

**CRISIS AND LEVIATHAN:  
Critical Episodes  
in the Growth  
of American Government**  
by Robert Higgs  
Oxford, 1987  
352 pp. \$24.95

Even the most casual observer cannot help noticing the expansion of American government. A promise to cut federal fat and take government out of the marketplace, after all, got Ronald Reagan elected president in 1980.

However, asserts Higgs, a Lafayette College economist, the vaunted "Reagan Revolution" has failed. Indeed, he devotes nine double-columned pages to listing the current federal agencies.

During political or economic crises, says Higgs, the public demands action and new agencies are formed. The crisis eventually ends, but the new agencies stay.

Documenting the growth of the American bureaucracy during the periods of 1916-18, 1930-33, and 1940-45, and the post-World War II era, Higgs shows how events affected government growth. The Progressive Era reforms of 1916-18, for example—the federal income tax and the Federal Reserve system—were reactions to government *inaction* during the economic crises of the 1890s. Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the other hand, modeled the emergency acts of his first 100 days on World War I precedents.

Each emergency, concludes Higgs, "sets in motion a variety of economic, institutional, and ideological adjustments whose common denominator is a diminished resistance to Bigger Government." Only a program of "individual rights, limited government, and a free society under a true rule of law," argues Higgs, will shrink the leviathan.

#### *Arts & Letters*

**EVELYN WAUGH  
The Early Years,  
1903-1939**  
by Martin Stannard  
Norton, 1986  
537 pp. \$24.95

On September 29, 1930, Evelyn Waugh, having recently published two hilariously blasé novels (*Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*) and one highly-praised biography (*Rosetti, His Life and Works*), took the most important step of his life: He entered the Catholic Church. Ever the self-publicist, Waugh explained his conversion in the daily press: "It is no longer possible, as it was in the time of Gibbon, to accept the benefits of civilisation and at the same time deny the supernatural basis on which it rests. . . ." To Waugh, Catholicism was simply the most effective barrier against chaos.

Of the latter he had intimate knowledge. Lei-



**VOICES FROM  
THE IRON HOUSE:  
A Study of Lu Xun**  
by Leo Ou-fan Lee  
Univ. of Ind., 1987  
254 pp. \$32.50

chester University's Stannard chronicles the formative years of a bright, self-centered brat. Born into a middle-class professional family, Waugh—under the spell of Oxford aesthetes and aristocrats—came to despise his origins even as he dunned his father for money. An undistinguished sojourn at Oxford, concluded without a degree, led to a suicide attempt (which was thwarted by jellyfish), years of drifting, and dismal teaching stints at second-rate schools. Yearning to be a craftsman-artist in the manner of the pre-Raphaelites, he turned reluctantly to writing. In 1929 Waugh's ill-starred marriage to Evelyn Gardner (dubbed "She-Evelyn") collapsed following her venture into adultery. His ensuing anguish may have marred his second novel, *Vile Bodies*; it certainly propelled him toward the Catholic Church.

"From the time he became a Catholic," notes Stannard, "Waugh no longer felt the intellectual burden of humanism." If anything, he became more aggressively snobbish, more sharply disdainful of humanity. A happy marriage—to Laura Herbert in 1937—failed to temper his misanthropy. For that, literature can only be grateful. Without his finely-honed malice, Waugh might never have penned such comic masterpieces as *Black Mischief* (1932) and *Scoop* (1938).

Today's visitor to China inevitably comes home with a book of Lu Xun's stories—or, at the very least, a Lu Xun pin. Fifty years after the death of China's greatest modern writer, Lee, a University of Chicago Sinologist, seeks to free the man's life and work from the distortions of Communist hagiographers.

In 1911, when Lu Xun (1881–1936) was 29, China's old imperial order collapsed, followed by the chaos of warlord politics and an even bloodier showdown between Communists and the Guomindang (Nationalists). When the Guomindang massacred Shanghai's Communists in 1927, Lu Xun's moodiness darkened into serious mental depression. He did not recover until the early 1930s, when the writer vowed as an artist to become politically engaged.

Until the early 20th century, literature, judged entirely according to traditional forms, had been the leisure-time activity of China's governing elite.