

journals and unpublished materials, and he is always agile in controlling the disparate sources. When he turns to the human consequences of his characters' decisions to stand apart, the book even manages an effect rarely associated with academic criticism these days: it becomes moving.

—James M. Morris

WILL THIS DO?:

An Autobiography.

By Auberon Waugh. Carroll & Graf. 288 pp. \$24

Each week in London's *Spectator* and *Sunday Telegraph*, 59-year-old Auberon Waugh writes battle dispatches from the losing side of the class war, praising such vanishing upper-class folkways as fox hunting, ethnic slurs, and drunk driving. The author of five novels, he appears frequently as a television pundit, edits the monthly *Literary Review*, and writes regularly on wine. But his own writing has not proved a vintage that travels well. While Waugh is among the best-known right-wing men of letters in Britain, foreigners know him, if at all, only as the eldest son of novelist Evelyn Waugh (1903–1966).

“Being the son of Evelyn Waugh was a considerable advantage in life,” Waugh notes, with some overstatement. For all of Evelyn's friends who helped Auberon (John Betjeman, Graham Greene), there were plenty of others who stood in his way (Anthony Powell, Cyril Connolly). Evelyn himself had little interest in family life, taking meals alone in the library when his children were home from boarding school, and, “with undisguised glee,” holding lavish parties to celebrate their departures. When rationing was lifted just after World War II, the government promised every child in Britain a banana—a legendary treat. Neither Auberon nor his two sisters had ever eaten one. On the evening the three bananas arrived, his mother placed all of them before Evelyn, who wolfed them down with cream and (heavily rationed) sugar. “From that moment,” Auberon writes, “I never treated anything he had to say on faith or morals very seriously.”

Other than the occasional adventure (serving with the Royal Horse Guards in Cyprus, he mishandled a machine gun and shot himself six times), this autobiography largely chronicles Waugh's free-lance

assignments in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. It is sometimes enlivened by blow-by-blow accounts of libel suits and literary feuds, and there are humorous moments. Invited to Senegal to speak on breast-feeding, Waugh discovers after weeks of research that the invitation had been misheard; the subject of his talk was to be not breast-feeding but press freedom. Because the speech was to be in French, Waugh could not even describe the misunderstanding to his audience, “since ‘*la liberté de la Presse*’ bears no resemblance to ‘*le nourrisson naturel des bébés.*’”

Slapped together out of the 1991 English edition, the book is full of anachronisms—not just dead people referred to in the present tense, but thematic anachronisms as well. Here, as in his columns, the British class system obsesses Waugh. *Will This Do?* catalogues, ad nauseam, his and his friends' houses and pedigrees, and laments the shiftiness of the working classes. The near-decade since the book first appeared has seen the rise of televised politics and the collapse of the Tory Party, changes that have corroded the class system in ways no workers' party could ever have dreamed of. The world Waugh lovingly chronicles here not only holds little appeal for the American reader; it's of waning relevance in Britain too.

—Christopher Caldwell

THE DREAMS OUR STUFF IS MADE OF: *How Science Fiction Conquered the World.*

By Thomas M. Disch. Free Press.
272 pp. \$25

In the late 1960s, science fiction was divided into two warring camps. The Old Wave wanted the genre to continue following the traditions established by Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and Arthur C. Clarke, depicting scientific advances and their human consequences. The New Wave, by contrast, wanted SF (which they maintained stood for “speculative fiction”) to raise its standards and aspire to become avant-garde literature. The Old Wave stressed *science*; the New Wave stressed *fiction*.

Thirty years later, it's hard to tell who won. The best writers—such as Gregory Benford, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Stephen Baxter—produce high-quality fiction that's scientifically accurate, satisfying

both factions' criteria. The trouble is, their work has been overwhelmed by a tidal wave of trash: novels based on television shows or games, "sharecropped" books expanded from outlines left by dead or retired giants of the field.

A novelist and literary critic who championed the New Wave in the 1960s, Disch indicts today's science fiction on a number of counts. It stimulates woolly-minded daydreaming. It drives readers to promote ridiculous or pointless causes, such as the existence of UFOs. As "lumpen-literature," it encourages simplistic fantasies—every woman a warrior queen, every man a starship trooper.

Much of Disch's critique is accurate. Science fiction attracts its share of obsessives and eccentrics, including some who turn antisocial (the creator of Japan's Aum Shinrikyo cult apparently derived his messianic ideas from Asimov's Foundation series). But most readers choose SF for its entertaining stories and stimulating ideas—

and they are just as skeptical of the genre's occasional mystical nonsense as Disch. The author's understanding of current SF is spotty, too. His chapter on female writers concentrates on Ursula Le Guin and Joanna Russ, neither of whom has written much science fiction for years, and he devotes a single dismissive line to Lois McMaster Bujold, who has won three Hugos for best novel in the 1990s.

"As to the future of SF," Disch writes, "apart from the fortified suburbs of tenured teaching, the outlook is bleak." He rightly argues that many midlist writers, whose books generate respectable but not spectacular sales, will have trouble getting new contracts (a situation that's not limited to science fiction, by the way). But SF has survived past predictions of doom. In all likelihood, the genre will continue to account for about 15 percent of all fiction published, Disch's entertaining but misleading rodomontade notwithstanding.

—Martin Morse Wooster

History

FREE SPEECH IN ITS FORGOTTEN YEARS.

By David M. Rabban. Cambridge Univ. Press. 393 pp. \$34.95

In *Schenck v. United States* (1919), the Supreme Court ruled that a group of socialists could be imprisoned, First Amendment notwithstanding, for dispensing antiwar circulars to men heading for military service. Writing for the Court, Oliver Wendell Holmes explained that the utterances at issue "are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent." Holmes's casual "clear and present danger" aside soon became the judiciary's test for regulating speech; it remained the analytical standard in sedition cases until the 1950s. Rabban, a professor of law at the University of Texas at Austin, traces the origins of the test by placing *Schenck* and the other landmark World War I speech cases in a context of legal and intellectual history, creating a rich and textured view of First Amendment law from the 1870s to the 1920s.

Harvard Law School professor Zechariah Chafee, Jr., emerges as a central character in the story. His *Freedom of Speech* (1920) established the 20th-century framework for analyzing the First Amendment. Written in support of the "clear and present danger" standard, albeit a somewhat more demanding version than Holmes's, Chafee's book treated the World War I speech restrictions as virtually unprecedented. Not since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, he claimed, had courts and the law been so unfriendly to free speech. It was a persuasive legal brief, but it turns out to be flawed history: American law and courts were quite hostile to free speech throughout the 19th century.

To Chafee and liberal champions of free speech of the post-World War I era—including Herbert Croly, John Dewey, and Roger Baldwin—speech principally served communal ends. In approaching the First Amendment, they "retained the progressive emphasis on social over individual rights," Rabban explains, even as they worked to avoid a recurrence of the