Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy (Oxford Language Classics)

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Until Nancy Mitford wrote "The English Aristocracy" in 1955, England was blissfully unconscious of U-Usage and its lethal implications. The phenomenon of "Upper-Class English Usage" had, it is true, already been remarked upon by Professor Alan Ross who, in an academic paper printed in Helsinki a year earlier, claimed that the upper classes were now distinguished solely by their use of language, but it was the Honourable Mrs Peter Rodd (as she was addressed by U-speaker Evelyn Waugh, Esq) who first let the cat out of the bag. Her article sparked off a public debate joined vigorously by Evelyn Waugh, "Strix", and Christopher Sykes, whose counterblasts are collected here. Osbert Lancaster, caricaturist of English manners, takes the debate into the visual dimension, and John Betjeman poeticizes on the theme.



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