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*Arts & Letters*

**EVELYN WAUGH,  
A LITTLE ORDER:  
A Selection from His  
Journalism**  
edited by Donat Gallagher  
Little, Brown, 1981  
192 pp. \$12.95

**THE LETTERS OF  
EVELYN WAUGH**  
edited by Mark Amory  
Ticknor & Fields, 1980  
664 pp. \$25

Before Evelyn Waugh achieved best-sellerdom with *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), he supported his novel-writing and his country estate by doing assignments for newspapers. Later, he could pick and choose his topics. Yet, whether hackwork or serious essays or polemics, his journalism, anthologized in *A Little Order*, was never dull, and it has yet to fade. He described British politics as the "cocaine of the people," deplored the emerging "two-class state of officials and proletariat," cheered the vigor of Catholicism in America, and regularly lamented aristocracy's decline at home. "I was driven into writing," he said, "because it was the only way a lazy and ill-educated man could make a decent living. I am not complaining about the wages. . . . What I mind so much is the work."

Like his early novels, his *Letters* are far funnier than his *Diary* (1976). They provide a lively running portrait of English high life and of Waugh himself (in public, an outrageous Tory; in private, a loving husband and father): his unhappy war experiences; his bibulous "raids" on London; his travels (Ethiopia, Italy, Rhodesia); his spirited exchanges with Graham Greene, Anthony Powell, Nancy Mitford, Randolph Churchill; his devotion to work and to gossip. Waugh did not like the telephone. He prodded, lectured, and entertained his friends by mail until his death in 1966, and the letters survive to stir us as well.

**IDEAS AND THE NOVEL**  
by Mary McCarthy  
Harcourt, 1980  
121 pp. \$7.95

Henry James "has a mind so fine that no idea could violate it," quipped T. S. Eliot. McCarthy, the highly opinionated author of such novels as *The Company She Keeps* (1942) and *The Group* (1963), agrees. But James, nevertheless, set the trends of 20th-century fiction, she adds. James invented a refined, stately way of writing nearly devoid of "physical action, inventory, description of places and persons . . . and moral teaching." Similarly,