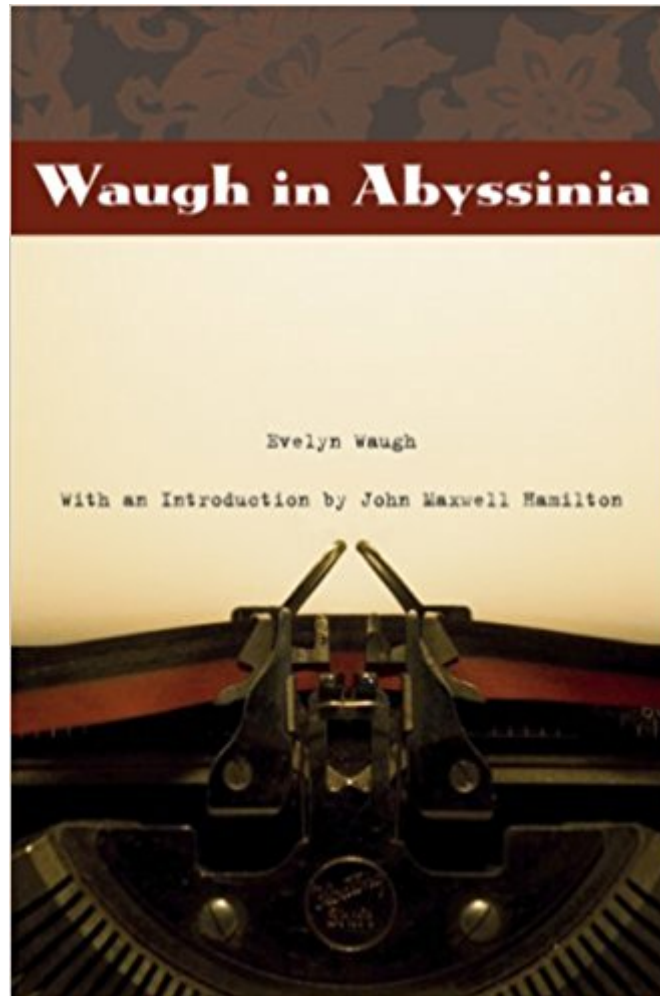




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Waugh In Abyssinia (From Our Own Correspondent)



Synopsis

Scoop, Evelyn Waugh's bestselling comedy of England's newspaper business of the 1930s is the closest thing foreign correspondents have to a bible -- they swear by it. But few readers are acquainted with Waugh's memoir of his stint as a London Daily Mail correspondent in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) during the Italian invasion in the 1930s. Waugh in Abyssinia is an entertaining account by a cantankerous and unenthusiastic war reporter that "provides a fascinating short history of Mussolini's imperial adventure as well as a wickedly witty preview of the characters and follies that figure into Waugh's famous satire." In the forward, veteran foreign correspondent John Maxwell Hamilton explores in how Waugh ended up in Abyssinia, which real-life events were fictionalized in Scoop, and how this memoir fits into Waugh's overall literary career, which includes the classic Brideshead Revisited. As Hamilton explains, Waugh was the right man (a misfit), in the right place (a largely unknown country that lent itself to farcical imagination), at the right time (when the correspondents themselves were more interesting than the scraps of news they could get.) The result, Waugh in Abyssinia, is a memoir like no other.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John Maxwell Hamilton, a longtime public radio commentator, has reported in the United States and abroad for ABC Radio, the Christian Science Monitor, and others. He is dean and LSU Foundation Hopkins P. Breazeale Professor at theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University and the author or coauthor of five books.

The book gives an outsiders view of the internal dynamics of Ethiopia during the Italo/Ethiopian war.

I thought 'Waugh in Abyssinia' is one of the worst books ever written about Ethiopia by outsiders. From the content, one can easily see that Waugh was disposed favorably towards Fascist Italy and was constantly annoyed that Ethiopians did not treat him the way he was used to be treated in other colonized countries. He himself says that he is irritated by the average Ethiopian person who thinks he is equal to anyone in the world. Even if one considers that this was written during World War II, I find it difficult to forgive this guy for thinking so blatantly in a racist manner. The book is just a reflection of his frustration. I find it difficult that European readers continue to admire this guy. Frankly, I consider the money I spent on the book as a total waste.

This is a book that works on a great many levels. On one level it operates as a useful work that describes conditions in Ethiopia during the mid 1930's and in the lead up to - and the early stages of - the Italian invasion. As such it performs a service as one of the few books on this somewhat sidebar conflict. It provides, in unvarnished form that is sure to ruffle those of more sensitive dispositions, a snapshot of the Ethiopian Empire and its emperor as well as the myriad of characters that were in the country in those last days of peace. Anyone interested in the lead up to World War 2 could do far worse than get themselves a copy. Secondly it works as a discussion of the information industry in times of conflict. Much of the book is taken up with the description of the reporting of events that did not happen. Of sorties and actions that didn't occur and the dearth of information on those engagements that did. It says much about the issue of propaganda and the lethargy of a dying administration. And lastly it gives a window into a lot of the social mores of the time and the manner in which someone in Waugh's position saw the world and interacted with it. Certainly some later readers will pounce with glee upon some of the phraseology which would not be tolerated now, taking it as proof that their own holy cows were pure as the driven snow. But that would be to miss the point in a very self serving manner. Better to take it as an insightful work that speaks its mind unapologetically. Very interesting if you have an interest in the interwar years of the 20th century. The prose is flowing enough while still being formal - a masterful way of hiding many of the more blunt observations. The book is hardly a tome, though it is sad that there are no photographs to accompany the text and a map would have been a useful adjunct. I printed a small one out and kept it in the back of the book.

Today there are only two copies available on used books! What a great book. Only 169 pages, but a wonderful insight into the leadin to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (not long before WWII) and thru to the early period of the consolidation of the Italian victory. The super justly famous Evelyn Waugh created, in this book, a tremendously educational outline and insight into a whole period, and parts of it are so witty that tears of laughter were running down my face several times. Interestingly, to me at least, the original purchaser of the copy I got evidently did so in 1986, in Nairobi. I have a feeling it is not available at your local newsstand, but if I knew how good it is and didn't already have it.. I'd sure be looking for it.

Waugh was a racist. His views are clearly against the Ethiopian people. Books by others who were there and wrote impartially about the Italian-Ethiopian War are no longer in print (go figure). But the racist guy's book still is. Don't waste your time reading this nonsense. 'Prevail' by Jeff Pearce is a much better read.

Wonderful. Evelyn Waugh's 'Waugh in Abyssinia' is making me wish I were going to spend longer in Ethiopia this summer. I recommend it very highly, if you like Waugh. I am at the age when I read non-fiction for fun and fiction from duty, even though I know fiction, at its best, is more important, serious and truthful than non-fiction. Odd how Scoop closely follows real life - as does of all things Greenmantle. These novelists are so lazy! (I know they transmute it..) I shall be interested to see to what extent Waugh's Black Mischief's lunacy will turn out to be based on truth as reported in Waugh's Remote People, his 1931 book about his attendance of Haile Sellasie's coronation. I suspect a lot will be based on life. 'Waugh in Abyssinia' is a very good book, drily funny, and perceptive. It takes a pro-Mussolini line which may be why Waugh suppressed it and why Wilfred Thesiger hated Waugh. Making allowance for Evelyn Waugh's and his employer the Daily Mail's sympathy for the Italians it should convince anyone who thinks colonialism on balance a Bad Thing that it did much good. Waugh, of course, rather persuasively blames liberalism for many of the world's wrongs and reading him I see for the first time how the amiable soft-hearted liberalism of mid- twentieth century England morphed into the unpleasant thing we now have in the Guardian.

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