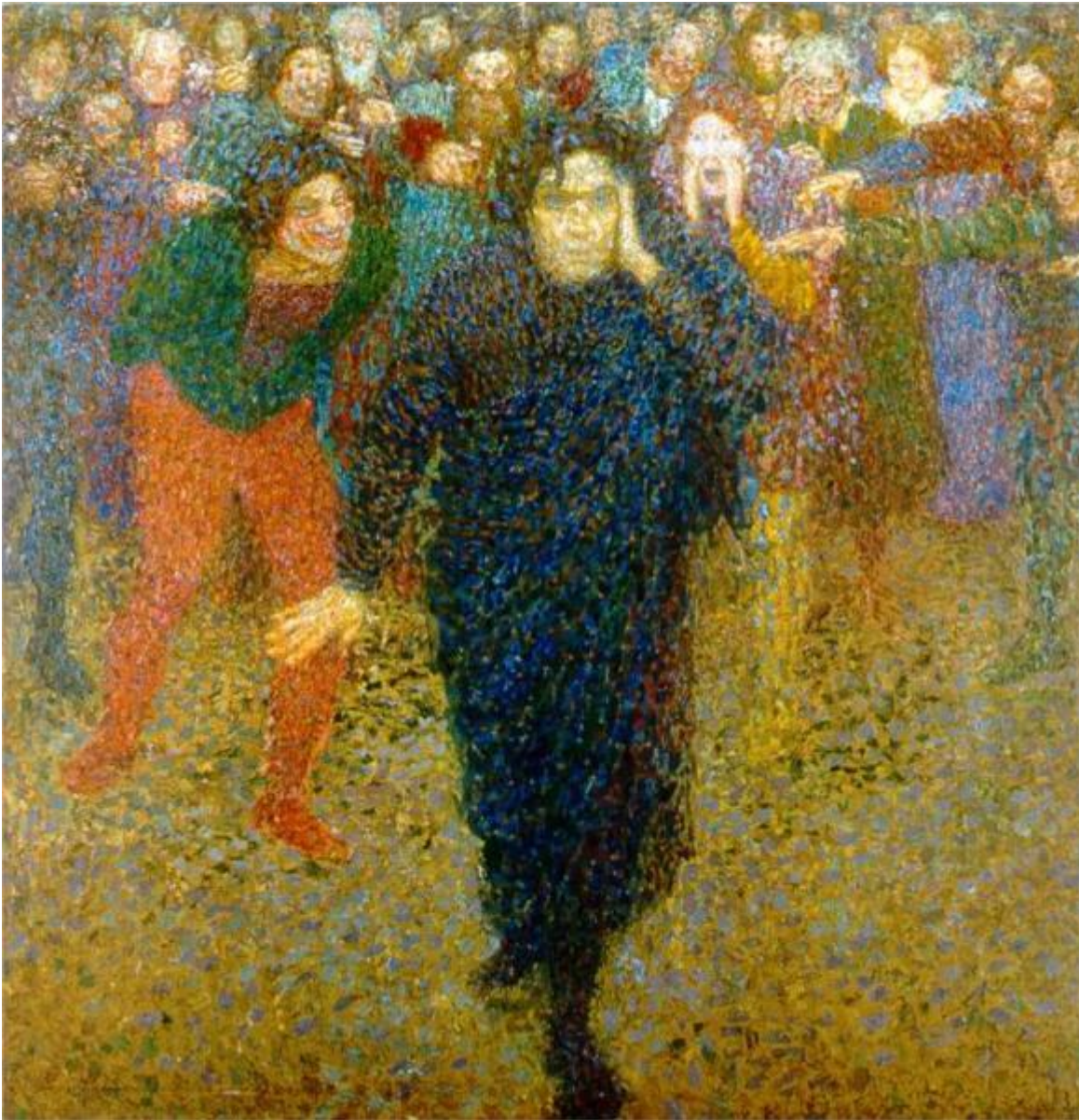


93 and Not Dead Yet: Nothing But ... Or Nothing Like ... The Truth

by [Reg Green](#) (August 2022)



The Genius and the Crowd, Yeghishe Tadevosyan, 1909

Do writers stretch the truth? Well, yes, said Evelyn Waugh. All the time, in fact. "A writer is not really content to leave any experience in the amorphous haphazard condition in

which life presents it," he wrote casually in an early essay. Note that 'any.'

Rearranging reality is good when it's for literature, see? Like tidying your room.

That's ok with fiction, of course, essential in fact. Who would read *Brideshead Revisited* if truth wasn't stretched tight and who doesn't relish *The Loved One* because of its ghoulish absurdities?

But should the same indulgence be granted to biographies? memoirs? Waugh's own, often riveting, travel stories rely on surprising twists and turns in the journey for some of their best effects.

It's depressing to realize how much of what we're told in books from the non-fiction shelves is assembled by writers motivated not to discover and report what happened but to confirm a previously-arrived-at point of view before whatever it was that happened happened.

More depressing, even, than the politicians who say, "I'll never lie to you." After all, everyone knows that such writing belongs in the pulp fiction section.

[Table of Contents](#)

Reg Green is an economics journalist who was born in England and worked for the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times of London*. He emigrated to the US in 1970. His books include *The Nicholas Effect* and his website is nicholasgreen.org.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)