm.

That did not survive his first meeting with MGM executives on 7 February 1947. James K. McGuinness's box office view of religion was too utilitarian for Waugh. The writer assigned to the project, Keith Winter, he had last seen in the company of Somerset Maugham in 1931. Winter could see nothing beyond the novel's romantic theme. Leon Gordon, the producer, arranged for Waugh to see his latest film, *The Green Years*, which had done record business. Waugh thought what little he saw terrible. He found the Americans far less efficient than the stereotype, but he had come more or less in good faith, if not much hope, and on 18 February he submitted a five-page memorandum to point scriptwriters and others in the right direction and to lay out the terms on which he would sell the film rights.

He began by discussing the theme which, he emphasized, was theological and dealt with the operation of divine grace. Then he outlined the plot, including motivation of the main characters, admitting that the flagrantly homosexual Anthony Blanche might "need considerable modification" and insisting that the priest be the exact opposite of the guru in *The Razor's Edge*, then in first run in Hollywood. He did make minor concessions to the necessity of streamlining the story, but he insisted that Charles and Julia not be united at the end for "a banal Hollywood ending" and that the two recognize their sins and expiate them separately (Heath 228, 229).

There, secure in his righteousness and orthodoxy—Fr. Martin D'Arcy, the prominent English Jesuit who had received Waugh into the Catholic Church, had identified offensive passages which were expunged—Waugh rested. He did complain from time to time about the studio's sloth, but he found a congenial circle of friends, new and old, and, more important for his career, he discovered Forest Lawn Memorial Park and began the investigations that led to his writing of *The Loved One*.

The MGM staff was less slothful than he thought. The rights to the novel alone would cost them \$140,000, a substantial amount then, though not enormous. (Daryl Zanuck had paid \$250,000 for rights to *The Razor's Edge*.) And Waugh's strictures would make production more difficult than usual. Besides that, MGM was less concerned with orthodox faith and morals than with the Production Code, most readily accessible in Raymond Moley's *The Hays Office*. The "Particular Applications" of "II. SEX" held that

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer [sic] that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

1) Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively. (Moley 106)

As producer, Leon Gordon had to be concerned not merely with the Code but with Breen's interpretations of it. Breen's discussion of adultery is characteristically thorough:

a) The sinful relationship must not appear to be justified. There cannot actually be a good reason for it; *it cannot be right*. But the audience must not be persuaded or deceived into thinking that there *is* good reason and sufficient cause for the transgression, and that it *is* right. For example, the husband may not, in the basic plot, live in adultery because his wife is insane. The Code clause on sympathy [for any kind of wrong-doing] here finds its most potent application.

b) The sinful relationship must not be condoned—that is, there must not be general indifference to it, nor tacit or express acceptance or approval of it, particularly on the part of the third party or on the part of any character closely concerned.

c) There must be somewhere a voice positively condemning the wrong. There must be wholesome and clean characters.

- d) There must be no dialogue or action in disrespect of marriage, beyond the necessary portrayal of the sin.
- e) Divorce, allowed by the law of the land, should take place only for sound reasons, as a last resort, and never lightly or flippantly.
- f) There must be no sensuous scenes; bedroom scenes should be avoided; and there should be as little physical contact as possible between the principals.
- g) There should be no more glamor and luxury than consonant with the plot.
- h) There should be satisfactory regeneration and/or retribution.

Moreover, under the heading of "Perversion," Breen insisted that "Sadism, homosexuality, incest, etc., should not even be hinted at in motion pictures" (Moley 107-108).

Every producer would have known Breen's views in general if not in minute detail, and though Waugh thought that Hollywood executives could not follow a story, Gordon had begun his Hollywood career as a scriptwriter—his credits include "Freaks"—and he understood enough to be worried about the novel. Anthony Blanche was easy enough to write out of the script. But from the "banal Hollywood" point of view, the central situation presented difficulties. For example, even though Charles and Julia end their adulterous affair for religious reasons, it begins on an ocean liner and continues amid the splendors of Brideshead Castle. Several characters take a very casual attitude towards marriage and divorce, and Lord Brideshead, who dispassionately calls Julia's arrangement living in sin, is everywhere else regarded as stiff and ridiculous. Charles and Julia begin the affair because their respective spouses are thoroughly awful people—not "good reason and sufficient cause" in Breen's definition. The story ends with the characters just beginning their regeneration—or, as Waugh put it in the memorandum, Julia "has a great debt to pay and we are left with her paying it" (Heath 229).

If Gordon was nervous, the Code and its application encouraged him to be. In practice, "No efficient producer would consider buying the movie rights to a questionable novel or play without consulting the P.C.A. regarding the possibility of making an acceptable movie of it" (Inglis 153). Producers were free—in the sense that everything about the Code was technically voluntary—to consult Breen at every point. In fact, "Whenever it appears that particular care will be required in the treatment

of the basic theme, Breen is so informed, and he, in turn, officially warns the studio heads of the company planning the production" (Moley 92).

As with any law, particularly one governing pleasurable activity, enforcement varied according to circumstances. The case of *Brideshead* could not have come at a worse moment. On 6 February, the day Waugh arrived in Hollywood, the Los Angeles *Times* carried the news of Archbishop John J. Cantwell's attack on the immorality of *Duel in the Sun*. Moreover, the Sodality of Our Lady for the Southern California Diocese was meeting to arrange a nationwide boycott of all movies to protest indecent films. Fr. Charles Leahy of Loyola University, Sodality moderator, said that the boycott should help "clean up films if we can show producers we mean business" ("Students Seek Film Boycott" II:1). This news would have put Breen on alert. He had known Archbishop Cantwell at least since the Cincinnati summit meeting to found the Legion of Decency, and he had helped to avoid a boycott then by promising to enforce the Code.

It wasn't just the Catholics he had to worry about. On the same day, the *Times* ran an editorial on the responsibility of movie stars to take marriage vows seriously. And on 18 February, the day that Waugh submitted his memorandum and Winter his treatment, a front-page headline in the *Times* read "Religious Figures Flay Morals of Film Colony." In an article for *Motion Picture*, Monsignor Fulton Sheen, Rabbi Sidney Goldstein, and the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick agreed that, as *Time* magazine put it more succinctly,

- 1) the true strength of a nation rests on the family; 2) the off-again-on-again marriages of Hollywood stars set a bad national fashion—and are at least partly responsible for the soaring U.S. divorce rate; 3) Hollywood marriage is not a private affair but a matter of public concern. ("Movies and Morals" 94)

The Los Angeles *Times* story, also on 18 February, about industry reactions was headlined "Film Leaders Squirm Over Morals Attack." Most of them said that Los Angeles was no worse than anywhere else; its divorce rate merely got more publicity. Others said, more feebly, that Hollywood stars are people of genius and don't live by ordinary standards. Breen did not agree. Both as a Catholic and as administrator of the Code, he disapproved of divorce, and the rising number "made him

extraordinarily sensitive and prompted him to block any hint that divorce could solve domestic problems" (Leff and Simmons 144).

In view of these developments as well as the general climate of censorship, it is clear that Waugh had misjudged Leon Gordon, who had in fact been quite zealous in protecting MGM's interests. The studio research department had been tracking down reviews of *Brideshead* in obscure as well as obvious places, and on 3 March he wrote to Joe Breen, sending him copies of the novel, of Winter's treatment, and of Waugh's memorandum. The accompanying letter, now in the library of the Motion Picture Academy, in effect dictated Breen's answer. Gordon began by saying that the novel presented "an immediate problem and heavy financial obligations" because MGM had to make a commitment or withdraw. He recognized that the book "offers many obstacles from a censorable angle" and asked Breen to decide if "they can be ultimately surmounted or if the cuts necessarily go so deep as to destroy the story."

Apparently unusual was Gordon's request that Breen consider not merely the "line-up" or treatment but the whole novel in order to get the "full impact" of scenes chosen from it. Gordon desired so strongly to be a good citizen that, in effect, he handed Breen the chalk and the .45:

You will find this a very unusual work and the religious implications extremely controversial and perhaps dangerous. Also as you will quickly realize as you read the novel, I am very worried regarding the divorce angle and its relationship to the Code. The homosexual angle, of course, has been eliminated.

. . . I find reviews such as the following which, you will understand, make me very uneasy.

The *Catholic World* in its review of the book says in part: "In any event, he will meet with some harsh criticism among devout Catholics." Again, a Dublin literary review, *The Bell*, has recently [sic] run an article on Evelyn Waugh as a "bad Catholic"; whereas the *New Yorker* refers to the novel as "a Catholic tract."

Sam Marx, a long-time associate of Gordon, told me that the language of the letter was more elevated than Gordon's usual down-to-earth style, but it obviously represented his views as an officer of MGM.

The material quoted from reviews was highly selective. Joseph McSorley, the *Catholic World* reviewer, actually wrote that Waugh

will meet with some harsh criticisms among devout Catholics, loyal Oxonians, cultured members of the leisure class. Resentment will be awakened by his picture of Catholics clinging to outmoded traditions and assenting to unintelligible shibboleths, of wastrels and prodigals and incompetents at Oxford, of English gentry decadent, parasitical, ripe for liquidation.

The real question, McSorley said, was whether Waugh "had actually overstepped the boundaries of legitimate satire by caricaturing faults and weaknesses to the point of absurdity?" (McSorley 470). Although he thought the novel a work of art through and through, he could not answer the question.

The "Catholic tract" accusation is from the review by Edmund Wilson, angry that his favorite contemporary satirist had turned serious—and, though he does not mention it, had snubbed him in London the previous year. The article in the *Bell*, signed Donat O'Donnell but written by Conor Cruise O'Brien, was harder to ignore.² O'Donnell/O'Brien does not explicitly label Waugh a "bad Catholic," but he comes very close to imputing heretical views to Waugh's treatment of the lower middle class Hooper in contrast to that of aristocratic sinners, and the article concludes with the assertion that Waugh's "private religion" of romantic nostalgia underlies his "superimposed Catholicism, much as newly-converted pagans are said to impose a Christian nomenclature on their ancient cults of trees and thunder" (Stannard 262).

Read carefully, the three articles cited in Gordon's letter raise interesting questions rather than level imputations of bad faith, but in 1947 Hollywood the questions themselves were enough to produce anxiety. An Irish Catholic argued that for Waugh class was more important than religion and an Irish-American had raised doubts about the reception of *Brideshead* by the unsophisticated. Handed this material, Breen had little choice.

Considering the amount of material Breen had to deal with, his response of 13 March, now in the Motion Picture Academy library, was quick and thorough. As protocol demanded, it was addressed to Louis B. Mayer. And given the terms of Gordon's letter, he announced at the beginning his inescapable conclusion: "this story, in its present form, is unacceptable, under the provisions of this industry's Production Code, in that it is a story of illicit sex and adultery without sufficient compensating

moral values." Nearly half a century later, readers may find his reasoning more interesting than the conclusion because it represents the official and by no means simple-minded moral standards of 1947:

. . . among the important threads there is one which deals with the unsuccessful efforts of several people, guilty of illicit sex and adultery, to find a solution to their problems by divorce and remarriage. In their confused efforts they are suddenly stopped and turned to a new life by a special influx of God's grace.

It is our considered judgment that, while the *fact* of God's grace is indisputable, in this story there does not seem to be a sufficient development of the significance, the importance, and the tremendous efficacy of this grace. Some such development, it seems to us, would be necessary, in the spirit of the Code, along with the proportionate dramatization of the repentance and reform of the various sinners.

With Charles and Julia, who are guilty of double adultery, there seems to be no recognition by them that their relationship is wrong. Rather, a sympathy is created that seems to make the relationship appear rather natural and acceptable, if not justified. Only when another character reminds them that they are living in sin, do they seem aware of their plight and even then they wish to solve their problem by obtaining divorces from their respective spouses.

The characters in the book seem to have an unacceptably light attitude towards the sanctity of the institution of marriage. So much so that the proposed divorces are made to seem right and acceptable, without any consideration of the moral seriousness and social importance of the whole question of divorce.

Any such treatment of the subjects of divorce and adultery is further aggravated by the fact that several other important characters in the story are guilty of the same sins as Charles and Julia,—as Julia's father, his mistress, and Rex and Celia.

The treatment of adultery on the part of these various people could in no wise be approved unless more emphasis is laid upon the proper compensating moral values required by the Code. By this we mean that a proportionate dramatization should be given to the punishment, reform and repentance of these people—a proportion which does not exist in the novel.

Again, referring to the introduction of God's grace, as a solution to the various problems set forth in the novel, may we suggest that, unless the whole meaning of grace, treated so succinctly in the novel, is more fully explained, mass audiences might easily confuse the idea of God's grace

with what might appear to be a condonation or, at best, a rather light treatment of sin and sinners.

You will further keep in mind the danger of introducing what might be called controversial elements, if the whole theme of Catholicism and grace is developed to any extent. This is not only with regard to non-Catholics, but also with regard to Catholics. But this, we know, you had well in mind.

Of course, under the provisions of the Code there could be no inference or reference to sex perversion in any form.

In other words, MGM can save its money.

Two days after Breen wrote this, Waugh cabled his agent that the censors had blocked the filming of the novel. It is not certain that he saw the letters, but, as his subsequent comments indicate, he was obviously familiar with their terms. Since Waugh maintained that he did not want a film made, he should not have been disappointed. But he clearly had some expectations. The day after he had turned in his memorandum, he had written to his agent about ways of evading tax on money he was apparently willing to take. And he was probably outraged at having the decision taken out of his hands.

Waugh outraged was Waugh in action. When he reached New York, he asked Harold Matson, his American agent, to arrange for *Life* to interview him on the subject of Hollywood censorship (A. D. Peters files, March 21, 1947). That never materialized, but soon after he returned to London, Seymour Berry of the *Daily Telegraph* offered him a hundred pounds each for as many as three articles on Hollywood. The money was not the chief lure—*Life* had already commissioned an article on Forest Lawn for more than twice as much—but the chance to retaliate publicly was irresistible.

Waugh's two articles, later combined under the first title, were headlined "Why Hollywood is a Term of Disparagement" and "What Hollywood Touches it Banalizes." The charges are familiar: Hollywood is out of touch with real life; the players are discarded because of age just when they have begun to learn their craft; jurisdictional disputes by unions inflate costs; the producers are illiterate; films are produced on the principle "that a thing can have no value for anyone which is not valued by all" (*Essays* 329).

This fallacy, Waugh concludes, is responsible for the impossible moral strictures placed on Hollywood films by a code "which forbids the production of any film which can be harmful to anyone, or offend any racial or religious susceptibility." The result is that stories are packed with innuendo, "while mature dramatic works intended for a morally stable, civilized audience have their essential structure hopelessly impaired" (*Essays* 330).

As a case in point he cites a story "condemned as likely to undermine the conception of Christian marriage" that, if not *Brideshead*, has preternatural resemblances to it. In contrast, *The Best Years of Our Lives* passed because a divorce necessary to the plot is glossed over in the telling (*Essays* 330).

Waugh's charges were familiar. The same year Ruth Inglis called for a production and exhibition system which allowed films to be made for mature audiences. A month before Waugh left England for Hollywood, the *New Republic's* Hollywood correspondent wrote that movie makers back from the war "dislike more than ever the silliness and pruriency that characterize so much of Breen's administration" (S.V.R. 907). Citing *The Best Years of Our Lives*, he notes that Breen objected when the story specifically mentioned divorce but passed an offensively sexy and suggestive scene which William Wyler himself cut after screening the film.

Waugh's second public response to the rejection of *Brideshead* was shorter, milder, and more personal. He rarely responded to critics of his work, and when he did, he defended not his artistry but his faith. Leon Gordon had cited the article in *The Bell* as evidence that Waugh could be regarded as "a bad Catholic." Otherwise, Waugh would probably not have known about it. By the summer of 1947 he had read it, and he responded because of "the fear that a hasty reader might conceive the doubt, which your reviewer scrupulously refrains from expressing, of the good faith of my conversion to Catholicism." "Scrupulously," used by a Catholic writing of and to Catholics, is a code word used to charge that the reviewer had strongly suggested the doubt.

Waugh goes on to admit that he could be called a snob, insofar as "I am happiest in the company of the European upper-classes," but he denies that this attitude contravenes charity or faith; asserts that "in England Catholicism is predominantly a religion of the poor" and thus gave him

no social motive for converting; and points to wealthy and aristocratic characters in *Brideshead* who are ridiculed (*Letters* 255).³

Almost a year later, Waugh was still nettled by Catholic misunderstanding of *Brideshead*. A Mr. Cowles, writing in *Duckett's Register*, asserted that Graham Greene and Waugh "have done more harm to the Catholic cause than any of the objective attacks by avowed enemies of the Church" (*Waugh*, "Mr. Waugh" 3). After surrounding Cowles's arguments and burning them to the ground, Waugh points out the difficulty all novelists face when characters' statements and actions are attributed to the writer and concludes with a modest manifesto:

The questions a Catholic writer shall ask himself are: first, when I write *in propria persona* am I correct in Faith and Morals? Secondly, do I always do my best to produce a workmanlike product that is fair value for my hire? If he can answer those two questions confidently he need not bother about other criticism however kindly intended. ("Mr. Waugh" 3)

In 1949, Waugh returned to the United States to do research for a *Life* article on the Catholic Church in America. It was surprisingly favorable, though in a long paragraph on Irish-American Catholics he remarks that the difficulty "is to guard them from the huge presumption of treating the Universal Church as a friendly association of their own." Unchanged by migration, he concludes, "they remain the same adroit and joyless race that broke the hearts of all who ever tried to help them" (*Essays* 384). Perhaps he was remembering Archbishop Cantwell, Father Leahy—and Joseph Ignatius Breen.

The collision of middle-American righteousness wrapped in Thomistic distinctions with subtle and sometimes idiosyncratic fictional embodiment of Catholic theology was, in the particular circumstances, unavoidable. The novel was not filmed, and the principals went on with very busy professional lives. Waugh did not get MGM's \$140,000, but he did get the inspiration for *The Loved One*.

Breen's power, here demonstrated at full strength, was on the verge of being first diluted and then destroyed by a combination of social, economic, and legal circumstances. The end of block booking of movies weakened the studios which supported the Code office and gave more power to exhibitors. More and more producers began to ignore the Code. Breen retired in 1954 to devote time to his large family, to the Order of

St. Stephen and St. Gregory, and to Loyola University, where he served as trustee. The Legion of Decency gradually weakened and then evaporated, and the Code was replaced by the current system of classifying movies by audience level, to the unspeakable advancement of human knowledge and artistic quality.

In 1981, in a very different moral climate, *Brideshead Revisited* was finally brought to the screen in a sumptuous television production. Divorce is freely mentioned; homosexuality is even more flagrant than in the novel; Julia takes at least some of her clothes off at the beginning of her affair with Charles. Or so at least I have been told. Television censors in Oklahoma—and in Arkansas and New Zealand—excised the scene. The most censorious critic of the series, Edward Pearce, objected not to the nudity but to the "puerile snobbery and social finessing" and the "false, wrong, sycophancy-inspiring quality which is doing better than it should in Britain" (Pearce 60, 61). This was a charge which Waugh had already encountered, and he responded that "Class consciousness, particularly in England, has been so much inflamed nowadays that to mention a nobleman is like mentioning a prostitute sixty years ago" (*Essays* 304). The more things change . . . except that the new guardians of morality do not yet have a Production Code to apply or a Joseph Breen to interpret it.

NOTES

1. *Time* identifies as the Johnston Office's definition of "cleavage": "the shadowed depression dividing an actress' bosom into two distinct sections." *Publishers' Weekly* was more openly hostile to the Code and its administration.
2. The long, careful response to O'Donnell/O'Brien by T. J. Bannington in the February 1947 issue of *The Bell* (see Stannard) came too late to do any good even if MGM had been willing to consult it.
3. Like most letters to the editor, this did little good. O'Donnell/O'Brien reprinted the article in *America* and then in *Maria Cross*, a book about modern Catholic writers.

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