EVELYN WAUGH: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NOVELIST

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Evelyn Waugh: The Development of a Novelist

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ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1

Waugh's early novels are a mixture of farce, satire and comedy of character. He sees the absurd in all aspects of society and exposes it. Here he does not feel obliged to suggest a remedy; instead he uses exaggeration, understatement, parody, and burlesque to shock people into an awareness of the predicament of society.

CHAPTER 2

Work Suspended marks a turning point in Waugh's development as a novelist. The plot is no longer farcical, the mood is more serious, and the characters are real people. Both Brideshead Revisited and Helena reveal an even more astonishing departure from his earlier manner of writing. In both Waugh reveals his interest in religion, and in both he takes sides, suggesting the church as a cure for the world's ills.

CHAPTER 3

Waugh's technical skill is still in evidence in the post-war satires. There are still traces of his earlier wit in these books, and they are written with the same cold cruelty. The characters are still flat and the triumph of barbarism is still the theme. However, there is a

difference. The detachment is gone; Waugh now sees the absurd in the things he detests. There is almost no farce; life is much grimmer; the world has hardened.

CHAPTER 4

In the trilogy Waugh reached a happy compromise in his writing. Here he successfully combines the farce of Decline and Fall and the religion of Brideshead Revisited. However, the comedy is more humane and there is no preaching. Irony gives these books an objectivity missing in Brideshead, allowing Waugh to give both sides of ideas and situations presented. This is a gentler, more tolerant Waugh who has finally made an unconditional surrender to the world.

CONCLUSION

Waugh's theme has remained the same but his approach and attitude have changed. He has moved from fantasy to the more serious, three-dimensional novel, from cold detachment to misanthropy to humility.

He has proven himself to be a skilful, versatile writer, an outstanding comic genius whose novels have a touch of universality about them.

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PREFACE

In this thesis I have traced Waugh's career as a novelist, suggesting that, although there are changes in his attitudes and techniques, the Waugh of today is implicit in the earlier Waugh, and that there is no break in his career. In techinque there is just the happy, natural development of a writer always preoccupied with style; in attitude there is the inevitable change in a man grown older and wiser.

This study also attempts to dispel the notion that Waugh is a mere writer of "entertainments" and of period interest only, and to show him to be a comic genius, a skilful writer whose novels have a touch of universality about them.

I have dealt with all of Waugh's novels except The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold which has been omitted because it is no more than a frank confession of Waugh's one-time hallucinations, and does not fit into any phase of his development as a novelist.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. E. R. Seary for his encouragement, to Dr. C. J. Francis for his kind criticism and helpful suggestions. I am also grateful to the staff of Memorial University Library for its assistance.

L.R.B. Jan. 25, 1966

GAIETY WITHOUT GRACE

> ... Waugh is the chronicler of the grimness of gaiety without grace. Bruce Marshall, 'The Commonweal', March 3, 1950.

Critics differ widely in their evaluation of Waugh's early novels. Frederick Karl says that, unlike Jane Austen, Fielding and Meredith, who use comic situations to redress injustice, "Waugh at his best is an entertainer, not a moralist..."[1] Graham Martin writes:

> With the exception of A Handful of Dust (1934) 'social satire' provides at least a starting point for discussion of Waugh's works from Decline and Fall to Put Out More Flags.[2]

Louis Coxe complains that Waugh's early novels are without moral centre and are "...not satire but at best the protracted sneer."[3]

To say that Waugh's writings from 1929 - 1942 are entertainment, satire or a sneer is an oversimplification, for no one division covers the subject; none adequately describes these novels.

Decline and Fall, Mr. Waugh's first novel, is a mixture of farce, satire and comedy of character; much of the exaggeration, parody and burlesque, which some critics have termed satire, in Evelyn Waugh is farce, mere fooling. In satire laughter is a means to an end, but in farce laughter itself is the end.

The description of the disorganized sports at the Welsh school does not imply a condemnation of school sports. They are here meant to look ridiculous, to provide pleasure, to be funny. The prejudicial comments about Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's negro friend, Chokey, are not meant to belittle negroes, nor are they intended to condemn people's attitude toward them. Waugh knows that this is how people think of the negro and he accepts this image as if it were valid for the sake of humour.

Waugh, Frederick Karl states, has "a 'be-damned' attitude toward everyone"[4] and, one may add, everything. He sees the absurd inherent everywhere in human existence. He exaggerates situations to make them clear. He is, as it were, training a microscope on society, and reality is magnified, revealing clearly the absurd in situations, where, to the ordinary eye, because of convention and custom, it can only be dimly seen. So Waugh's humour strikes out in all directions; there is nothing sacrosanct.

Near the end of Decline and Fall a humorous parody of a hymn is used disrespectfully to announce the death of Prendergast, the prison chaplain:

> 'O God our help in ages past'...
> 'Where's Prendergast today?'
> 'What, ain't you'eard?' e's been done in'
> 'And our eternal home'[5]

Here humour is sacrilegious. Death is not, as it is expected to be, treated with solemnity; it is regarded rather as a joke. The prisoners behave inappropriately in the circumstances as we see them. The accepted code is

forgotten; there is a conflict with propriety. Yet we laugh with them. We do so perhaps because it provides a relief from restraint. We return to our natural selves and escape the admonition of the superego. We enjoy a holiday from the restrictions of convention.

Charles Ryder in Brideshead Revisited says:

> ...we keep company in this world with a hoard of abstractions and reflections and counterfeits of ourselves- the sensual man, the economic man, the man of reason, the beast, the machine and the sleep-walker, and heaven knows what besides, all in our own image, indistinguishable from ourselves to the outward eye.[6]

"Reflections", "abstractions" and "counterfeits" are what most of Waugh's characters are, especially in the early novels. They are certain qualities heightened out of all proportion. None of the figures in Decline and Fall are real or solid. They are not people who arouse antipathy or compassion. For that reason one finds it impossible to mourn Prendergast's death or to hate the impostor Philbrick. Our feelings are not aroused. Here Waugh is true to the Bergsonian idea of comedy:

> The comic... appeals to the intelligence, pure and simple; laughter is incompatible with emotion. Depict some fault, however trifling, in such a way as to arouse sympathy, fear, or pity; the mischief is done, it is impossible for us to laugh.[7]

To say that Waugh's characters are flat is not to imply condemnation or to belittle his achievement, for caricature best suits his purpose. It is the unreality of his characters that save these novels from being profoundly depressing. We are amused, not dejected, about Prendergast's death. Because

he is less than real, we are not involved, we never fully identify ourselves with him. His suffering does not obtrude on our sympathies. All of the characters in this novel are types: Dr. Fagan is an impostor, Philbrick is a liar, Prendergast is the personification of doubt, and Margo is a fraud. We remember most of them for a single sentence that expresses them completely. Dr. Fagan says, "We schoolmasters must temper discretion with deceit"; Prendergast, "only I had doubts" and Grimes, "That's been my trouble, temperament and sex". Bergson says in Laughter that any character that resembles a type has something comic in it, and to depict general types of character is the object of comedy. It is so, I suppose, because, as D. H. Monro points out, they are people with an obsession.

> The joke is to see how this obsession crops up again and again in the most varied situations, so that he always behaves in a manner wildly inappropriate to the circumstances as others see them, but entirely appropriate to his own ruling passion.[8]

Dr. Fagan's ruling passion to "temper discretion with deceit" determines his every decision. For example, at the school sports he advises Paul Pennyfeather:

> "It doesn't do to let any boy win more than two events; I leave you to arrange that. I think it would be only right if little Lord Tangent won something - and Beste-Chetwynde - Yes his mother is coming down, too."[9]

More needs to be said about Captain Grimes, the comic villain of the novel. Like Falstaff, he is a liar, a drunkard and a cheat. He breaks both moral laws and social conventions without shame or a twinge of conscience. He is against everything serious, everything that restricts him.

We are slaves compared to him; he is the embodiment of ease and merriment. We laugh at Dr. Fagan and Prendergast but we laugh with Grimes. His love of freedom and pleasure are characteristics that each of us has, but has repressed. We delight in him, then, because in laughing with him we throw off these repressions. We do not feel guilty about his vices because they are harmless, or if they do harm people, their suffering is kept from us. Laughing with Grimes gives us, what we all at times welcome, a chance to rebel if only vicariously.

The satirist, by using such devices as parody, exaggeration, irony and incongruity, exposes, condemns, ridicules, refuses to accept. In Decline and Fall Mr. Waugh is mainly concerned with exposing the chaos and absurdity of modern society which render helpless a man of integrity and principle. Behind the facade of humour there is revealed a world of futility, aimlessness and pretence. Even when he is funniest he may be confronting us with the grim realities of our Modern Age. Like T.S. Eliot, from whom he borrows the title for A Handful of Dust, he sees the world a wasteland; like Aldous Huxley he perceives its brutality and self-deception. He rejects outright twentieth-century society because he sees in it only irresponsibility, chaos and lunacy. It is, no doubt, this rejection, coupled with his failure to suggest a remedy, that caused Louis Coxe to call his novels "the protracted sneer", and others to term him "negative" and "destructive". But Evelyn Waugh, by portraying vice in detail and profusion, by

exaggeration and distortion, shocks people into an awareness of their predicament. By stripping off the mask he reveals the naked truth. It is left to the reader to consider the implications of what he has read and supply his own answer. James Sutherland explains it this way:

> Satire is not for the literal minded... it can only function properly when the tact and the intelligence and the imagination of the satirist are met by a corresponding response in the reader.. twentieth-century satire relies more and more on indirectness of irony, innuendo, fantasy and fiction of all kinds. The reader has to supply the positive to the satirist's negative...[10]

To be more specific Waugh rejects the Modern Age because it

> ...has crazily destroyed and cannibalized what he finds supremely valuable - veneration for the past and for the hierarchial principle; the aristocratic way of life; the former greatness of England...[11]

It is this viewpoint that is expressed in all his novels, and it is this attitude that has at times caused him to depart from his usual implied satire to the more overt. One senses Waugh's indignation when Paul Pennyfeather is made to complain that Margo Beste-Chetwynde, as a member of the upper class, is not filling the position assigned to her with dignity and principle. Early in the novel Waugh's animus is obviously directed toward the "epileptic royalty from their villas", the "uncouth peers", and the "illiterate lairds" who are not suitably filling theirs either. On one occasion Paul, on his way to Margo's, watches the sunlight fall through the trees -

> 'English spring' thought Paul. 'In the dreaming ancestral beauty of the English country'. Surely, he thought, these great chestnuts in the morning sun stood for something enduring and serene in a world that had lost its reason and would so stand when the chaos and confusion were forgotten? And

> surely it was the spirit of William Morris that whispered to him...about seed-time and harvest, the superb succession of the seasons, the harmonious interdependence of rich and poor, of dignity, innocence and tradition?[12]

This is the norm by which Waugh judges the Modern Age. "The dreaming ancestral beauty" is being destroyed by the machine. "The harmonious interdependence of rich and poor, of dignity, innocence and tradition" is set in juxtaposition with the confused and chaotic present. Tradition and dignity is now forgotten by the unscrupulous and irresponsible aristocracy of money rather than birth.

Since Waugh cannot find meaning to life in a world that has lost its reason, he is forced to take refuge in retrospection. Being an exile in this century he sentimentalizes about life in the past. But this nostalgia for other days, as Waugh recognizes in A Handful of Dust, is a lost cause. It does not provide an answer to the twentieth-century dilemma. As James Sutherland again points out: "The satirist is under no obligation to produce a substitute for what he destroys."[13] Waugh, in this novel, appears to be engaged in a search; he does not seem to know the prescription for the world's ills. He is mainly concerned with exposing our moral turpitude, with making us take a long, hard look at what he has called our "disintegrated society of today".

Decline and Fall contains several of the basic techniques that Waugh is to use in later novels. The novel begins with the familiar situation of the innocent being erroneously thrown from a world of order into one of confusion. Paul

Pennyfeather, an Oxford undergraduate, one night while returning to Scone College, is stripped by college rowdies, wrongly accused of indecent behaviour and expelled. The world in which he finds himself is a decadent one, one which he cannot understand. Ironically there is here neither decline nor fall. Here there are no "punishments, no reprisals", no sense of guilt and no moral values. Finally, after having his standard of victorian morals rejected, he finds that he cannot come to terms with this nightmarish society. Since there is no way forward for him, he withdraws again into the peace and order of an academic world, away from the bewilderment of the wasteland. Paul, then, is the first of a long line of innocents, for most of Waugh's heroes from Decline and Fall to Unconditional Surrender are after the manner of Paul Pennyfeather. This introduction of a person into a foreign environment, like Huxley's use of the savage in Brave New World, serves comic purposes. For there is an instant conflict between what the innocent expects and what he finds, between what he assumes society is like and what it is in reality. His assumptions and values are contrasted with the assumptions and values of society thus magnifying and giving added emphasis to the issues presented.

Waugh writes in this novel with a remarkable degree of detachment. As a narrator he is neutral and very seldom passes personal comments. Early in the book he describes Paul Pennyfeather in his usual factual, unbiased manner.

> Paul Pennyfeather was reading for the church. It was his third year of uneventful residence at Scone. He had come there after a creditable career at a small public school of ecclesiastical temper on the South Downs, where he had edited the school magazine, been President of the Debating Society, and had, as his report said, 'exercised a wholesome influence for good' in the house in which he was head boy.[14]

Here the narrator is in possession of all the facts, but is interested only in presenting them as they have happened. He at no time judges the character. One notices that the only subjective remark "exercised a wholesome influence for good" is carefully prefaced by "as his report said". How unlike Jane Austen's description of Mr. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice:

> Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character.[15]

In these early novels Waugh never confides anything to the reader about his characters. E.M. Forster comments:

> It is confidences about the individual people that...beckon the reader away from the people to an examination of the novelist's mind.[16]

Waugh never calls attention to himself, he never reveals explicitly what he is thinking. His characters are left to reveal themselves and work out their own destinies. There is also in this novel an ironic detachment. We have already noted that the innocent was used to contrast expectations with reality. But there is no overt comment made either in favour of the innocent's expected decency and principle or against reality. Although it is implied that Waugh is disillusioned with reality, he does not appear certain that humanism is the answer either. Instead of an answer, we get

a quest for meaning. Andrew Wright's description of the ironist adequately describes Waugh's attitude :

> ...his is an interested objectivity; he is detached but not indifferent, withdrawn but not removed... what distinguishes him...is a rare and artistically fruitful combination of...distance, implication.[17]

It is also this detachment that gives Waugh the freedom to laugh at all aspects of society, to hit out in all dir ctions. When he becomes serious and takes sides, as he does in his later novels, the use of his comic tools, exaggeration, caricature and incongruity, is restricted. Frederick Karl writes: "His comic approach precluded his worshiping at any altar, and when he did so, method clashed with subject matter".[18]

Vile Bodies is an extended description of the English society already portrayed in Decline and Fall. In this novel Waugh has created a veritable wasteland, and he has populated it with decadent Bright Young People like Adam Symes, Nina Blount and Agatha Runcible, who are surrounded by equally decadent older people - Lady Metroland, Colonel Blount, Lady Anchorage, and Miss Melrose-Ape, the evangelist.

Vile Bodies, with its showy revivalists, wild parties, love-affairs, disguises, flagrant gossip writers and faithless Bright Young People, reads like a chapter from Robert Graves' The Long Week-End. It reveals the cynical, gay disillusion of people who, like J. Alfred Prufrock, have measured out their lives in coffee spoons. It is the portrait of a doomed people, a lost generation. One war with all its horror had just ended and another is looming large on the horizon. For

the Bright Young People nothing is permanent. As Father Rothschild says, they hold another end of the stick and say "If a thing's not worth doing well, it's not worth doing at all".[19] So they do nothing at all except try to be gay. They treat nothing seriously, not even death, which is regarded with a shocking indifference. A conversation between Nina Blount and Adam Symes accentuates their dilemma:

> 'Don't let's talk anymore, Nina, d'you mind?
> Later he said: 'I'd give anything in the world for something different.'
> 'Different from me or different from everything?'
> 'Different from everything...only I've got nothing...'[20]

Indeed, Adam's plaint epitomizes the condition of them all. As Rose Macaulay states, "It is noticeable that none of the people...has any interest in art, literature, drama, music or world affairs..."[21] One notices in Jane Austen's characters a similar lack of interest. She limits her field, however, for the sake of concentration. Elizabeth Drew writes:

> She narrowed her field to domestic life in country villages...because she felt that this setting was what she needed for concentrating the essentials of her vision.[22]

Waugh, on the other hand, leaves out religion and culture to emphasize the emptiness of the lives of his characters. What Jane Austin omits is actually not missed; Waugh, however, portrays his characters so that we are constantly aware of their limitations.

Vile Bodies is more loosely constructed than Decline and Fall and, like it, has no carefully planned story. It is made up of various incidents gathered around the attempt of Adam Symes and Nina Blount to get married. It at first appears

that Waugh has written a poorly constructed novel. But this apparent disorganization is carefully planned to establish his desired effect.

The characters in this novel are carefree, reckless, always in a giddy rush. Waugh has skilfully written this book to fit the spirit of the characters. The wild parties:

> (... Masked parties, Savage parties, Victorian parties, Greek parties, Wild West parties, Russian parties, Circus parties, parties where one had to dress as somebody else, almost naked parties in St. John's Wood, parties in flats and studios and houses and ships and hotels and night clubs, in windmills and swimming-baths, tea parties at school where one ate muffins and meringues and tinned crab, parties at Oxford where one drank brown sherry and smoked Turkish cigarettes ...);[23]

incidents like Agatha Runcible's No. 13 crashing at the race track; Flossie Ducane's falling from a chandelier; and Colonel Blount's film showing horses galloping backwards, villagers trotting to church as if galvanized, all symbolize the abnormality and insanity of the world of the Bright Young People.

To quicken the pace and add to the desired effect of inconsequence, Waugh makes superb use of certain structural devices. As Kingsley Amis observes, we get in this novel, instead of heavily populated long stretches of narrative, "fragmentary snapshots of the same people, singly or in pairs held for an instant."[24] We observe for a moment Kitty Blackwater and Fanny Throbbing lying "... one above the other in their bunks rigid from wig to toe". Quickly the camera turns to Father Rothchild thinking "of the suffering of the

saints, the mutability of human nature", then to the Leader of his Majesty's Opposition who is "in a rather glorious coma, made splendid by dreams of Oriental imagery." These quick and apparently disconnected snapshots, revealing different people reacting differently to the same or different situations, create a comic effect and reflect Waugh's theme - moral and social disintegration. These disjointed scenes reflect the chaotic, disconnected movements of modern society.

A wild, dizzy effect is produced by Waugh's telegraphic dialogue. There is, for example, the fragmentary technical conversation heard at the race:

> '... Only offers a twenty pound bonus this year ...'
> '... lapped at seventy-five ...'
> '... Burst his gasket and blew out his cylinder heads ...'
> '... Broke both arms and cracked his skull in two places ...'
> '... Tailwag ...'
> '... Speed-wobble ...,'[25]

or there is Agatha Runcible's delirious babbling in the hospital after her car accident:

> '... and how are you ...? ... how angelic of you all to come ... only you must be careful not to fall out at the corners ... ooh, just missed it ... Faster....'[26]

Waugh has also perfected another device which Frederick Stopp calls the "studied understatement of the shocking." It is incidentally mentioned, for instance, that Flossie Ducane one night falls from a chandelier. A few pages later Lottie Crump, a hotel proprietress, nonchalantly announces "'It doesn't do any good having people killing theirselves in a house like Flossie did'." There is no sympathetic talk of suffering or

death. It just happens unexpectedly, almost as if there were some unseen power working to bring about the disaster while we were concerned with surface gaiety and conversation. The contrast between expectations and result shocks us; and Lottie Crump's insouciance is so much in character that we are disturbed. The ability of these characters to dismiss death with such indifference shows them to be devoid of pity and compassion, capable of accepting any disaster without thought or emotion.

In this novel, perhaps more than in any other of this period, Waugh reveals his skill in writing dialogue which not only gives him a certain objectivity but superbly conveys a sense of individual identity and economically furthers the action of the story. Discussing Waugh's narrative style, Frederick Stopp writes:

> Authenticity is conferred largely by an extensive use of dialogue; speech, not gesture or scenic effect or psychological atmosphere, is Mr. Waugh's preferred medium.[27]

This is not to say that he depends mainly on phonetic transcreption; he does not. He achieves authenticity chiefly by capturing the idiom, and Waugh's ear for a wide range of idiom is unerring. He is able to catch the speech rhythms, the phrases and the jargon of all sorts of people, from the drunk to the journalist, from the customs officer to the foreign dignitary. Many characters in Vile Bodies make only brief appearances, but even these are characterized distinctly, not because of their clothes, appearance, mannerisms or

gestures, but because of what they say. Arthur the sea-sick passenger who pretends not to be sick is convincingly drawn through conversation:

> 'How about knocking off for a bit? Makes me tired - table moving about all the time.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'Course I ain't feeling ill, only tired.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'Well, what d'you expect, being hit on the back like that. Makes me tired.'[28]

Stephen Spender writes in The Creative Element that the dialogue of the Bright Young People is extremely funny because it is "photographically exact". Waugh appears to have thorough knowledge of their jargon.

> 'Well', they said, Well! how too, too shaming,, Agatha, darling! they said. 'How devastating, how unpoliceman-like, how goat-like, how sick-making, how too, too awful'.[29]

The sharp, pointed telephone conversation between Nina Blount and Adam Symes especially illustrates Waugh's skill. It is neither stylized nor real, yet it appears realistic. It has spontaneity; it gives the impression that there is more to be said than is actually communicated; and, as one would expect in such circumstances, there is a great deal of irrelevance and repetition. Yet the whole conversation is entirely relevant. It springs from something that has already happened and what is said will in turn have its effect. It expresses character: both Nina and Adam treat marriage as a trifling arrangement, so both are shown to be devoid of passion and to have a twisted sense of values. It crystallizes the

relationship between them, making it unnecessary to analyze further or describe the relationship.[30]

'You haven't got any money?'
'No'
'We aren't going to be married today?'
'No'
'I see'
'Well?'
'I said, I see.'
'Is that all?'
'Yes, that's all, Adam.'
'I'm sorry, too. Goodbye.'
'Good-bye, Nina.'
. . . . . .
... I've got some rather awful news to tell you.'
'Yes'
'You'll be furious.'
'Well?'
'I'm engaged to be married'
'Who to?'
'I hardly think I can tell you.'
'Who?'
. . . . . .
'Ginger.'
'I don't believe it.'
'Well, I am. That's all there is to it.'[31]

Vile Bodies has the same gusto and gaiety as Decline and Fall. Farcical situations, like Colonel Blount's giving Adam Symes a cheque for a thousand pounds signed "Charlie Chaplin", and the customs officer's confident classification of Dante's Purgatorio as "pretty dirty", are highly amusing. Waugh's verbal wit is also masterly. His use of what Freud calls "condensation" (the changing of the wording of a well known phrase) - "from wig to toe"; the "transposition from solemn to trivial" - "there ain't no flies on the Lamb of God"; the use of comic and suggestive names that clearly indicate the character of the owner - Mrs. Melrose Ape, the evangelist, Mr. Walter Outrage, the leader of His Majesty's Opposition; his comic portraiture, especially of Colonel Blount and the

"drunk major", who have affinities with Philbrick and Grimes of Decline and Fall, all make this novel wildly hilarious.

Comedy of character, farce and verbal wit give this novel a mood of gaiety and zest. This mirth, however, is only on the surface, for Vile Bodies is even grimmer than Decline and Fall. It is so because, unlike Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Symes has no principles to be contrasted with the meaninglessness of the society portrayed. It is true that Paul's morals save no one, but they do, at least, supply a little stability, a balance. Paul remains an outsider; Adam becomes a part of his milieu. He, like the other characters of the book, has a tremendous capacity to submit to evil; he, like the others, would not change his situation even if he could. His caddishness in selling Nina Blount to Ginger Littlejohn looks forward to the depraved bounderism of Basil Seal in Black Mischief and Put Out More Flags. Paul is allowed to withdraw from the wasteland; Adam, however, continues his search for excitement by taking part in a pointless war. The final scene of the novel, entitled "Happy Ending" is brutally ironic. It takes place "on the biggest battle field in the world".

> The scene all around ... was one of unrelieved desolation; a great expanse of mud in which every visible object was burnt or broken. Sounds of firing thundered from beyond the horizon....[32]

There is, I think, an underlying weakness in Vile Bodies, a weakness that lies in ambivalence of attitudes. Waugh, because he depicts a damning picture of modern society, appears to be disillusioned with it. But by making his Bright Young People glamorous and witty, he shows his attraction to them,

and his shrill "O Bright Young People" does not convincingly reveal his indignation. There is here a tone of condemnation and condonation, an ambivalence of attitudes that almost cancel each other out.

Black Mischief, a novel that followed and drew a great deal from Waugh's book of travel, Remote People, is the story of an attempt to impose alien morals and manners on a primitive culture. It depicts a conflict of cultures on an imaginary African island, Azania. Seth, the emperor, B.A. of Oxford and symbol of the "new age", tries to impose on his uncivilized subjects modern, western progress. He is helped by dissolute, ruthless Basil Seal from London and an egregious native, Krikor Youkoumian, the epitome of trickery. The story is further brightened, and the futility of Seth's task is given added emphasis, by the sub plots about a suspicious French minister, M. Ballon; a childish British Envoy with a propensity for knitting and party games; and two British spinsters who claim to be trying to prevent cruelty to animals, but who, like the rest, are as devoid of compassion as the savages surrounding them.

In comparing Vile Bodies and Black Mischief, Edmund Wilson writes:

> In Black Mischief there is a more coherent story and a good deal of careful planning to bring off the surprises and shocks.33

From the beginning of this novel it is obvious that Waugh is skilfully using background to convey atmosphere, to strengthen the effect of his design and, to quote Mr. Wilson,

"bring off the surprises and shocks". Mr. Waugh himself has observed about Black Mischief:

> The plan of my book throughout was to keep the darker aspects of barbarism continually and unobtrusively present, a black and mischievous background against which the civilized and semi-civilized characters performed their parts...[34]

Savagery is omnipresent. There are constant references to public hangings, "gangs of prisoners chained neck to neck" and the "terror of the jungle". Seth lies awake in the darkness listening to "the drumming of unknown conquerors". The boots given to the army are mistaken for rations and eaten. Dame Mildred's attempts to prevent cruelty to animals are misinterpreted as efforts to teach the natives new ways to be cruel to them. These forces of barbarism gradually gather momentum and finally smash through the surface, and, like rushing waters, carry all the fragments of so called modern progress with them.

It is significent that there are only "constant references" to barbarism. The hangings and chained gangs, for instance, are never really visible; they are only casually mentioned. It is this hinting that creates the horror, the haunting, mysterious atmosphere. It is this, too, that, without being too explicit, prepares us for the shock of the final triumph of barbarism.

Later in the novel Waugh effectively associates a storm in nature with confusion in human affairs to emphasize his theme. Torrents of rain drenched Debra Dowa:

> The surviving decorations from the pageant of birth control clung limply round the posts or, grown suddenly too heavy, snapped their strings and splashed into the mud below. Darkness descended upon a subdued city.[35]

Basil was caught in the rain in Wanda country:

> For six confused days Basil floundered on towards the lowlands. For nine hours out of twenty-four the rain fell regularly and unremittingly so that it usurped the sun's place as a measure of time and the caravan drove on through the darkness...[36]

There is also disorder among the people:

> Amidst mud and liquid ash at Debra Dowa a leaderless people abandoned their normal avocations and squatted at home, occupying themselves with domestic bickerings...[37]

This association of darkness and confusion in nature with the chaos and turmoil in human events gives added significence to the despair of the people and the futility of Seth's scheme.

Black Mischief, perhaps more than Vile Bodies or Decline and Fall, reveals Waugh's ability to use repetition to give the novel unity and order and to add intensity to his theme. There is, for example, repetition of the theme of cannibalism, of incidents in which Youkoumian is allowed to reveal his trickery and discretion "('I don't want no bust ups', 'I fix it')", and repetition of the description of Azania at the beginning and end of the novel.

We are reminded of cannibalism in the first chapter when Seth, after hearing of his father's death at the hands of the Wanda, says:

> They should not have eaten him - after all, he was my father ... it is so ... so barbarous.[38]

Again in chapter five cannibalism is suggested when General Connolly remarks that his soldiers have eaten the boots given

them by the government. Both of these incidents prepare us for the time when barbarism will usurp the stage, symbolized by Basil's eating Prudence. "'Where is the white woman?'", Basil questions the headman..

> 'Why, here', he patted his distended paunch. 'You and I and the big chiefs - we have just eaten her.'[39]

Waugh, by repeating this theme, is stating emphatically that the white man's superficial civilization has been useless to the natives. Those who were cannibals when the book opened were cannibals at the end. It is rather the white man, as ironically symbolized in Basil's act, who becomes submerged in the black savagery he tries to exploit.[40]

Throughout the novel Youkoumian is shown in situations where it is easy for him to cheat. The first time we meet him he is tricking Ali, Seth's Indian secretary, into giving him some money. When Basil Seal wants to go to Debra Dowa, he is there to "fix it" if Basil will pay him two hundred rupees. When Basil and General Connolly disagree about supplying boots to the army, Youkoumian, though he will make money on the sale, wants to "go after him and fix it" because there is, as he says, "'no sense at all in 'aving bust-up'". Near the end of the book Mr. Reppington, the district magistrate, says:

> 'Useful little fellow Youkoumian. I use him a lot. He's getting me boots for the levy. Came to me himself with the idea.'[41]

Waugh achieves through this repetition a comic effect. Youkoumian's reiterated phrases and his invariable reaction to different situations are funny, because what he does and says is not due to any thoughtful decision on his part; it rather

springs from habit, from what E. K. Brown calls:

> ... the hard moulds in his mind, moulds from which he can no more escape than the jack-in-the-box can alter his squeak.[42]

The final description of Youkoumian by Mr. Reppington reveals him unchanged and, as at the beginning, still successfully exploiting. Again through repetition one is made forcibly aware that in Azania neither circumstances nor individuals have changed in spite of the change of regime, and that in these circumstances dishonesty will always triumph.

At the beginning of the novel things are in a state of disorder and decay. People are hanged in the public square, and natives use abandoned cars for living quarters. At the end the Works Department has to make a new road around a native who has "built a house in a broken lorry in the middle of the road". Things have changed but little; we are back where we started. The circular pattern, expressing vanity and changelessness, is obvious. The pattern speaks for itself, it is its own comment.

Like the two earlier novels, Black Mischief is inventive, humorous and ebullient. Waugh writes here with the same detachment and his comic tools, exaggeration, caricature irony, are still in evidence. There has, however, been a noticeable change. Innocence and passivity no longer characterize the hero, Basil Seal, as they do Paul Pennyfeather and Adam Symes. Basil is what D. S. Savage calls a "bounder", one who is

> ... immune from the contagion of experience, not indeed through passivity but through an excess of activity ...[43]

Waugh's attitude has changed. Basil's ruthlessness and offensive exploitations are in sharp contrast to the innocence of Paul Pennyfeather, and the callow playfulness of Captain Grimes. There is here revealed a movement from unsophisticated innocence to an almost depraved bounderism. Waugh the misanthrope seems to be more in evidence.

Like Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies, A Handful of Dust, a novel "... as soul searching as the poem from which it derived its title, Eliot's, Wasteland,"[44] deals with upper class English society in the 1930's. It is, however, a more mature, more serious work. Gone now is the sparkle and overt gusto of these two earlier novels.

In this novel Waugh has perfected his use of repetition, contrast and parallelism to give the impression of hopelessness, suffering, terror and decadence.

He does not start by describing or analysing the poor relationship between Brenda and Tony or the decadence of society. But from the beginning there is casual mention of the public's hatred of Tony's symbol of the romantic past, Hetton Abbey, of broken marriages and death. A little later Brenda reveals her dislike of Hetton and being dissatisfied with it she makes frequent clandestine visits to John Beaver, a worthless man of the world, which causes the breakup in her marriage with Tony. There is also a succession of allusions to death. John Beaver in telling Brenda's fortune with cards foretells "there's going to be a sudden death". Later Tony ironically writes about his son in a letter to Brenda:

DEATH DOESN'T WAKE PEOPLE UP.

> John can talk of nothing except his hunting tomorrow. I hope he doesn't break his neck.[45]

The next day John Andrew falls from his horse and is killed. This fear and horror created by repetitive innuendo and culminating in John Andrew's death is further intensified in chapter six. Tony is helped in the jungle by Mr. Todd. First there are suspicions and fear about Tony's fate. Gradually they vanish and grow into the certainty that he is helplessly trapped by a madman. Mr. Todd's conversation will illustrate the point:

> 'Until five years ago there was an Englishman ... he died. He used to read to me everyday until he died. You shall read to me when you are better.'
> . . . . . .
> 'Every afternoon until he died ... he used to read to me. I think I shall put up a cross - to commemorate his death and your arrival - a pretty idea.'[46]

Finally there is certainty of Todd's insanity and Tony's destruction:

> 'Your head aches, does it not?.... We will not have any Dickens to-day ... but tomorrow, and the day after that, and the day after that.'[47]

Through the novel, events are at first just hinted at, then repeated until one becomes aware that they presage more serious catastrophic happenings, giving the impression of fear and the feeling that the bottom is about to drop out of everything.

The contrast between romantic illusion and reality is in this novel Waugh's primary structural device. The whole novel is constructed of a series of illusions that collapse into disillusioning reality. Tony Last is the embodiment of romantic illusion, and Brenda Last, John Beaver and the other unscrupulous aging Bright Young People represent reality, the

reality of the wasteland. Tony has illusions about his happiness in his Gothic world, Hetton. To him it is a source of exultation and delight, a protection from the outside world. He hopes that one day John Andrew will be able to keep it after him. He feels that he can only have a happy marriage by keeping Brenda happy so he rents a flat for her in London because there is not, as he says, "really much for her to do all the time in Hetton." All these illusions are shattered by the rough intrusion of reality. John Andrew is killed. Brenda, feeling that nothing binds them now that John Andrew has died, breaks the already strained relationship between her and Tony. Then Tony discovers that to divorce Brenda means losing Hetton; he will have to sell it in order to pay alimony. (He is now stranded in a ruthless world, a sharp contrast to his earlier dreams:)

> ... for a whole month now he had lived in a world suddenly bereft of order; it was as though the whole reasonable and decent constitution of things, the sum of all he had experienced or learned to expect, were an inconspicuous inconsiderable object mislaid somewhere on the dressing table; no outragious circumstance in which he found himself, no new, mad thing brought to his notice, could add a jot to the all encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears.[48]

This is a world he cannot understand and against which he cannot rebel. With the aid of an explorer, Dr. Messinger, he sets out in search of a new home, a city. Early in the voyage he has a preconceived notion of what it is going to be like:

> For some days now Tony had been thoughtless about the events of the past. His mind was occupied with the city ... He had a clear picture of it in his mind. It was to be Gothic in character, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, graining and tracery,

pavilions and terraces, a transfigured Hetton.[49] This is to be for Tony a fruitless quest. The Gothic world of his imagination never materializes. He finds, instead of a "transfigured Hetton", a hut in the jungle. There is always for Tony a discrepancy between wish and fulfilment. All his illusory happiness crumbles into despair, and the ironic contrast between dream and reality gives emphasis to the despair.

The theme of A Handful of Dust, a quest for happiness in a modern world, is universal, for everyone is engaged in Tony's search. Some, like him, end in despair; others, like Dante, succeed; but all, like Tony, experience the betrayals by reality at every turn. It is the archetypal search that makes this novel more than a period piece and secures for it a position as a minor classic.

Waugh uses superbly another technical device - parallelism. In London Brenda is shown losing John Beaver; in the jungles of Brazil Tony and Dr. Messinger are left to their fate by the Indian guides. Dr. Messinger drowns leaving Tony alone; Brenda, too, loses her friends and is left in the "lowest possible spirits". Tony upsets kerosene and remains "awake in the darkness crying"; Brenda, too, "broke down and turning over buried her face in the pillow". The flashback links both in their suffering and despair; neither sees his dream fulfilled. As in Black Mischief all ends in futility.

In an examination of Evelyn Waugh's development as a novelist A Handful of Dust must be regarded as an important

work. For the first time in his books we are in a world that is close to real life, meeting at least some people who have a degree of humanity, who, in part at least, engage our sympathies. One can mourn the death of John Last as one cannot that of Lord Tangent in Decline and Fall. One finds it possible to pity naive Tony Last and to hate his wife Brenda for her infidelity and cruelty.

Yet, as D. S. Savage has remarked, these characters lack the "depth of personal reality"[50] necessary for such a serious work of art as this one is. Since this novel is about real life: adultery, betrayal and the breakup of a marriage, one expects to find here fully developed characters involved in a moral struggle, aware of the complexities of life. Instead they all lack awareness and are totally unable to grapple with their problems. Tony's only distinguishing characteristic is his passivity and Brenda's actions, like those of the other characters of her milieu, are unmotivated, unsympathetic and casual. For the first time Waugh's hero is engaged in a tragic situation but he lacks the degree of humanity to become a tragic hero. Even though Tony is destroyed by Brenda, one feels it is not he so much as it is the romantic world he represents that has come to grief. For he exists only in an idealistic, Gothic world, and her desertion brings it to ruins.

One also notices in A Handful of Dust a change in tone. In his earlier works the author, although he is fully aware of their lunacy, experiences a certain delight in observing the follies of his characters. Here there is more bitterness and

that earlier pleasure has vanished. This permits Waugh to reveal the vacuous lives of his characters much better in this novel than in previous ones. In Vile Bodies, for example, the sympathetic laughter prevents the author from catching and communicating the real horror of the futility of their way of life. Here the people of fashionable society like John Beaver and Brenda Last are without any admirable characteristic or emotion.

Though A Handful of Dust is Waugh's second novel after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, religion has not yet greatly influenced his writing. It is true that Tony goes to church but only out of habit, and he confesses to Mr. Todd that he has never really thought much about God. However this work is what Mr. DeVitis correctly calls:

> ... the transitional novel between his 'secular' or comic works and his 'religious' novels beginning with Brideshead Revisited.[51]

This is so because A Handful of Dust clearly reveals that trust, honesty, unselfishness and a return to the past have failed. Humanism is not the answer for modern man; man alone is insufficient and the way is left open for religion to banish the "fear in a handful of dust."

Since little is added in Scoop and Put out More Flags, not much needs to be said about either. In Scoop we meet again the innocent who is forced from his Eden into the Wasteland. William Boot, because of an error, (this time the stock situation of mistaken identity) is, like Tony Last, compelled to leave the sequestered life of his Gothic world, Boot Magna, to enter "a foreign and hostile world".

Obsequious Mr. Salter, foreign editor of the Beast, persuades William to go to Ishmaelia, a country in Africa, to "cover" a civil war. William is completely ignorant of the tricks of journalism and is at first such a pitiable failure that he is "sacked". Later, with the help of some friends called Katchen, Mr. Baldwin and John Bannister, he makes a scoop and is immediately acclaimed a hero. On his return to England he will, however, have none of the celebrations planned in his honour. Boot Magna alone is for him. On the night of his return it lay serene, pure and undisturbed:

> The harvest moon hung, brilliant and immense, over the elm tress ... For a few feet ahead the lights of the car shed a feeble, yellow glow; beyond, the warm land lay white as frost, and, as they emerged from the black tunnel of evergreen around the gates in the open pasture, the drive with its sharply defined ruts and hollows might have been a strip of the moon itself, a volcanic field cold since creation.[52]

Unlike Tony Last, then, Boot is allowed to withdraw into the order of Boot Magna after beating the outside world at its own game. From this point of view a note of optimism is sounded in Scoop that is absent in A Handful of Dust. For William Boot, a man of integrity, can compete in the modern world; and Boot Magna is shown to be at least a protection from the chaos of society. But Boot's escape into the country-house eliminates some of the tension and excitement that one feels, for instance, in Vile Bodies, where Adam Symes accepts the way of life of his milieu, or in A Handful of Dust where Tony Last, being unable to return to Hetton, desperately struggles for a new home.

Waugh is still as amusing as ever in Scoop. We meet here

a typical comic character of his, who, like Youkoumian, "because of the hard moulds in his mind", gives the same verbal response to almost any question of his employer's. Mr. Salter's conversation with Lord Copper is limited to two expressions. When he is right he says "Definitely, Lord Copper"; when he is wrong, "up to a point".

> '... Capital of Japan? Yokohama, isn't it?'
> 'Up to a point, Lord Copper.'
> 'And Hong Kong belongs to us, doesn't it?'
> 'Definitely, Lord Copper.'
> . . . . . .
> '... and the Prime Minister keeps his books by his bed. Do you read him?'
> 'Up to a point, Lord Copper.'[53]

There is also use of what Freud calls "displacement".

> 'I happened to see Hitchcock's expense sheet ... He charged three hundred pounds for camels alone'
> 'But I don't think I shall know what to do with a camel.'[54]

Here the point of the remark has been twisted so that the unimportant has been given all the emphasis.

There is successful use of what might be called an ironic juxtaposition of double talk. At a meeting of the Free Press Association the chairman's grandiloquence is mockingly synchronized with the rough conversation of two journalists:

> Gentlemen, gentlemen, Doctor Benito has consented to meet us here ... and it is essential that I know the will of the meeting ...
> . . . . . .
> 'Did you call me a scab?'
> 'I did not; but I will.'
> 'You will?'
> 'Sure, you're a scab. Now what?'
> 'Call me a scab outside.'
> . . . . . .
> '... gravely affecting our professional status. We welcome fair and free competition... obliged to enforce coercive measures...'
> 'Go on, sock me one and see what you get.'
> 'I don't want to sock you one. You sock me first.'
> 'Aw, go sock him one.'[55]

The high sounding rhetoric and serious remarks of the chairman are canceled out by the rough intrusions. The contrast is humorous and also supplies a mild commentary on the uncouth representatives of the press.

Although Scoop is as funny as Black Mischief, Waugh's other novel with its setting in Africa, it has none of its macabre incidents. Waugh is careful not to shock; there is here no death, no atrocity. He is concerned only with exposing the press at home and abroad which, because of its thirst for the sensational, exploits an unstable situation in the Republic of Ishmaelia. The satire in Scoop seems to be milder and lighter than in the previous four novels. In these we seemed to be always presented with the dark side of man; the repetition of his hopeless plight becomes monotonous. Here the air seems to be fresher, perhaps because there is no shocking savagery or horror. We are not witnessing the exposure of mankind's depravity so much as we are enjoying a gentle satire on the faults of only a small part of society, the press. It provides among Waugh's early novels a kind of relief.

Put Out More Flags is a satire on the Mayfair coterie during World War II and deals with characters that have populated Waugh's novels from Decline and Fall to Black Mischief. Of course they live in a vastly different world. "The full blaze of fashionable notoriety" has been extinguished and "The wreckage of the roaring twenties" is now "beached, dry and battered". In Vile Bodies the Bright Young People are living under the clouds of war - a trying, yet static and boring,

time that can only be brightened by a determined effort to be amusing. In Put Out More Flags the storm has broken and these "ghosts", like everyone else,

> ... have been disturbed in their habits by the rough intrusion of current history.[56]

The war has brought general dispersion. There are arrests, evacuation, billeting, and the break-up of family ties by mobilization and death. The war means different things to different people. Alastair Trumpington feels that there might not have been a war if he, and people like him, had had less fun, so he enters the service as a kind of penance. Angela Lyne is driven to drink by the war and Basil, seeing it as a time for profit, swindles his way through the "phoney war" period. He is as obstreperous here as he was in Azania, practising just as skilfully his art of deception. His billeting the three Connolly children on innocent householders and exacting money to lodge them elsewhere; his betrayal of Ambrose Silk as a Fascist and his packing him off to Ireland dressed as a priest, reveals Basil as his old irresponsible self.

Basil, irresponsible and dishonest, is again shown to be successful, and so represents the truimph of evil in society. This is Waugh's way of exposing the blindness, greed and selfishness of the world that produced him.

Put Out More Flags continues the movement started in A Handful of Dust towards real life and away from the fantasies of Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies. The characters, however, are still abstractions, still flat. But because they inhabit

a real world they appear, as D. S. Savage remarks, "...as rather dim, flat 'realistic' characters",[57] and one feels prone to pass moral judgement on them as one does not on villains like Philbrick and Grimes in Decline and Fall. As Christopher Hollis points out in the British Council pamphlet on Waugh, if Basil Seal appeared in a fantasy like Vile Bodies, perhaps one could laugh at him without considering him offensive. But in a real world he is too horrible. These absurd characters served Waugh's purposes in his earlier books, but to force them now to play a part in a great crisis like World War II is incongruous. There is here a mixture of the farce of Decline and Fall and the realism of A Handful of Dust, but it is a unhappy mixture, for it lacks the humour of the first and the pathos of the second.

This novel marks the end of Waugh's use of the familiar figures of Mayfair. His description of the activities of that "race of ghosts" which peopled his earlier novels makes Put Out More Flags reminiscent of the works from Decline and Fall to Black Mischief. As a war novel, however, it looks forward to Men at Arms, the first of the war trilogy. It is, as Frederick Stopp asserts,

> ... poised on the frontier of memory and anticipation: memory of the bright social world of earlier works from Decline and Fall, anticipation of the military world of later works like Men at Arms.[58]

Since A Handful of Dust, the way has been left open for religion. It is true that very little mention is made of it here. Alastair Trumpington, as Christopher Hollis states,

> ... is not of the company to whom the language of religion is familiar ...[59]

Angela Lyne, even during the most trying days of the war, resorts to the bottle not the church, and Basil Seal has forgotten, not only the church, but the most elementary rules of conduct. It is Poppet Green, the Surrealist painter, terrified of the wailing sirens and haunted with the fear of death, who moans:

> 'I wish I'd been to church. I was brought up in the convent. I wanted to be nun once. I wish I was a nun. I'm going to be killed. Oh, I wish I was a nun'.[60]

She is the first of Waugh's characters to express a deep need for the church. Thus the way is prepared for the explicitly religious work, Brideshead Revisited.

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THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

'... a turning point in my career'. John Plant, Work Suspended

The advent of the Second World War found Mr. Waugh working on a novel that he did not finish. Instead it remained "a heap of neglected foolscap at the back of a drawer". It was, however, highly regarded by the author and was published in 1942 under the title Work Suspended.

This work is significant in Waugh's development as a novelist. John Plant, finding it impossible to continue his detective novel with any interest, goes to his publishers and explains:

> 'I have been writing for over eight years...and I am nearing a climacteric.'
> 'I don't quite follow' said Mr. Benwell anxiously.
> 'I mean a turning point in my career.'[1]

A little while later he adds:

> 'I feel I have got as good as I ever can be at this particular sort of writing. I need new worlds to conquer.'[2]

These words might have been spoken by Waugh himself, because this work reveals a departure from his earlier style; it indicates a turning point in his career as a writer.

Edmund Wilson has written:

> ...with each successive book Waugh is approaching closer to the conventions of normal fiction.[3]

Work Suspended comes closer to conventional fiction or the

straight novel than anything else Waugh wrote before the war. The plot is not, as in earlier works, farcical, and it has nothing of the macabre fantasy of Black Mischief or Vile Bodies. The mood is more serious, more sober than heretofore.

Atwater's unexpected appearances under various aliases, and his sly methods of extracting money from John Plant add a touch of humour, but the novel lacks the earlier wit and hilarity; it has less sparkle and is less exhilarating. Gone also are the previous exaggeration and sensationalism. The style is more quiet, much less swift and hard hitting. We are no longer in a world of satire. There is here no attempt to ridicule, no special effort to portray the ruthlessness of twentieth century society that is so characteristic of the preceding novels.

In the earlier works Waugh's main concern was to give an impression of society. There was no character study of any depth because the individual did not matter except in so far as he served to create the desired impression. In Work Suspended, however, Waugh's main subject is not society; it is character. His object is to show the change and development of John Plant. To accomplish this he changes his technique. There is here much less emphasis given to dramatized scenes which served him so well in his earlier books. In this fragment he uses long stretches of narrative in the first person. This narration of events foreshortens time and space and creates the effect of much greater distances and longer periods of time than is possible with dramatized scenes. John

Plant by summarizing can convey rapidly a stretch of his past life, a knowledge of which is essential to understanding him.

In telling his story Plant recalls the past: his father, his home life, his father's death. He also discourses upon the present: his vocation, his diversions, his friends. In doing this he reveals himself, for his accounts are naturally coloured by his own views, his own likes and dislikes. We are given insight into his character by the way he looks at the world. What he includes and omits in his accounts, his reactions to events, how he regards others, all tell us a great deal about him.

Stretches of narrative only give us reported action which is much less vivid than dramatized episodes. And even though John Plant, as a narrator, is close to us, yet we never see him face to face as we do the other characters in the book. To give dramatic effect to the story and to give the main character, what Percy Lubbock calls in The Craft of Fiction, "greater definition", Waugh permits Plant to step down as the seeing eye and converse with those whom he has been seeing and judging. He has even supplied Plant with a double for self-investigation and self-revelation. Arthur Atwater is a personification of three of his moods - the good scout, the dreamer and the underdog - and Plant often reveals his state of mind by conversing with his alter ego.

This work is carefully constructed. The use of the first person gives it a certain unity. Each part is linked to the others because they are about the narrator and all are directed

towards him. There are two divisions to the work. The first part, appropriately entitled "Death", tells of the death of Plant's father, the destruction of his old home and the abandonment of his old way of writing; the second, "Birth", reveals his love for Lucy Simmonds, tells of his new literary career, and gives an account of his finding a new home. Each carefully reflects the change and development in the character and career of the hero.

Because satire does not require depth of character, Waugh's figures have been flat. But in Work Suspended, which, unlike the earlier fantasies, takes us into a real world, we find that the characters, too, are more real. They have more rotundity than those of the preceding works; we take them more seriously. Rose Macaulay notes that Lucy Simmonds

> ...is presented with restraint, a new subtlty of emotion, composed and near-profound, at times a little Jamesian in slant.[4]

Lucy cannot be categorized or summed up with one sentence as can Margo Metroland of Decline and Fall or Brenda Last of A Handful of Dust. Neither does she exist to state a point of view as Lady Marchmain does in Brideshead Revisited. She exists as an individual in her own right, never performing, never conversing for the sake of expressing a point, but, as E. M. Forster remarks in Aspects of the Novel, "capable of surprising in a convincing way".

John Plant, unlike Waugh's earlier heroes, is neither an innocent nor a bounder. He is rather an individual capable of changing and developing. He is the first of Waugh's characters

to feel deeply, the first hero who tries to reconcile himself to the modern world. Malcolm Bradbury writes:

> Waugh's first-person narrator...is offered with new seriousness and a new range of feeling. Obligations and affections are represented as serious matters. Plant is concerned with accurate delineation in a book in which death, birth, love and duty involve genuine feeling. The contingent world of farcical cruelty is transformed into necessary world of feeling....[5]

Waugh in Work Suspended is writing in a new mode, one that is not so vigorous, not so exciting as the one we have been used to in his early satires, but it is a style that is skilfully suited to his purpose. In its absence of satire Work Suspended is unique among all of Waugh's works, but its serious tone, its development of character and its point of view, all foreshadow Brideshead Revisited.

Brideshead Revisited is the first of Mr. Waugh's Catholic novels. Most of its characters are Catholics and Roman Catholicism is an essential element of the plot. Good and evil, virtue and sin, salvation and damnation overtly concern the main characters. Its theme is "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters".

The military duties of an army officer, Charles Ryder, bring him back to the mansion of Brideshead, and memory, "that winged host", creates for him the past - the years between the wars when, as an iconoclastic young man, he was intimately associated with the perplexing aristocratic, Roman Catholic Flyte family. As an undergraduate he formed a close friendship with the recalcitrant Sebastian Flyte, the younger son of the family. Other members of the family, Lady Marchmain, her younger daughter Cordelia and her elder son Bridey, are

also his close acquaintances. He falls in love with Julia, the elder daughter of the family and wife of the politician Rex Mottram. Towards the end of the book Lord Marchmain, who has been living abroad with a mistress, returns home to die, and after a brief objection to the faith is reconciled to God. At this point one realizes that just as Sebastian was so Julia is merely a forerunner, for Charles at Lord Marchmain's deathbed also accepts the challenge of the Church and is led from human love found in Sebastian and Julia to divine love revealed in Christ.

The love of Charles and Julia is obstructed. She, too, has made her bargain with God; she cannot live with Charles and be shut out from His mercy. "'I can't be with you ever again'" are her parting words to Charles.

It is impossible to read Brideshead Revisited without feeling that Waugh's approach to the novel has undergone a radical change. Yet there is much in this work that is at least implicit in earlier Waugh. The nocturnal "sprees" of Sebastian and Charles are reminiscent of the wild parties of Vile Bodies. The way has already been prepared in A Handful of Dust and Put Out More Flags for this novel's religious statement. The interest in and reliance on tradition and the aristocracy is a theme common to all his earlier books. And the serious note of Brideshead Revisited has been sounded in Both A Handful of Dust and Work Suspended.

This novel, nevertheless, marks an astonishing departure from Waugh's earlier mode of writing. Gone now is the brilliant

and objective portrayal of the chaotic world of the thirties. Apparently Waugh is no longer satisfied to write witty fantasies about the meaninglessness of modern life. To the dismay of many of his admirers he has begun to speak seriously. He has strongly taken sides, an attitude revealed as early as 1935 in his biography of Edmund Campion, where he directed his animus against the Anglican Church. In Brideshead he has overtly supplied the cure for the ills of the modern world; therapeutics has now engaged his interest. As a comic satirist Waugh always avoided issues, decisions and moralizing; he attacked in every direction and left the criticism implicit. In this novel he presents the Roman Catholic Church as the answer, and the reader is asked to accept it as a powerful force. This change from one kind of fiction to another is not, however, synonymous with Waugh's maturity as a novelist, for an examination of Brideshead Revisited will show that he has not been altogether successful in his new mode.

Charles Ryder, who when outside the Church is only a part of an individual pretending to be whole, is a kind of twentieth-century pilgrim searching for wholeness. But he lacks the character for such a role, partly because he, like some other characters in the novel, belongs to the milieu of the Bright Young People and resists serious treatment. He is a bigot, a sentimental snob who is interested in nothing more significent than Gothic architecture and drunken "sprees". He shows almost no concern for anything that might give purpose to his life. One would expect a modern pilgrim to suffer, to struggle; Charles Ryder is aimless, and appears almost indifferent to

any religious or metaphysical beliefs. He lacks, for instance, the concern and the agony that characterize another character with a similar mission - Larry Darrell of Somerset Maugham's The Razor's Edge.

Charles Ryder is given direction by the Flytes whose behaviour is anything but exemplary. Sebastian, an overgrown adolescent, is a miserable, drunken failure, and confesses himself to be "very much wickeder" than Charles. Lord Brideshead is a prig, Julia, in the words of Sebastian, is "half heathen", and Lady Marchmain's obsession with religion has already driven Sebastian to drink, and her husband to a mistress in Italy. When Ryder accuses them of being "just like other people", the best Sebastian can do is explain that, being members of the communion of saints, they have "an entirely different outlook on life". Ryder is not convinced of the difference in outlook and is certain there is no difference in behaviour. He goes through the book denouncing the Roman Catholic Church, convincingly arguing against religious beliefs and at times grossly ridiculing the convictions of others. Near the end of the book Lord Marchmain returns home to die, and on his deathbed he makes a sign of the cross and is converted. Charles Ryder, witnessing the event, is also deeply moved, and one assumes that he, too, accepts religion:

> 'Then I knew that the sign I had asked for was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition, and a phrase came back to me from my childhood of the veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom.'[6]

The scene is touching but unsatisfactory because there is a lack of balance. Ryder has so convincingly presented the views

of the humanist that he has secured an unfair advantage; to redress the balance there is needed a powerful sense of religious conviction which Waugh does not communicate. The sudden conversion is forced and unexpected. We were not carried along to this event by the moral and religious growth of the character, neither is this expiation shown to spring from any deep sense of sin. Ryder's sudden regeneration appears to be contrived rather than integral. It would seem that the theologian in Waugh has taken over at the expense of his art.

There is another weakness underlying the conversion episode. As Stephen Spender points out in The Creative Element, there is no clear distinction made between "the presence of the divine and the human":

> There is nothing to distinguish the reaction of Charles from that of a man who has been made to realize that he has shown a stupid disrespect for another man's profoundest belief and who now feels sorry for it.[7]

Neither do his actions after conversion give us any clue. He still reveals a profound hatred for Hooper who is "no romantic"; and there is no indication that he has recognized his duty to his own family. Charles Ryder is as loveless as ever.

The movement towards reality, evident in A Handful of Dust and continued in Put Out More Flags and Work Suspended, has not been interrupted by Brideshead Revisited. Here there is none of the earlier exaggeration of reality and the characters are no longer mere puppets. They are more developed than those of the earlier satires and are capable of arousing pity and indignation. Here a real experience of life is portrayed,

with characters who, generally, are capable of good and evil, who struggle, suffer and, to a limited extent, develop. Waugh has attempted in this work what he said, in an interview for Time in 1946, he would do in his future books. He has endeavoured

> ...to represent man more fully, which...means only one thing: man in his relationship to God.[8]

Nevertheless most of these characters are not suitable for Waugh's ambitious theme - the expression of the workings of divine grace. For instance, Sebastian, Julia and Charles do not have the gravity to sustain religious argument. Their attitudes are closer to those of the Bright Young People than to those of people struggling for self-fulfilment. The characters of this book are not, like Graham Greene's people, torn between the attraction of evil and the power of grace; there is no such conflict. It is true they do suffer, but it is not suffering that stems from a struggle in life as much as it is torment brought on by their own religious dogma. Julia suffers because the church forbids her to marry the man she loves; Lady Marchmain suffers because her husband forsakes the Church; and Sebastian is driven to drink because of his mother's preoccupation with religion.

Given consciences these people become monotonous and tedious. Their religious belief is not a part of them; it seems to be outside, appended for reference when a decision is to be made. Julia explains to Charles:

> But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can't shut myself off from His mercy. That is what it would mean; starting a life with you, without Him.[9]

She cannot have God's love while at the same time loving Charles because her Church forbids divorce. In order to uphold the Church's position, she is forced to leave Charles; she weakly defends her action thus:

> ...it may be a private bargain between me and God, that if I give up this one thing I want so much, however bad I am, He won't quite despair of me in the end.[10]

The whole conversation seems affected, insincere. One finds it impossible to imagine Julia suddenly disparaging herself and philosophizing about her beliefs.

Francis Kumkel says of Graham Greene that

> ...he has no a priori edifying intention in writing his novels but is simply driven by the destiny of his characters.[11]

Waugh, one feels, is not carried along by the destiny and energies of his characters; they seem to exist to express his thoughts or prove a point. Frederick Karl expressed the same thought:

> Ryder must be converted, Lady Marchmain must triumph through the final conversion of her husband, ...Sebastian, the drunkard, must achieve a kind of sainthood through inner suffering, Julia must renounce the possibility of earthly happiness... Everyone recognizes that there is some role cut out for him, and for him to exceed or underestimate the demand made is, in some way, for him to fail God.[12]

Waugh is not so much concerned with the presence of God or the power of grace in an atheistic world as he is with the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. He seems to be saying that people should be Catholics, and divine purpose is synonymous with joining the Catholic Church. It is this dogmatism that makes this novel less universal, more parochial

than his earlier satires.

The note of compassion noticed first in A Handful of Dust is evident here. Waugh shows sympathy and concern with those whom he earlier ridiculed. It is enlightening to compare the cruel indifference with which he describes the death of Simon Balcairn in Vile Bodies and his open sympathy for the dipsomaniac, Sebastian Flyte. This is not to say however, that there is more love in Brideshead Revisited than in his earlier novels. There is, for instance, no sympathy shown the unbelievers and there is no attempt made to understand their point of view. Neither is there any pity or kindliness for Hooper. He, it appears, is shut off from grace, for him there is only scorn. He is "no romantic"; rather he symbolizes the "young England" that Waugh so much detests. Waugh's Catholicism is private, confined to the aristocracy. Here for the first time there is a strong association between the Church and tradition. The values of Catholicism are one with the values of the aristocracy. As Bernard Bergonzi points out, there is an arbitrary identification of the Country House and the Catholic City.[13] Mr. Donat O'Donnell has referred to Waugh's "cult of the aristocracy" as his

> ...private religion, on which he has superimposed Catholicism, much as newly converted pagans are said to superimpose a Christian nomenclature on their ancient cults of trees and thunder.[14]

In his earlier novels Waugh is no respecter of persons; not even the aristocracy escapes his satire. Here the aristocrats, in spite of their wilfulness, are regarded as guardians of civility and honour. Yet in a war they are the first to fall,

the first to lose their identity. Waugh exposes his intense snobbery, his fear of the advance of Hooper and his disillusion with the twentieth century which has destroyed the ideals of this aristocracy of the past, when he bitterly complains:

> These men must die to make a world for Hooper; they were the aborigines, vermin by right of law, to be shot off at leisure so that things might be safe for the travelling salesman, with his polygonal pince-nez, his fat wet hand-shake, his grinning dentures.[15]

Waugh lacks the two qualities that are required of every religious writer: love and humility. Intolerance, prejudice and arrogance predominate in this novel, and there is a little compassion, but not a trace of love. Stephen Spender sums up Waugh's achievement in Brideshead this way:

> It is when he identifies his prejudices with a moralizing religion that qualities anachronistic and absurd in his view of life-intolerance, bigotry, and self-righteousness - work against his talent, and even tend to caricature the very ideas he is supposed to be supporting. When he is solemn, his work provides an extravagant example of faith without charity... there was more love among the innocent savages of Decline and Fall and the cannibals of Vile Bodies than we find among the Marchmains and Charles Ryder.[16]

Brideshead Revisited is eloquently written in prose that is both poetic and evocative. Its poetic imagery appropriately (since his theme is memory) gives to the novel a dream-like quality, and expresses situations and emotions with intensity because it eliminates the need for wordy explanations and concentrates a great deal of significance into a small space. The recurrence of images at intervals gives unity to the work, binds it together while at the same time revealing the theme. Charles, through the "low door in the wall", finds his "enchanted garden" at Brideshead. From one "forerunner",

Sebastian, he is drawn to another, Julia:

> 'It's frightening', Julia once said, 'to think how you have completely forgotten Sebastian.'
> 'He was only a forerunner.'
> '...I've thought since, perhaps I'm only a forerunner, too.'
> 'Perhaps,' I thought, while her words still hung in the air between us like a wisp of tobacco smoke... 'perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols....'[17]

Later, when Charles lies between sleeping and waking in the darkness thinking of the Marchmains and their faith, he is conscious of another image:

> ...an arctic hut and a trapper alone with his furs... everything dry and ship-shape and warm inside, and outside the blizzard of winter raging and the snow piling up against the door...minute by minute...the white heap sealing the door, until quite suddenly when the wind dropped and the sun came out on the ice slopes and the thaw set in a block would move, and tumble, high above,...till the whole hillside seemed to be falling, and the little lighted place would open and splinter and disappear, rolling with the avalanche into the ravine.[18]

The final words of Charles Ryder's memories are:

> The avalanche was down, the hillside swept bare behind it; the last echoes died on the white slopes....[19]

Images that at first are only partly understood finally become clear. Charles finds more in his "enchanted garden" than he bargains for; Julia and Sebastian are both only "forerunners" of divine love, and finally the hillside of faith becomes clear, the storm abates and all is calm in his life.

Yet the style of Brideshead is at times undisciplined. The trenchant dialogue of the earlier satires and the quiet, moderate style of Work Suspended have given way to an overripeness, an ornateness.

Lush passages are profuse and, as Frederick Stopp asserts,

are "spun out beyond the requirements of disciplined style":20

> There Julia sat, in a tight little gold tunic and a white gown, one hand in the water idly turning an emerald ring to catch the fires of the sunset; the carved animals mounted over her dark head in a cumulus of green moss and glowing stone and dense shadow, and the water round them flashed and bubbled and broke into scattered flames.21

This ornateness springs from a romantic nostalgia brought on by disillusionment with the war. The times are apparently too serious for Waugh to engage in the objective, cynical satires of the twenties and thirties. Brideshead Revisited is written during, what Waugh calls in the preface to the 1960 edition, "a bleak period of...privation and threatening disaster." It is a time, too, when the author feels the English country houses are "doomed to decay and spoliation like the monasteries of the sixteenth century". As a result the book

> ...is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language....22

In spite of its overripeness, this prose is more moving than the cold, staccato prose of the earlier books. It conveys greater emotional depth. Waugh's early satires left one cold because the emotions of the characters were not expressed. In Brideshead, as has already been noted, the poetic prose expresses the feelings of the characters with intensity; the reader lives through these feelings and becomes involved with the characters themselves. It must also be emphasized that one of Waugh's purposes in this novel is to create a picture of the romantic past; to crystallize his romantic nostalgia. There is no doubt that this prose with its dream-like quality, its evocativeness, its rich metaphor, does exactly that. One

can open the book at random and find passages that summon up the past with great skill, appropriately giving it the atmosphere of a dream:

> It is thus I like to remember Sebastian, as he was that summer, when we wandered alone together through that enchanted palace; Sebastian in his wheel chair spinning down the box-edged walks of the kitchen gardens in search of alpine strawberries and warm figs....[23]

Like Work Suspended, this novel is told in the first person by the central character. Charles Ryder is both the main figure and the middle-aged narrator who relates his remembered experiences with all the apparent disorder of memories. Waugh in this novel perpetuates by a single act of memory relationships and events of the past. Like Proust, he skilfully uses the first person narrator to give back the whole of his departed world seen across a span of years, complete with all its snobberies, pathos and laughter.

But Charles Ryder is an unpleasant narrator. He has a sentimentality that infects the whole novel and often gives the reader a distorted view of the other characters in the novel. This portrait of Julia illustrates the point:

> This was the creature, neither child nor woman, that drove me through the dusk that summer evening, untroubled by love, taken by the power of her own beauty, hesitating on the cool edge of life...the heroine of a fairy story turning over in her hands the magic ring; she had only to stroke it with her fingertips and whisper the charmed word, for the earth to open at her feet and belch forth her titanic servant, the fawning monster who would bring her whatever she asked, but bring it, perhaps, in unwelcome shape.[24]

It seems that Waugh the romantic being has taken over in Brideshead Revisited. Charles Ryder, who has turned to both

the social class - the aristocracy, and the religion - Roman Catholicism, that defend the values of the past, evokes its vanished splendours in rich profusion:

> Hooper was no romantic. He had not as a child ridden with Rupert's horse or sat among camp fires at Xanthus-side; at the age when my eyes were dry to all save poetry...Hooper had wept often, but never for Henry's speech on St. Crispin's day, not for the epitaph at Thermopylae...Gallipoli, Balaclava, Quebec, Lepanto, Bannockburn, Roncevales, and Marathon - these and a hundred such names whose trumpet-notes, even now in my sere and lawless state, called irresistibly across the intervening years with all the clarity and strength of boyhood, sounded in vain to Hooper.[25]

Charles so repudiates adult life, is so enchanted with the days of youth, that most of his recalled experiences concern his early life with Sebastian, who is so fascinated with his childhood that, even as an adult, he carries his teddy bear wherever he goes. It is true that Waugh apparently does not approve of Sebastian's actions, for he condemns him to a life of decadence because of his complete repudiation of the adult world. But Charles Ryder is allowed to be over-emotional with impunity, and he is permitted, as we have already noted, to let his sentimentality distort the reader's view of places and people in the novel. It is also because Waugh is overtly sentimental with his boyhood that Brideshead is written disproportionately, with more than half the book devoted to the adolescent days of Charles and Sebastian. Such gross sentimentality on the part of the author becomes nauseous and reveals what D.S. Savage calls:

> The basic immaturity of conception which makes it impossible for Waugh to deal capably with his characters' adult lives.[26]

Helena is the story of a saint who, as Waugh points out in his essay, "St. Helena, Empress", is remembered for a single act, the discovery of the True Cross.

Waugh has claimed Britain as Helena's birthplace, and King Coel, old King Cole of the nursery rhyme, as her father. We meet her first as an English schoolgirl who overnight falls in love with Constantius of the Imperial family. He takes her with him to Nish. Through a series of plots he becomes Emperor of the West. Helena for political reasons is cast aside. She lives quietly at Spalata and then at Treves where, without any of the resistance to faith shown by Charles Ryder or Lord Marchmain, she accepts the Christian religion. On the invitation of her son Constantine she goes to Rome where she meets Pope Sylvester. In their conversation Helena inquires:

> 'Where is the cross anyway?'
> 'What cross, my dear?'
> 'The only one. The real one.'
> 'I don't know. I don't think anyone knows.'
> 'It must be somewhere. Wood doesn't just melt like snow.' 27

Thus the search for the cross becomes her great adventure. Against great odds she finds it and so makes her one great contribution to the world.

In Helena, as in Brideshead Revisited, Waugh is concerned with tracing "the workings of the divine purpose in a pagan world". Like that earlier novel, it is also overtly concerned with Roman Catholicism. But the first person narrator, the ornate language, the poetic prose and romantic soliloquy are absent. That kind of writing was a product of Waugh's period

of "privation and threatening disaster".

Helena contains much that is characteristic of the early satires. From the beginning of the book Waugh establishes overtones of flippancy. Helena's early conversation might be taken for mouthings of the Bright Young People:

> 'It is only the fisherman', said Helena, 'coming up from the sea for tonight's beano'.[28]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'What a lark!' said Princess Helena, 'What a sell!'[29]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'What a spread!' said Princess Helena, when she had guzzled. 'What a blow-out!'[30]

There is also a levity, an unconcern about Fausta's arranged seance with the witches who foretell in irreverent verses, reminiscent of the hymn parody in Decline and Fall, that Helena is dangerous and should be killed:

> Man of destiny, man of grief
> Nobody loved that plenty big chief.
> The world was his baby, but baby got sore.
> So he lost the world and plenty lives more.
> Threw him snakes eyes, lost all the pile,
> Lost to the world on Helena's isle.[31]

As in the early books the characters in Helena are not credible personalities. Marcias, Pope Sylvester and Lactantius, for example, exist only to express a point of view. Even Helena, who early in the novel is a convincing and attractive young girl, later becomes lifeless, monotonous, a mouth-piece for the condemnation of the non-Christian sects and the praise of the Christian Church.

Neither are these characters people for whom we feel any real concern. Their deaths are announced as nonchalantly as are Lord Tangent's in Decline and Fall or Agatha Runcible's in Vile Bodies. Constantine unemotionally arranges the death

of his son Crispus, and one day when his wife is in the bath, he bolts the door and orders the slaves to put on extra heat. "She slid and floundered and presently lay still like a fish on a slab." Waugh's comparison of the death of a human with that of a fish, his use of "slid" and "floundered", verbs that portray no trace of emotion and are ordinarily considered appropriate only to describe the death of animals, reveals a lack of sympathy that leaves the reader cold, and as unmoved as he was at the announcement of the death of Prendergast in Decline and Fall.

If one approaches Helena with the sterotyped hagiography in mind, expecting the pious life of a saint, one is likely to condemn it as a failure and commence to teach the author his business. One will probably argue that it lacks the serious tone that such a serious theme demands; that its flippancy is incongruous with the subject; that the characters are not real as one would expect in hagiography; that the cynically humorous picture of Constantine is unsuited to the novel and that he lacks the gravity and strength of one who is greatly responsible for the victory of christianity in Rome.

But one must not think of Helena so much as the accurate account of the life of a saint as of the study of a social and religious movement. Neither must one expect an historically accurate recreation of the past for its own sake. Waugh has here made use of the legend that serves as a medium for his vision. It allows him to comment on his own times while at the same time maintaining a certain degree of objectivity,

while appearing to be writing the facts about third-century Rome. Waugh will not debar himself from his purpose for the sake of creating an historical illusion. His use of modern idiom brings the novel closer to the present and gives it vivacity. The incongruity produced by the modern idiom yields a witty surprise and a comic charm. Waugh's treating the characters as Bright Young People brings them closer to us, to our time, and so creates the impression that in condemning their depravity he is damning the deceit and cruelty of modern society; that in accusing Constantine of "Power without Grace" he is reprimanding all the Constantines of the twentieth century. The pre-christian world is seen as today's society in which a fairly simple girl like Helena gave the world hope, although, unlike most saints, she lived comfortably and bore no suffering "beyond the normal bereavements, disappointments and infirmities which we all expect to bear". This, perhaps, sounds a note of optimism for our own day, for Waugh is saying that it has happened once and it can happen again that in Bright-Young-Thing type of society someone might, if given a chance, help change the world.

After one abandons one's "technical presuppositions" of how a novel about a saint should be written, after one first considers Waugh's aim in the novel before criticising its technique, then the seeming weaknesses - the incongruity, the flat characters, the irreverent tone - all appear appropriate to his purpose and one is forced to conclude that he has been fairly successful in combining satire and hagiography.

Like all of Waugh's heroes since Tony Last, Helena is a visionary. She gladly relinquishes home and local loyalties to search for a larger loyalty - a city. She explains to her father:

> 'I must go with Constantius', papa, wherever he goes. Besides, he's promised to take me to The City.'[32]

However, hers is different from Tony Last's Gothic city, or the city of Brideshead, because, as Frederick Stopp asserts,

> Helena is the first-fruit of Mr. Waugh's liberation from an imagined union implicit in the term 'household of faith', from desire to realize a world of the spirit in allegiance to a great home.[33]

Her city has no walls, it is not confined to any particular place, class or local loyalty. Hers is the Christian civitas. She tries to explain to Constantius:

> 'I mean couldn't the wall be at the limits of the world and all men civilized and barbarian have a share in the city?'[34]

This movement away from the aristocratic myth has meant a lessening of snobbery and bigotry which so worked against Waugh's talents in Brideshead Revisited. There is in Helena a gentler humanity, more compassion and love. Helena in Rome mixed with the crowd - officials, hucksters, sightseers and crooks:

> A few years earlier Helena would have shrunk from them, would have had a posse of guards whacking and barging to clear a little cloister for her to move and breathe in. 'Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.' That was an echo from the old empty world. There was no hate in her now and nothing round her was quite profane. She could not dispense with her guard but...always her heart was beyond them, over their big shoulders in the crowd.[35]

As a result of conversion there has been a change in her

personality, something not evident in Charles Ryder's. Her saintliness is shown in her actions, not merely explained as is the saintliness of Lady Marchmain of Brideshead Revisited.

However, Helena has one major weakness. Like Brideshead, it is too obviously about Roman Catholic theology and dogma. It is so much concerned with Catholic doctrine that De Vitis is prompted to write, with a good deal of justification, that

> Helena is more valid as an historical commentary and as an apology for Roman Catholicism than as a novel which creates an experience of life.[36]

Conversation is at times falsified to make a point. When faced with Helena's probing questions, Marcias is made to appear incompetent in order to portray his sect as being shallow and unsound. At the same time the conversation between Lactantius and Helena occurs only to defend the Christian position. Helena always wants straightforward answers to her questions and rejects Marcias for not giving them. Yet she is forced to answer Lactantius more positively:

> 'It is always the same, Lactantius, when we talk about religion. You never quite answer my questions but you always leave me with the feeling that somehow the answer was there all the time if we had taken a little more trouble to find it.[37]

The Christian message is stated too directly, too explicitly, and at the expense of art.

This novel is important in Waugh's development as a novelist because it reveals an absence of the aristocratic myth, a movement towards an acceptance of reality without myth or illusion, towards a surrender to the modern world, a subject dealt with more fully in the war trilogy.

This novel also completes an allegorical cycle; the odyssey of man is completed here. In Waugh's first novel, Decline and Fall, the pattern is a fall from innocence, a struggle in the wasteland and a withdrawal from it. A Handful of Dust goes a step further; a search for a new city is conducted. But Tony Last wants this city to be a replica of Gothic Hetton and is condemned to a living death in, what Frederick Stopp describes in his book on Waugh as, "a grotesque parody of the Eden from which he was expelled".[38] Both of these novels end in the wasteland; there is no way out. Brideshead Revisited, however, goes a step further. It ends with Christian redemption. The sin within is finally conquered; Charles Ryder becomes a complete man in God. Helena goes still further; it is concerned mainly with what happens after salvation has been achieved. She finds the True Cross, an event that is symbolical of spiritual marriage. She discovers the "real Troy" of her youth, the Christian civitas. Her discovery is a remedy for sin in the world, it cleanses the land. Fishermen in the Adriatic claim "she came there and...calmed the raging sea since when waters have always been kind to sailors". She set up the composite crosses of the thieves and Cyprus was changed into a fertile land. Constantine was finally baptized and Christianity spread. Her finding the Cross, like the coming of King Arthur or the slaying of the dragon by the Red Cross Knight, presaged a new life, a new order.

Waugh has come a long way since Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies. The detached, comic mode of these earlier novels

made it possible for him to confront us with the grim realities of our age while keeping his criticism implied. In Brideshead and Helena he has more directly expressed his views, and his ideas are commonplace, dull, annoying and his manner ineffective; one finds it difficult to take his opinions seriously. It appears that his serious manner really says less, and says it less effectively, than his early satires.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

1. Evelyn Waugh, Work Suspended (London, 1950), p. 167.

2. Ibid., p. 167.

3. Edmund Wilson, 'Never Apologize, Never Explain', New Yorker, XX (March 4, 1944), p. 68.

4. Rose Macaulay 'Evelyn Waugh', Horizon, XIV (December, 1946), p. 371.

5. Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh (London, 1964), p. 77.

6. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (London, 1960), p. 371.

7. Stephen Spender, The Creative Element (London, 1953), p. 172.

8. Time, XLVII (April 8, 1946), p. 27.

9. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, p. 373.

10. Ibid., p. 373.

11. Francis L. Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (New York, 1959), p. 102.

12. Frederick Karl 'The World of Evelyn Waugh: The Normally Insane', The Contempory English Novel (New York, 1962), p. 178.

13. Bernard Bergonzi, 'Evelyn Waugh's Gentleman',

Critical Quarterly, V (Spring, 1963), p. 23.

14. Donat O'Donnell, 'The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh', Maria Cross (London, 1953), p. 130.

15. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, p. 155.

16. Stephen Spender, op. cit., p. 174.

17. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, p. 333.

18. Ibid., p. 341.

19. Ibid., p. 373.

20. Frederick J. Stopp, Evelyn Waugh (Boston, 1958), p. 121.

21. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, pp. 305 - 306.

22. Ibid., p. 9.

23. Ibid., pp. 91 - 92.

24. Ibid., pp. 201 - 202.

25. Ibid., p. 17.

26. D. S. Savage, 'The Innocence of Evelyn Waugh', The Novelist as Thinker, ed. B. Rajan (London, 1947), p. 39.

27. Evelyn Waugh, Helena (London, 1950), p. 208.

28. Ibid., p. 3.

29. Ibid., p. 15.

30. Ibid., p. 18.

31. Ibid., p. 188.

32. Ibid., p. 33.

33. Frederick J. Stopp, op. cit., p. 207.

34. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, pp. 48 - 49.

35. Ibid., p. 145.

36. A. A. De Vitis, Roman Holiday (New York, 1956), p. 67.

37. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, p. 136.

38. Frederick J. Stopp, op. cit., p. 208.

A REVERSION

> ... he found a peculiar relish in contemplating the victories of barbarism.... Scott-King's Modern Europe

After Brideshead Revisited many readers suspected that Waugh, in middle age, was giving way to regret and nostalgia, that he was softening. The novels of this chapter give that theory the lie. In Brideshead Waugh had largely abandoned his pre-war style because his disillusion with the war drove him back to the past, and his earlier mode could not be used to communicate recollected memories or the influence of religion in people's lives.

In 1947, as in the 1930's, Mr. Waugh still nurses a furious scorn for modernity. There are still lies, pretensions and cruelty to be exposed; there are still ugly facts about society to be presented, and satire in the earlier tradition provides a means for comment on the times.

The first of Waugh's satires in his earlier style is Scott-King's Modern Europe. Scott-King, the hero of the book, becomes enthralled by a poem of the seventh-century Neutralian poet, Bellorius. The subject of the poem is

> ...a visit to an imaginary island of the New World where in primitive simplicity, untainted by tyranny or dogma, there subsisted a virtuous, chaste and reasonable community.[1]

Scott-King, too, is attracted by such a dream. However, when he visits Neutralia his dream is shattered, he is rudely

awakened. In sharp contrast to his own ideals and to Bellorius' Utopia, he finds a chaotic world of fear, suspicion and murder. After his brush with brutality he returns home to continue teaching classics, a subject no longer modern. But Scott-King refuses to teach anything to qualify a person for modern society because, in his own words, "'I think it would be very wicked to do anything to fit a boy for the modern world'".

The characters of this book, like Waugh's pre-war figures, are something less than real people. For example, Dr. Fee and the engineer Garcia typify the people produced by the system Mr. Waugh is condemning. In sharp contrast, Scott-King personifies humanism and culture. He is the familiar exile who finds himself stranded in a hostile world. His journey from Granchester, through the tribulations and miseries of Modern Europe, and his return to obscurity reminds us of Paul Pennyfeather's odyssey from Scone, through the disordered world of Grimes, Prendergast and Margo Metroland, back to Scone again. Tony Last, too, has affinities with Scott-King. Both are dreamers: Last has visions of a Gothic city but in his search he is condemned to failure; Scott-King dreams of a "chaste, virtuous and reasonable community". His speech at the unveiling of Bellorius' statue reveals his ideal:

> He had said that a torn and embittered world was that day united in dedicating itself to the majestic concept of Bellorius, in rebuilding itself first in Neutralia, then among all the yearning peoples of the West, on the foundations Bellorius had so securely laid. He had said that they were lighting a candle that day which by the Grace of God should never be put out.[2]

The statue, however, is not Bellorius, "it was not even unambiguously male; it was scarcely human". Neutralia has

given Scott-King the lie, it is not dedicated to the "majestic concept of Bellorius". No candle has been lit, his dream world can never be realized. Once again the humanist has failed; sanity, it is shown, cannot succeed in an insane world; barbarism, as in Black Mischief, is again the victor.

Waugh's presentation still has traces of earlier wit and humour. For example, Miss Sveningen, one of the guests at Bellorius' Tercentenary Celebration, arrives in Neutralia in sports dress that, to the delight of the men present, reveals "unpredictable expanses and lengths of flesh". When she appears at the party, she is dressed "from collar bone to humerus" in silk. Waugh, in overstating such a trivial subject as the effect of Miss Sveningen's party frock on the guests is extremely amusing. When she first appears, the men regard her aghast, then,

> ...one by one, with the languor born of centuries of hereditary disillusionment; the knights of Malta rose from their places and saundered with many nods to the bowing footmen towards the swing doors, towards the breathless square, towards the subdivided palaces where their wives awaited them.[3]

The situation is further shown to be absurd when Whitemaid comments:

> 'You must remember how she looked in shorts? A Valkyrie, something from the heroic age. Like some god-like, some unimaginable strict school prefect, a dormitory monitor.'[4]

The frivolous juxtaposition of words suggesting poetry and myth such as "god-like", "Valkyrie" and the prosaic "strict school prefect", "dormitory monitor" produces a shock in the rhythm which creates a ridiculous situation and is thus highly amusing.

Is one to conclude, then, that the writer of Scott-King's Modern Europe is the same Waugh of the twenties and thirties? No, for there has indeed been a departure from his earlier mode. Evelyn Waugh of Scott-King's Modern Europe is no longer the exuberant young cynic of Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies. Except for the Miss Sveningen episode, there is here almost none of the delightful fooling that characterizes the earlier satires. Because it lacks the earlier distortion and exaggeration, the situations are not nearly so funny. It is as if Mr. Waugh's imagination were not stirred, as if there were a lack of excitement with the scene. As Frederick Stopp suggests, to Waugh

> The modern state is just boring, and the mode of its rejection varies between distaste and petulance.[5]

The merriment and zest of the Bright Young People are supplanted by melancholy. In fact there are no Bright Young People, only the dull, insipid middle-aged who have no such vitality of character as Colonel Blount of Vile Bodies or Captain Grimes of Decline and Fall.

He has also abandoned the lively dialogue of the pre-war satires. Instead there are longer passages of description and reported action that remind one of the meditative style of Brideshead Revisited. The first six pages of Scott-King's Modern Europe are monotonous stretches of third person narrative that has neither the levity of the sharp-pointed dialogue of Vile Bodies nor the precision and individuality of Brideshead Revisited.

Waugh has also made the mistake of abandoning the admirable

detachment of his earlier satires, of not letting the situations and characters speak for themselves, of attracting attention to himself by making open comments. His animus is too obvious in the following passages:

> Out of it emerged the present republic of Neutralia, a typical modern state...supporting a vast ill-paid bureaucracy whose work is tempered and humanized by corruption.[6]

A little later in the book he is overtly petulant with another aspect of modernity:

> Here on a bare hillock stood the National Memorial. Like all modern state-architecture it was a loveless, unadorned object saved from insignificance only by its bulk....[7]

In Waugh's pre-war books his objectivity permitted him to attack in all directions; now he sees the absurd only in what he detests. His commitment to the cause has limited his scope.

Even though Scott-King has affinities with earlier heroes like Paul Pennyfeather and Adam Symes, he is much less attractive, less spirited. The latter is a melancholic, dim creature claiming to be something he is not - an intellectual. He is too perfect an embodiment of Waugh's attitude towards the modern world, which makes his stand for culture and honesty more boring than convincing. His decision to reject economic history for classics, because he thinks it wicked to prepare a boy for modern society, suggests the cure for the world's ills is a return to the classics. As an answer to corruption this is trivial, and as a conclusion to the dramatic narrative it is implausible.

Waugh of Scott-King's Modern Europe has become bitter,

indignant. In books like Vile Bodies and A Handful of Dust one notices, instead of malice, an ambivalence. He is on the one hand mocking fashionable society for its loss of direction, its confusion, its meaninglessness. Yet, on the other, he appears to be impressed by its rashness and venture-some spirit. He condemns Brenda Last and her friends for their cruelty towards Tony Last; but he also damns Tony for depending solely on the values of the past. Here there is no ambivalence and none of the tension that it produces. In this story there are no split loyalties; as in Brideshead Revisited, Waugh has taken sides. His hostility is directed towards modernity, which in this book includes education, totalitarianism and modern travel. The comic misadventures of Basil Seal and William Boot are replaced by the terrifying experiences of a modern exile, Scott-King. One feels that the difference between Scott-King's Modern Europe and Black Mischief is parallel to the difference between his travel books, Waugh in Abyssinia and Labels. In both Black Mischief and Labels the going is good; in the other two books the world has hardened, life is grimmer, totalitarianism has become ruthless and tyrannical. Nothing good has come out of the war; it has created a Modern Europe that is ugly, a Europe that has no room for decency, honesty or justice.

When Waugh went to Hollywood in 1947 to discuss the filming of Brideshead Revisited, he spent some time at Forest Lawn, the great burial place of Southern California. From this visit he took home with him "a great shapeless chunk of experience" that later became the The Loved One.

The book is the story of an unsuccessful young English film writer, Dennis Barlow, who gets a job in a pets' cemetery. He falls in love with Aimée Thanatogenos, a cosmetician at Whispering Glades (Forest Lawn), and so becomes the rival of Mr. Joyboy, the senior mortician at that establishment. Aimée becomes disillusioned with both of them and takes her own life. To avoid a scandal Dennis cremates her body at the pets' cemetery.

Like his early satires, this novel has an exact and precise style. There is the same economy of expression, the same frequent use of brief, jerky, humorous sentences:

> 'That sounded like "Dr. Kentworthy". Is that what you are trying to say?'
> Mr. Joyboy gulped.
> 'Dr. Kentworthy knows?'
> Mr. Joyboy groaned.
> 'He does not know?'
> Mr. Joyboy gulped.
> 'You want me to spread the news to him?'
> Groan.
> 'You want me to keep him in ignorance?'
> Gulp.
> 'You know, this is just like table-turning.'
> 'Ruin', said Mr. Joyboy. 'Mom'.[8]

Here Mr. Joyboy is distraught because Aimée has committed suicide. Ironically he, whose profession is handling corpses, has now to depend on someone else to arrange cremation. The best he can do is cry in desperation to his "mom", an act entirely true to character but wholly inappropriate in the circumstances. This inappropriateness creates a comic situation.

Waugh's humour is as unsqueamish and as ruthless as ever. There is the same childish delight in cruelty. The suicide of

Sir Francis Hinsley, chief script-writer in Megalopolitan Pictures, is treated with the same nonchalance as is Flossie's in Vile Bodies. Dennis's cremating Aimée has affinities with Basil's eating Prudence in Black Mischief. The parody of the order of the Christian funeral service for the burial of a dog ("dog that is born of bitch hath but a short time to live") reminds one of Miss Ape's evangelical hymn ("There ain't no flies on the lamb of God") in Vile Bodies. There is throughout this book the same earlier flippancy, the same sacrilegious attitude.

The society of The Loved One is as decadent and as phoney as that of Decline and Fall. Nothing is what it seems. The poems Dennis pretends to write are all quotations from famous authors. Mr. Slump, who can not cope with his own problems, presumes to advise others, and Whispering Glades is a thriving business built on an illusion. This society has lost its values, there is left not a trace of human dignity; commercialism has destroyed man's spirit. Man has become a robot who, as Sir Francis says, is only "...capable of a few crude reactions - nothing more".

The characters of The Loved One have affinities with those in Waugh's earlier writings. For example, both Basil Seal and Dennis are equally unreal, and if taken seriously both would be equally revolting. Both are bounders. Dennis's trickery in extracting money from Mr. Joyboy for Aimée's cremation recalls Basil's exploitation of the evacuee children in Put Out More Flags. Because both are caricatures we are

amused at their flippancies. Waugh exaggerates certain qualities of his characters and so creates symbols of the decadence he wants to satirize. Mr. Joyboy, the effiminate mortician, embodies all that Whispering Glades stands for. When Waugh condemns him he is damning Whispering Glades itself.

It is not true, however, to say that in The Loved One Waugh returns completely to his earlier style. As we have observed earlier, in books like Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies Waugh handles his material with amused detachment. There is little if any trace of disgust. Even when he uses the term "vile bodies", one does not detect the acrimony that is usually the connotation of such an expression. There is not the same balance of uncommitted humour in this book. In these earlier satires there is more farce; here one feels Waugh is using parody and exaggeration solely to condemn. The Loved One reveals the mood of rancour that prevails in Edmund Campion. Waugh's personal animosity against things American is too much in evidence. The Englishmen in America are described by the narrator as exiles in "the barbarous regions of the world". He describes Aimée as the typical American girl, the standard product:

> A man could leave such a girl in a delicatessen shop in New York, fly three thousand miles and find her again in the cigar stall at San Franciso... and she would croon the same words to him...and express the same views.[9]

Such direct comments are not an integral part of the story. They are crude exaggerations about American life, revealing a personal malice which is annoying to the readers.

A deep religious belief also pervades this novel. There is not the direct, overt Christian statement of Brideshead Revisited, but one is aware that Waugh is speaking from a Christian point of view. The Christian Church emphasizes that life is a preparation for death and that the future of one's soul depends on one's condition at death. To commercialize death, to attempt to make the dead resemble the living, to minimize the awfulness of death is to Waugh unchristian. And unless one realizes that he is here contrasting the secular and the Christian attitudes towards death, one fails to appreciate his task.

The Loved One is a brilliant and powerful satire, economically written. Waugh's indignation is not diffused over so many subjects as it is in Scott-King's Modern Europe. He concentrates his attack on Whispering Glades, and by treating it with detail and without mercy he is portraying the epitome of man's fear, pretence and emptiness in the twentieth century.

This novel is sharply focused: there are no unnecessary details, no blurred edges. All of the subordinate episodes in the book, such as the humiliation and death of Sir Francis Hinsley, the cremation of Mrs. Hunkel's dog, and Dennis at the end of the book unemotionally awaiting "his loved one's final combustion", are skilfully handled to add to the desired effect, each is a part of a series of calculated shocks.

The Loved One is a more sustained, a more searing satire than Waugh's pre-war books. There is here much less farce,

much less slapstick humour. Satire permeates the whole novel; every action, every scene, every character is portrayed as being an integral part of the calculated mockery and condemnation of the system that betrays the Christian idea of death.

In its macabre outrageousness, its unemotional language, its cruelty, The Loved One is unnerving and horrifying. Here the shocking and the ugly are accepted as naturally and as nonchalantly as an early morning cup of tea. Its horror is further emphasized because not one character in the book condemns what Waugh is so vehemently damning. Everyone is a part of his milieu; there is not a single stabilizing influence. The characters are depraved, insensitive, and most are relatively undisturbed in their modern inferno.

We have already noticed that in his early books Waugh appeared to be attracted to the Bright Young People. He made them glamorous and witty, and did not catch completely the emptiness and futility of their lives. In The Loved One he is more successful in portraying meaninglessness because the characters of this book have not one admirable characteristic. They are people without values, without culture, without religion; people who cannot face reality, who have a deep fear of death. To minimize this fear they have built Whispering Glades. And to emphasize their shocking plight Waugh has given Whispering Glades, a thoroughly irreligious establishment, the appearance of a religious institution. The first time Dennis visits the burial grounds he is likened to "a missionary

priest making his first pilgrimage". Aimée performs her duties "like a nun", and Mr. Joyboy is regarded as a high priest. All of this creats the impression that the same dedication and devotion is given to spreading the lies of Whispering Glades as to preaching the Christian gospel. It creates an air of blasphemy, producing in the reader the feeling that man is thoroughly depraved, that the wall separating barbarism and civilization has been breached.

In this book Waugh makes superb use of parallelism as a structural device. Before we are introduced to Whispering Glades, the human burying place, we are made acquainted with The Happier Hunting Grounds, the pets' cemetery. Before we witness a human burial, we see the funeral of a dog. One is shocked into the realization that, on a smaller scale, the pets' funeral home and funerals are almost a duplication of the human cemetery and burial rites. The fact that at death as much attention is given to animals as to humans is both funny and appalling - funny because the situation is inappropriate in the circumstances as we see them; appalling because it implies man and animals are on the same level.

The phoniness of the movie industry is paralleled to the falsity of the funeral home. When Juanita del Pablo arrives at the movie studio, she loses her own identity and becomes at first Spanish, then Irish. She, like Mr. Joyboy's corpses, becomes something she is not, a counterfeit, a sham.

Sir Francis Hensley, whose contract with Megalopolitan Pictures is not renewed, takes his life. Aimée of Whispering

Glades, because of her emotional and ethical problems, also commits suicide. This repetition of self-destruction accentuates the fact that the worlds of the movie studio and the mortuary business are equally soul-destroying, and anyone with any degree of sanity cannot survive in such an insane world.

To give more significence to the deception that Whispering Glades epitomizes, Waugh makes use of a classical parallel. Dennis, in being ferried across the water to Lake Isle, reminds one of Charon ferrying the souls of the dead across Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Greek Mythology. Just as the waters of Lethe bring forgetfulness to those who cross, so Whispering Glades is designed to cause people to forget reality, to forget the awfulness of death, to forget their own helplessness when facing it, to forget the corruption that might have caused it.

The Loved One is much more powerful and has much more zest than Scott-King's Modern Europe. Waugh appears to be more excited, more stimulated with the scene. In this book he contemplates the barbarism of society with monstrous and satiric glee. Donat O'Donnell describes this mirth as "the bitter delight of the aristocrat who finds the rabble living down to his worst expectations".[10] The humour of this novel is puckish, malign. Waugh's scorn is fierce, reminiscent of Swift's. And, like Swift's, his laughter has no tolerance or sympathy; it is uncompromising and irreverent. Waugh is here a modern prophet laughing in feverish merriment; prophetically

writing the shocking comedy of twentieth-century society. He is a warning voice in the wilderness.

Throughout this book one finds oneself laughing at suicide, at deceit, at decadence, but it is a cathartic laugh; we laugh in self-defence, as we would if threatened by a world crisis, to ease the sense of danger.

Those who took exception to Mr. Waugh's remanticism in Brideshead Revisited, his religion in Helena, his anti-Americanism in The Loved One, will no doubt object to his politics in Love Among the Ruins. For this little book clearly reveals Waugh's animus against the modern welfare state. In all of his books Waugh has disclosed a certain dislike for modern society; Love Among the Ruins is the epitome of that attitude expressed, as earlier, with complete lack of compassion, without sentimentality and with a blatant denial of all dignity to human life.

This book does not contain the superb fooling of the pre-war satires. There is nothing to match the wild exploits of Basil Seal or of Captain Grimes; nothing to compare with the hilarious parties of the Bright Young People. This is so perhaps because Waugh feels more at home with fashionable society, and his youthful imagination is more strongly stirred when satirizing it. Neither is this book so powerful, or so hard-hitting as The Loved One. Waugh is obviously not so overexcited with a future state as he is with the present fantastic burial customs of California. Nevertheless, Love Among the Ruins is written with skill and contains a great

deal of humour.

The novel begins with a rather facetious statement:

> Despite their promises at the last election, the politicians had not yet changed the climate.[11]

One accepts it as just an exaggeration of the thoughtless promises of politicians. The next sentence reveals it as more than that:

> The State Meteorological Institute had so far produced only an unseasonable fall of snow and two little thunderbolts no larger than apricots.[12]

Already the government has been moderately successful in controlling the weather. It now becomes a dramatic expression of the power of the state. It foreshadows the insidious control the state will have over the lives of characters later in the novel. Yet, as indicated in the first sentence and as further shown by the frivolous juxtaposition of "thunderbolt" and "apricot", there is an air of flippancy about this paragraph that sets the tone for the whole book. For this book, so unlike Orwell's rather sombre picture of the future, 1984, never loses its astringent humour and is completely free from sentiment.

The second and third paragaphs continue:

> This was a rich, old-fashioned Tennysonian night. Strains of a string quartet floated out from the drawing-room windows and were lost amid the splash and murmur of the gardens. In the basin the folded lilies had left a brooding sweetness over the water.[13]

The reader is lulled, but the tranquility is temporary. This Victorian setting is disturbed by an allusion to the slaughter of peacocks: "...the whole flock...had been found ...slaughtered a day or two ago..." The storm is already

starting to break. The slaying of the peacocks is ominous, is indicative of more violence. It is a brutal condemnation of the new penology, the products of which were responsible for the crime. Waugh is saying that man cannot be changed by stuffing him with culture and minimizing his responsibility for his own acts.

The success of this book as comic satire depends on one technique - inversion. Throughout the book situations are reversed, roles are inverted, everything, in short, is topsy-turvy. Early in the story the reader learns of prisoners who, being so fond of prison life, commit crimes that they may not be considered rehabilitated. The judge of the law court, which tries Miles Plastic for incinerism,

> ...reminded the jury that it was a first principle of the New Law that no man could be held responsible for the consequences of his own acts.[14]

The Euthanasia Centre has more prestige and is more popular than any other government department. An orphan has infinitely more advantages than a child of "a Full Family Life". These are the stock-in-trade of this book, and such stock situations always provide humour. As Bergson points out,

> ...we laugh at the prisoner at the bar lecturing the magistrate; at a child presuming to teach his parents; in a word, at everything that comes under the heading of 'topsy-turvydom'.[15]

But the repetition of inversion throughout the book does more than provide comic scenes; it also emphasizes the ridiculousness of the welfare state. Every time the reader meets such abnormal situations, he automatically in his mind juxtaposes them with what he considers normal. The ironic

contrast gives emphasis to the idiocy of the society that accepts them as normal.

There is also an ironic reversal of expectations, of what the state hopes for from Miles Plastic. It repeatedly claims that he is corrected, whereas, by setting fire to the prison, he proves that he has been transformed into a man of destruction. The state becomes a victim of its own creation and the futility of its penal system is forcefully expressed.

There is also shown an inversion of what people generally accept as attractive and elegant. Miles, who falls in love with Clara because she wears "a long, silken, corn-gold beard", reverses the normal concept of loveliness, thus adding to the touch of mania, of lunacy in the whole book.

Mr. Waugh's comic type has often been a modern man who is callous, inhuman; one thinks of Basil Seal, Captain Grimes and Youkoumian. However, these characters in spite of their madness, have certain pleasant qualities. Miles Plastic, like these, is also callous, but he has no pleasing characteristics; he is sub-human. He is incapable of authentic personality; he is the victim of the modern state that has lost all respect for individuality. He is a ready-made personality, standardized. Like Paul Pennyfeather and William Boot; he is the victim of the world, but it is a more depraved post-war world. These earlier heroes are permitted to escape - Boot to Boot Magna; Paul into Scone. For Miles there is no way out, except self-destruction; he is doomed. So Love Among the Ruins, in spite of its lively humour, is a sad little

jeu d'esprit, and pessimistic.

One finds it difficult in Waugh's early novels to discover a consistent point of view, a secure system of values. When the reader thinks he has discovered the author's intentions they disappear again.

> He lures the reader into a judgement - in the context of neutral narration we are eager to accept one - and then leaves him there, the target of a hostility more subtle and more deep-seated than he had guessed.[16]

Waugh's comic strength lies in his objectivity, his ability to look with scepticism at values that he himself upholds. In the three books of this chapter his sympathy and prejudices are more directly stated than in his first six novels. Here there is no ambivalence; his hostility towards modern burial customs, Americans, totalitarianism and modern penology is overt. Besides being annoying to the reader, this attitude prevents Waugh from hitting out in all directions; it limits him to only those things he find detestable.

It is obvious, when one compares these three books with his pre-war satires, that Waugh's view of the world has changed. The society of Decline and Fall, in spite of its turbulence and baseness, is carefree and attractive. One finds oneself fascinated with Margo Metroland, Captain Grimes and their fashionable society; but the world of Scott-King and Miles Plastic is gloomy, ugly. There is nothing charming or pleasant about totalitarianism, the welfare state, or their products.

The Loved One, with its economical language, its lively dialogue, its coherent structure, its brutal parody, is one

of Waugh's most effective satires. But the other two novels of the chapter are less successful. Malcolm Bradbury writes:

> The success or failure of Waugh's later books depends on the degree to which he is prepared to "go native" as Dennis Barlow did, to follow the demands of the imagination unresistingly into a barbarian world.[17]

This Waugh does not do in Scott-King's Modern Europe or Love Among the Ruins. They lack the excitement and comic delight of The Loved One. One misses also the extreme distortion, the liveliness and the comedy of character that characterize the pre-war satires.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 3

1. Evelyn Waugh, Scott-King's Modern Europe (London, 1950), p. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 66.

3. Ibid., p. 29.

4. Ibid., p. 36.

5. Frederick J. Stopp, Evelyn Waugh (Boston, 1958), pp. 191 - 192.

6. Waugh, Scott-King's Modern Europe, pp. 4 - 5.

7. Ibid., p. 57.

8. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (London, 1961), p. 120.

9. Ibid., p. 45.

10. Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross (New York, 1952), p. 130.

11. Evelyn Waugh, Love Among the Ruins (London, 1953), p. 1.

12. Ibid., p. 1.

13. Ibid., p. 1.

14. Ibid., p. 8.

15. Henri Bergson, 'Laughter' in Comedy (New York, 1956), p. 121.

16. Graham Martin, 'Novelists of Three Decades' The Modern Age, ed. Boris Ford vol. 7 (London, 1961), p. 398.

17. Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh (London, 1964), p. 103.

THE MELLOWING

> ... sophistication has been supplanted by weary wisdom. (Time, Jan. 19, 1962)

The main events of the trilogy are concerned with an historical event, the war, which is shown ironically as mass confusion, a series of absurd encounters with the enemy. The narrative is loosely written; the action is episodic. A variety of characters are thrown together, all seeking to satisfy their personal ambitions. In this chaotic world disaster and death are commonplace, spies and traitors abound, underhandedness and double-dealing are prevalent. In this confusion Guy Crouchback tries to find meaning for his life and his quest gives unity to the story, connects the episodes and gives meaning to the action.

In contrast to the more personal ambitions of that strange variety of men surrounding him, Guy's are shown to be noble. He regards the war as a crusade against the modern world. It is a time for him to dedicate himself to his country and to his faith in the manner of Sir Roger de Waybroke, saintly crusader of the Middle Ages. When Guy hears of the Russo-German alliance, he knows the time has come for him to do battle against the ills of the twentieth century:

> The enemy at last was in plain view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle.[1]

For most of the novel he is a victim of circumstances, an exile in the modern world. He experiences moments of hope but alwaysthere is despair. He is inadvertently responsible for the death of a friend to whom he unwittingly gives a bottle of whiskey when he is down with a fever. While on the Dakar expedition he comes under disapprobation for an escapade arranged by Richie-Hook, his superior officer. He is sadly disillusioned when Ivor Claire, regarded as "the fine flower of them all", deserts in the face of the enemy. These periods of despondency represent stages in his spiritual life; through these sufferings he grows stronger, develops, reaches self-fulfilment.

Each book in the trilogy has a distinctive theme and each marks a stage in Guy's spiritual odyssey. Men at Arms is concerned mainly with his finding a place in the war, his search for identity. Officers and Gentlemen portrays the end of an illusion, showing gentlemen as cowards and priests as spies. Unconditional Surrender reveals the paradox of victory in defeat. Although the war brings no glory to England, even though his heroes are completely superseded, Guy is reconciled to the world and achieves a measure of happiness. This is accomplished by two acts of compassion: his marriage to his ex-wife, Virginia, and his assuming responsibility for her child; and his sympathetic action on behalf of the refugee Jews.

The war trilogy is like, yet very different from, Waugh's earlier novels. There are here many of the characteristics for which Waugh's writings have been noted. There is, for

example, the same naturalness of dialogue, the same ability to catch the appropriate idiom. There is portrayed the same concern for tradition: Guy himself is of the landed gentry and regards all gentlemen as "quintessential England". Neither has Waugh's ability to create memorable characters shown any decline in this novel. Trimmer, the irresponsible commoner, and the garrulous, quixotic officer, Apthorpe, are distant relatives of Captain Grimes and Prendergast of Decline and Fall, and can match any of Waugh's earlier creations for zest and wit. But Waugh of the trilogy is not the exuberant young cynic of the early satires; neither is he the apologist of Brideshead Revisited or Helena, nor the rather contemptuous satirist of The Loved One or of Scott-King's Modern Europe. He is here more thoughtful, more tolerant than heretofore. The books reveal a greater understanding of issues that can be shown best by comparing this novel of the war with another war novel - Put Out More Flags. At the end of that earlier work Basil's task is clear and simple - "killing Germans". This he implies will restore England's former greatness. Guy Crouchback, on the other hand, at the end of his crusade has a more complex view of war. He sees it stripped of its chivalrous and heroic disguise; he sees some of the dishonorable motives for war and is willing to admit that it will not bring national honour.

Guy Crouchback is a man who yearns for traditional values and the order of the past, yet he tries to adjust to and meet the challenge of modern society that is destructive of these values. Unlike the typical Waugh hero, he does not remove

himself from society but feels an obligation to it, and assumes responsibility for its operation. So Waugh changes his method of presentation. In most of his earlier novels one finds that although society is sharply delineated, it is subject to fantasy. Here Waugh is more concerned with experienced reality and there is far less emphasis on extravagance and exaggeration of issues. Waugh creates his illusion of reality by telling the story in massive detail. A whole chapter is devoted to Mr. Crouchback's boarding house and at one time a half page is given to Fido Hound's asking Guy the time. There is also much historical detail and many incidental episodes in clubs and hotels that have almost nothing to do with furthering the action of the story. This overemphasis on detail is perhaps the novel's most serious fault, for it slows the pace of the narrative, creating a sort of slow motion that makes the novel, in spite of humorous episodes and characters, unduly dull.

In the trilogy Waugh successfully combines the seriousness of Brideshead Revisited with the farce of Decline and Fall. However, the difference in humour is quite noticeable. Earlier Waugh's humour was of the boisterous kind which depended heavily on cruelty and rancour. Here it is less brutal, more gentle. A. A. DeVitis observes:

> The youthful extravagance is gone, replaced by a mature appraisal of the ridiculous...it is as though Waugh has come down from the summit and identified himself as one of men.[2]

The difference in humour is further emphasized when one compares the more mild thunder box scenes of Men at Arms

with the ruthless treatment of the Connolly children in Put Out More Flags. Waugh's change of attitude, from cruelty to tolerance, is evident when one contrasts his reproachful handling of Aimée Thanatogenos of The Loved One with his humane treatment of Virginia in the trilogy. For although Virginia is a loose, dissolute woman, she is presented without satire and with full understanding of her weaknesses. Waugh has moved away from his earlier cold, dispassionate attitude. His vision seems to be more humane; he appears to have acquired a more benign view of life. The scorn of The Loved One has been modulated. As R. T. Horchler points out, "...it is rather as a compassionate realist than a satirist that Mr. Waugh tells the story of Guy Crouchback's war..."3

As in Brideshead Revisited and Helena the trilogy is concerned with tracing the operation of divine grace in the world. In the first two books Roman Catholicism is seen, as in these two earlier novels, as a part of a dream of an ideal past that is contrasted with a degenerate, disintegrating present. But, unlike Brideshead Revisited, they are not overtly apologetic. There are no characters like Lady Marchmain or Lord Brideshead who exist solely to express a point of view. Guy's father, for example, is an admirable Catholic, but he does not preach. He is a man with religious convictions living an unassuming life with charity and humility. Guy Crouchback's uncle Peregrine is also a strict Roman Catholic, but is not so wooden as Lord Brideshead. He has a sense of humour, is human enough

to be tempted and to make mistakes as he proves during his one night with Virginia.

In Unconditional Surrender the Church is no longer associated with Guy's nostalgic dream of an aristocratic past. It has come to represent suffering and forgiveness. Religion, as symbolized in Guy's marriage to Virginia, is compassion and private acts of charity. This is a long way indeed from Lord Brideshead's dull preaching of church dogma. Religion in the trilogy has finally grown big enough to contain the world. The conflict between

> ...the conduct of the spiritual life in an ideal realm, identified with a Golden City and a vanished civilization in the past, and the conduct of diurnal life in the real world...[4]

has been partly resolved. Guy's spiritual life is no longer separated from real life; they have merged and become one.

Guy Crouchback, like his predecessors, is an idealist, a romantic. Like Charles Ryder and Tony Last he lives in the past. Guy goes into battle excited by his boyhood readings of the romantic adventures of Captain Truslove, and of Troy and Agincourt. In Men at Arms and Officers and Gentlemen and throughout most of Unconditional Surrender he is a typical Waugh hero, weak, ineffectual, not in control of events. He means well but his acts usually have disastrous results. His values and attitudes serve only to hinder his progress in the world. He is bitterly opposed to modernity but, unlike previous heroes, he faces it. He cannot change the world but he recognizes

opportunities for self-fulfilment and performs his own private act of charity. So Guy excites the humanity of the reader. It is these acts of pietas that round out his character, make him Waugh's most human, most sympathetic hero. He is the first to examine his values and attitudes and, in finding them wanting, to change them. Frederick Karl has observed that Guy is prevented from changing or growing and thus

> He remains what he is: a boring, well-meaning, ineffectual young man on the brink of useless middle age.[5]

But that was Guy before Unconditional Surrender. Near the end of that book one of the Jewish leaders questions him:

> 'Is there any place that is free from evil? It is too simple to say that only the Nazis wanted war. These communists wanted it too. It was the only way in which they could come to power. Many of my people wanted it, to be revenged on the Germans, to hasten the creation of the National State. It seems to me there was a will to war, a death wish, everywhere. Even good men thought their private honour would be satisfied by war. They could assert their manhood by killing and being killed. They would accept hardships in recompense for having been selfish and lazy. Danger justified privilege. I knew Italians - not very many perhaps - who felt like this. Were there none in England?'
> 'God forgive me,' said Guy. 'I was one of them'[6]

This passage, one of the most moving in Waugh's writing, reveals Guy's growth in compassion and self-knowledge. Having finally learned to judge himself, to look at "the dry and empty parts of his...character",[7] to understand himself, he becomes a man, a fully integrated personality.

In Brideshead Revisited we have already noticed that Waugh had developed a cult of the Catholic Aristocracy who

were shown as guardians of those values of the past now threatened by such unromantic barbarians as Hooper. There is in that book a strong association between the Church and the traditions of the aristocracy. Marchmain House is a type of the Catholic City. Charles Rolo writes that Waugh's Catholicism

> ...is so inextricably bound up with worship of ancient British Nobility, so laden with contempt for 'lesser breeds without the law,' that the Church is made to appear a particularly exclusive club rather than a broad spiritual force.[8]

But in Helena there is a move away from this myth. Helena's City has no walls, it is not confined to any local loyalty; hers is the Christian civitas. In the war trilogy the struggle between the romantic myth and what Bernard Bergonzi calls "unadorned reality"[9] is concluded. Men at Arms portrays Guy as a twentieth-century Roger De Waybroke, going forth to defend Christendom and to restore to England her traditional Catholic culture. In Officers and Gentlemen he is rudely awakened. When he sees his own sort, the gentlemen, run away from the enemy, he becomes sadly disillusioned. His romantic view of the aristocracy is transformed. At the end of Unconditional Surrender Guy comes to terms with the modern world and he does so at the expense of his myth. Now the romance is off, the myth is deflated. We are left with the impression that

> Even Trimmer has a soul to be saved and...has become an inhabitant of the City in Helena's sense rather than the Marchmains'..[10]

Guy's Catholicism is no longer at one with class loyalty, the romantic myth has finally collapsed.

Irony, based on contradiction, contrast and paradox, is a device used to express a meaning which is contradictory to the stated one. Any ironic situation or statement has two meanings: the one not obvious but clear to the discerning reader - the ironic truth; the other obvious, accepted only by the superficial reader. A situation is not ironic merely because it contrasts with another, but because it causes the reader to look at the other and evaluate it, or possibly to evaluate both because of the juxtaposition.

Waugh has often used irony in his earlier novels. One recalls the savage irony at the end of Vile Bodies, when the singing of "O tidings of comfort and joy" is juxtaposed with the news of the outbreak of war. One remembers the ironic accusations of Aimée Thanatogenos of The Loved One. She charges Dennis Barlow with cheating because he frequently borrows poetry from the masters, although she is herself, as cosmetician of Whispering Glades, a professional cheat, earning her living by deception. There is also the bitter irony of Miles Plastic's destruction of the very institution that is supposed to have cured him.

The war trilogy, however, is the novel that best reveals Waugh's skilful use of irony. Unlike the examples given from earlier novels, the irony of the trilogy is not savage. In The Loved One and Love Among the Ruins, for example, it is used to condemn, to flay. In the trilogy there is more sympathy, more humility in his

search. The irony of these books reveals the complexity of the situations and ideas by presenting the opposite side; there is no simple, clear cut answer. One noticed a similar ambivalence in A Handful of Dust, but never before in Waugh's writings has irony been so much a part of his vision. Neither has it been so skilfully and so subtly used. Irony is implicit everywhere, in words, situations, actions and theme.

Often there is just a word or two that gives a hint of irony to the passage. Waugh at one time appears to be giving a factual account of Mr. Goodall's ideals:

> Guy visited Mr. Goodall and found him elated by the belief that a great rising was imminent throughout Christian Europe; led by priests and squires, with blessed banners, and the relics of the saints borne ahead, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians, Bavarians, Italians and plucky little contingents from the Catholic cantons of Switzerland would soon be on the march to redeem the times. Even a few Frenchmen, Mr. Goodall conceded, might join the Pilgrimage of Grace....[11]

The choice of words: "plucky little contingents", "Even a few Frenchmen" "conceded" reveal an ironic tone. "Plucky", for example, suggests overwhelming odds. "Little contingents" further emphasizes the redeeming of the times as an illusion. "Even a few Frenchmen" and "conceded" not only disclose Mr. Goodall's disrespect for Frenchmen, but also suggest a last minute detail of a plan, implying that Mr. Goodall is taking this pilgrimage seriously and so making clear his naivety and exposing his romantic fantasies. There is further irony in the fact that Mr. Goodall's views are really a parody of Guy's motives for joining the war. So we are given a glimpse of Mr. Goodall's character,

and the absurdity of Guy's dreams is forcefully exposed in a way not possible were Waugh to state the facts directly, unironically.

In discussing Moll Flanders Dorothy Van Ghent says that irony has a structural function and she compares it to an arch:

> A round arch is made up of a number of wedge shaped blocks, and each of these blocks is pulled earthward in obedience to gravity, but each also exerts a sideways push against its neighbour because of its wedge shape and the weight of other blocks around and over it. If there were only the one pull, freely earthward, the blocks would fall and there would be no arch; but because of the counterforce, acting in the sideways direction, the structure of the arch is defined and preserved. The contrasting significances of an ironic statement or of an ironic situation may be compared with the counteracting stresses that hold the arch up and hold it together - that give it structure.[12]

One can apply this analogy to the trilogy. To illustrate let us consider examples. Although Trimmer is stupid and slightly mad, he is always victorious. In spite of his bungling one of his expeditions, he is acclaimed a success. His superior officers and civilians alike proclaim him a hero. General Whale's citation reads:

> Captain McTavish trained and led a small raiding force which landed on the coast of occupied France. On landing he showed a complete disregard of personal safety which communicated itself to his men. ...Captain McTavish, in spite of having substained injuries in the course of the action, successfully re-embarked his whole force, without casualties.... Throughout the latter phases of the operation he showed exemplary coolness.[13]

Guy's father is also lavish in his praise of him, describing him as "a splendid young fellow". Such dramatic irony displays with clarity the confusion and chaos of war and

the helplessness of human plans in the face of it. This point is further emphasized by Guy's treatment after the expedition at Dakar. Although he acts bravely, and is successful, he is condemned because the operation is not official. It is a black mark against him. Colonel Tickeridge explains:

> 'Of course you were acting under orders. You're in the clear legally. But it'll be a black mark. For the rest of your life when your name comes up, someone is bound to say: "Isn't he the chap who blotted his copy book at Dakar in '40?"[14]

We are here confronted with irony that is structural to the whole novel. It is a sort of irony of fate mocking the plans and actions of men. It vividly exposes the war as nothing more than a series of absurd episodes in which only audacity succeeds.

There is also the ironic contrast between what Guy thinks he can do and what he in fact does accomplish. We have already seen that Guy's ideals are Captain Truslove of his childhood-storybook adventures and Sir Roger De Waybroke. Like then he is crusading against what is wrong in the world. As the war advances his place in it becomes increasingly ambiguous. When the Russians become allies of England, the enemy is no longer in plain view. Guy's throughts and mood are now far removed from Sir Roger. In Unconditional Surrender Guy tells his father "It doesn't seem to matter who wins." Not only does Guy not accomplish what he dreams he will, but he never really meets the enemy:

> In this limbo Guy fretted for more than a week while February blossomed into March. He had

> left Italy four and a half years ago. He had then taken leave of the crusader whom the people called 'il santo inglese'. He had laid his hand on the sword that had never struck the infidel. He wore the medal which had hung round the neck of his brother, Gervase, when the sniper had picked him off on his way up to the line in Flanders. In his heart he felt stirring the despair in which his brother, Ivo, had starved himself to death. Half an hour's scramble on the beach near Dakar; an ignominious rout in Crete. That had been his war.[15]

Again events have come full circle. Guy is back where he started, the chaos remains, his dreams have vanished. The only worthwhile causes now are private acts of charity.

Waugh's vision is centred upon one other ironic contrast - that between Guy's idealistic expectations of the Catholic aristocracy and their disillusioning failure in war. Ivor Claire is for him a typical gentleman, the epitome of culture, honour and good soldiering. When he deserts, Guy's hero is destroyed. Ivor proves himself to be no better than either Hooper or Trimmer. This disclosure of Ivor's cowardice is, ironically, at Guy's expense; it costs him his ideal. He overstates the claim of honour, he counts on moral integrity that Ivor does not possess. This leads to Waugh's deepest irony: Guy's acceptance of Virginia's baby by Trimmer as his son. A child of the lower classes is accepted to carry on the Crouchback line. This act forcefully marks the end of Guy's illusions. At the end of the novel Arthur Box-Bender, Guy's brother-in-law, says, "'things have turned out very conveniently for Guy'". But if things have turned out conveniently for him, it is, as Malcolm Bradbury points out:

> ...only in the limited and ironical way, a way which has involved his unconditional surrender.[16]

Such a complex system of ironies, of stresses and counter stresses is the key to the meaning of this novel. For example, Guy's compassion for Virginia and her child acts as a counterstress to his devotion to the upper classes; it is this cross-pull that defines Guy meaningfully for us. Throughout the books the "contrasting significances," the contrasts between wish and fulfillment, between desert and reward, appearance and reality, effectively portray the disorder of Guy's society. Irony makes this novel a significant work of art, makes it more than a religious tract. It powerfully displays the unresolvable conflicts in a man's search for happiness.

Waugh is writing in the trilogy with a degree of detachment that is absent in Brideshead Revisited. In Men at Arms Guy asks Mr. Goodall:

> '...do you seriously believe that God's Providence concerns itself with the perpetuation of the English Catholic aristocracy?'[17]

The fact that Guy could have asked such a question is indicative of an objectivity completely lacking in that earlier novel. Waugh maintains this detachment partly through his use of irony. The juxtaposition of events, the contrast between expectation and results, the appropriate syntax speak for themselves. Nothing is forced on the reader; he is left to draw his own conclusions.

Waugh has also abandoned the first person point of view employed in Brideshead, and he seldom permits his third person narrator to intrude, to voice his opinions

or pass value judgements. He is an impersonal, detached raconteur telling parts of the story, linking episodes and events into a whole, giving unity to the novel.

Waugh seldom describes events. Throughout these books the action is dramatized. By thus allowing the reader to look through the eyes of different characters Waugh not only maintains a degree of objectivity, but a liveliness of scenes that would be impossible through description. Through dramatization the novel becomes a complex of the views, opinions and outlooks of varied characters.

The great weakness in Waugh's early satires is their pessimism; in them there is no hope for the human situation. In these novels one feels Waugh is not only depicting decadence but is partaking in the values of the decadence he depicts. His characters are deprived of any dignity and life of any meaning. One does not deny that pessimism is a part of human experience and should be reckoned with in literature, but one objects to the over-emphasis on man as a doomed creature and the meaninglessness of life.

In Brideshead Revisited one gets the impression that Waugh is, perhaps, a little vulgar by insisting too much on the external system of his religious beliefs. As he developes as a novelist his religious and political convictions grow clearer. But in The Loved One, Love Among the Ruins and Scott-King's Modern Europe his convictions are too angry. He has no tolerance, no

sympathy for views he does not share. There is in these novels a little too much arrogance, too much malice.

In the war trilogy we hear the voice of an older Waugh. Cynicism is here supplanted by wisdom and youthful merriment by middle-aged melancholy. Waugh has amended many of his earlier attitudes. The note of compassion first sounded in A Handful of Dust and again in Brideshead Revisited is dominant in the trilogy. It is true we miss the fast pace, the economy of construction, the inventiveness, the audacity of the early satires; but we welcome the charity, the tolerance, the depth of characterization, the deepening seriousness. We welcome, too, his respect for life and his concern for people - two requisites for any true work of art.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 4

1. Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms (London, 1962), p. 3.

2. A. A. De Vitis: Roman Holiday (New York, 1956), p. 69.

3. R. T. Horchler, 'The Mellowing of Mr. Waugh's Art', Commonweal, LXII (August 12, 1955), p. 476.

4. Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh (London, 1964), p. 13.

5. Frederick Karl, 'The World of Evelyn Waugh: The Normally Insane', The Contempory English Novel (New York, 1962), p. 170.

6. Evelyn Waugh, Unconditional Surrender (London, 1961), p. 300.

7. Malcolm Bradbury, op. cit., p. 111.

8. Charles J. Rolo, 'Evelyn Waugh': The Best and the Worst', Atlantic Monthly, CXCIV (October, 1954), p. 8.

9. Bernard Bergonzi, 'Evelyn Waugh's Gentlemen', Critical Quarterly, V (Spring, 1963), p. 31.

10. Ibid., p. 36.

11. Evelyn Waugh, Officers and Gentlemen (London, 1955), p. 46.

12. Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and

Function (New York, 1961), p. 36.

13. Evelyn Waugh, Officers and Gentlemen, pp. 198 - 199.

14. Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms, p. 293.

15. Evelyn Waugh, Unconditional Surrender, p. 217.

16. Malcolm Bradbury, op. cit. p. 144.

17. Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms, p. 147.

THE CONCLUSION

The novels of Evelyn Waugh have this is common: they are all concerned with a search for meaning in a world where tradition, social institutions, manners, aesthetic values and morals are being destroyed by chaos, crudity and incivility, which are, in Waugh's view, the epitome of modernity. In portraying this search Waugh has changed the structure, the style, the characterization and the point of view of his novels, but this has not been any linear change from comic fantasies to serious three-dimensional novels. He has moved in this direction rather fitfully.

In his early novels Waugh creates a chaotic, insane universe. He is largely detached from this world and offers no remedy for its ills, does not take sides, suggests no consistent system of values. It is true that we are aware of his rejection of everything modern and of his longing for the past, because in these novels he is showing us that without the traditions, civility and social institutions of a former time modern society has become barbaric. And often in these books barbarity clashes with innocence, often chaos meets with order, but the conflict is never settled; it is merely resolved by laughter. Order is never restored. Those like Tony Last

and Paul Pennyfeather, who try to restore order, are doomed to failure and their efforts are reduced to absurdity.

One finds it difficult in these early books to separate the farce from the satire; for Waugh, lacking a consistent point of view, focuses his microscope on the whole of society, magnifying all, making all appear absurd. It is almost impossible to determine what specifically he is attacking. For example, he has in Tony Last a person with whom he can sympathize. One feels he is Waugh's ideal - cultured, sensitive, romantic. Just when the reader accepts him as such, however, he is condemned to a life of torture at the hands of a maniac. Waugh's world is one of disorder, and characters like Tony Last who embody his ideals are, as Malcolm Bradbury points out, "mock-heroic figures on a mock-heroic quest".[1] The bold and audacious of whom he disapproves are successful because only they are capable of surviving in such a chaotic world; anarchism is, apparently, the quality needed to cope with modernity.

In these early novels he is writing within a framework of fantasy which can contain any form of action he wishes. Within this framework he can create an arbitrary universe, can reduce his heroes to puppet-size and raise his audacious and anarchistic figures to a level of importance in a way that he could not if he were writing realistic moral stories. That is not to say, however, that there is no truth in Waugh's social observations.

For all the fantasy, Vile Bodies is a remarkably accurate picture of the Bright Young People, of the confusion and gaiety of early twentieth-century society.

The publication of Work Suspended revealed a marked change in Waugh's technique. Here the old farcical characters have disappeared; this book contains characters who are more true to life than heretofore. Unlike his earlier figures they are drawn with little or no exaggeration. Plant is Waugh's first hero to try to reconcile himself to the world, the first to meet the challenge of a society that has destroyed the values for which he feels so deeply. For the first time Waugh has moved away completely from the world of fantasy and cold cruelty. Here one finds oneself in a real world of suffering, love and death.

As Waugh develops as a novelist he commences seriously to portray his ideals; his prejudices and sympathies become clearer and more directly expressed. In Brideshead Revisited, for instance, he finally takes sides. Here he exposes his deep sense of the romantic, his profound sympathy for Roman Catholicism and his hatred for the common man. In his early novels Waugh diagnosed the ills of society, now the cure has engaged his interest and religion is given as the remedy. It is the answer to the "fear in a handful of dust"; it is, as De Vitis says "...the permanence that the Bright Young People sought for".2 In his early works he surveyed the horrors of modern society; here he retreats into his own private

world of Roman Catholicism which he offers as an alternative to the meaninglessness of life. Having abandoned his early irony he loses his detachment, indulges in lush sentimentality and reveals bigotry and rancour.

Brideshead Revisited, written, as Waugh pointed out in the preface to the 1964 edition, under extreme circumstances, is a novel of extremes. Waugh has moved from the detachment of a reporter to the subjectivity of a pamphleteer. He has turned from characters who have no religion to those who exist only to proselytize. The characteristic hard, staccato prose has been supplanted by extreme ornateness, a provocative, poetic prose. The cult of the aristocracy, noticed first in A Handful of Dust, has here developed into a total myth and is identified with Roman Catholicism. In Waugh's early satires he implicitly condemned all aspects of society; here he overtly sympathizes strongly with the aristocracy and ferociously condemns the lower middle-class officer, Hooper. Brideshead Revisited represents the apex of this kind of writing. When Waugh wrote the war trilogy, for example, times had changed. Waugh had grown wiser and as he himself had said the advance of Hooper had been held up and the aristocracy had maintained its identity to a degree that earlier seemed impossible. He further experimented with style and technique in the trilogy and reached a happier medium, accepting neither the attitudes nor the style of his early satires or of Brideshead. Instead he compromised and combined the best of both.

In his post-war satires Waugh speaks with greater assurance than he does in his early fantasies. He abandons the detachment of the latter and speaks out directly against modernity. In his early books Waugh's forte is his ability to reveal the absurd in all aspects of life, including people and values with which he sympathizes. Here he hits out only at those aspects of society that he despises: the modern penal system, totalitarianism, modern travel and the degrading burial customs of Southern California. In the early satires no sides are taken; here the conflict is always resolved on the side of the status quo, revealing more than earlier his conservatism. There is in these books less farce, less light-hearted humour. The world of these books is darker than that of the pre-war satires; it has lost its liveliness and zest. The difference probably lies in the fact that Waugh is writing these early books from the point of view of the Bright Young People, an age group to which he himself belongs. Here he is writing from the point of view of a middle-aged melancholic who has lost his youthful vigor, who has seen the world change from a place where 'the going was good' to the hardened, terrifying place it now is.

One notices in Waugh's writing a conflict between satirical arrogance and Christian humility. In some of his early satires like Vile Bodies and Black Mischief there is a complete lack of concern; everything is treated with a shocking indifference. In A Handful of Dust he reveals a little sympathy, but in others like The Loved One

he succumbs to ferocity, portraying modernity with monstrous glee. In Brideshead Revisited he expresses concern for those whom he earlier condemned - the aristocracy who have not been living up to their traditions and codes of honour. In the war trilogy Christian humility wins. The aristocratic myth is deflated when Guy Crouchback discovers that even gentlemen can be cowards. His religion is no longer identified with class loyalty, it has moved out into the world to include all who are in need.

In the trilogy Waugh has reached a happy compromise in his writing. These books contain the religious theme of Brideshead Revisited but without fanaticism, without being apologetic. He reveals his loyalty to the aristocracy but is mature enough to question their character and values. He is less subjective than he was in Brideshead but does not revert to the coldly dispassionate attitudes of his early novels. In the trilogy Waugh brings together the religious and the humorous in a happy relationship, although his humour is more humane and does not depend on cruelty or the macabre as it does in both his pre-war and his post-war satires. Guy Crouchback is, for the first two books at least, a typical Waugh hero - ineffectual, the victim of events. But, unlike any other, he is allowed to develop, to adjust to the world's standard's, although they are incompatible with his. So he emerges as Waugh's ideal Christian gentleman, as his most sympathetic hero, engaging the feelings of the reader as no

previous hero has done.

Donat O'Donnell writes that Waugh's mind

> ...is hardly qualified to make a great contribution to Christian thought, or to render balanced judgements on political issues.... It is, however, preeminently well equipped for artistic creation.[3]

Indeed, Waugh is an outstanding comic inventor, a stylist whose technical developments are significant. In a few words he can etch an action sharply and clearly or create a memorable character. Through parody, burlesque and exaggeration situations are sharply presented. There are no fuzzy edges; every action is clearly defined, making an indelible impression on the reader.

In Waugh's early novels his

> ...most powerful single effect lies in his invention of a comic universe seen from above by a creator largely independent of the action who, from a position of moral uninterest, perceived it as a total impression.[4]

In this world insanity is the norm and justice does not exist. Waugh creates "little systems of order" where good and evil are unknown, where traditional morality does not apply. Because his is a fantastic universe, because his characters are merely puppets, and because his tone is comic, Waugh can engage in the outrageous without offending.

Waugh in his early works has shown himself to be a novelist of the gossip column, the race track, the wild parties. In Brideshead Revisited he proves his skill at another kind of writing, a different genre-romance. His symbolism, his structure, his poetic prose and first-

person point of view are expertly handled to recreate the splendours of the past and to produce an intense feeling of nostalgia. For example, Waugh frames the story with a prologue and an epilogue. The narrator first tells of his boredom with the present, then recollects his memories of the past. The novel ends by showing the effect these recollections have on him. This method of presentation not only gives the book unity and meaning, but by contrasting the past, the magic, languid time in Ryder's life, with his drab present, Waugh gives added intensity of feeling to his memories. In his early novels Waugh is a master of a cold dispassionate prose; here he reveals his peculiar skill in combining words, sounds and images to give his prose a dream-like quality, to give the impression of langour, to create strong emotions: love, hate, faith.

Helena is further indicative of Waugh's technical resources. Here he splenddidly evokes the life of third century Rome while at the same time passing judgement on present-day conditions. There is also the theme of what Waugh calls "the split between East and West", the contrast between Western hard common-sense and Eastern mysticism. The book is also concerned with the rise of Roman Catholicism, its universality and its influence on Europe. Waugh has competently interwoven all of these themes into this novel and has written it with the flippancy, the humour that characterized his satires. To be able to write hagiography successfully in such a

light-hearted manner is suggestive of Waugh's skill as a novelist.

Inversion, parallelism and irony are technical devices used by Waugh from the beginning. For instance, we have noticed his use of parallelism in A Handful of Dust and irony in Vile Bodies. But in both the post-war satires and the trilogy one sees each fully, completely developed. The Loved One for example, is constructed of a system of parallels that gives the book unity, that enables the author, without being verbose, without being necessarily direct, to write a searing attack on modern burial customs.

Heretofore Waugh has used irony as a device for flaying. In the trilogy, however, he reveals an ironic vision. Irony is implicit in every part-words, actions, situation, theme - of the novel. He has skilfully built up a complex system of ironies that defines the character of the hero, that gives the novel its real substance, and creates a work of art.

One cannot conclude comments on Waugh's technical ability without discussing the form of his novels, the pattern or organization he uses to express his vision.

Waugh's novels are not dramatic, that is incidents do not arise out of a central situation to develop it. There is no progressive action and almost no cause and effect. The plot is not important to Waugh; his form is loose, episodic, picaresque. Nothing is ever subordinated to the working out of the plot. There is little concern

for probability. The most unlikely events occur in rapid succession, but the reader is carried along with such gusto that he has little desire to complain. What matters is Waugh's prolific invention, his piling absurdity on to absurdity. He shows how little he is devoted to plot when for an American magazine he changes the ending of A Handful of Dust, allowing Tony Last to return home from the jungle of South America to continue living with Brenda.

Vile Bodies also reveals this lack of concern for plot. The action is loosely constructed around Adam's and Nina's unsuccessful attempts at marriage, but the reader has no interest in their love life. There is no suspense, no serious conflict. Instead one finds oneself engrossed in Waugh's wild improvisation. For this book, resembling a theatrical revue, consists of numerous episodes populated with a wide variety of dazzling characters "...flung together and lurching apart like heavenly bodies on the run",[5] all adding up to a sordid picture of society. The slight plot is merely an excuse for the satire. Its function is not to trace the development of characters or to present an unfolding action; it is rather to set characters in a variety of situations for the purpose of satire and humour.

When one first reads Vile Bodies one feels that instead of a composed whole one is given a series of random incidents, of brilliant fragments. But if there is randomness, Waugh is in control of it; for each scene,

each episode, is linked to the other by its common theme, all are making the same point. The confused and unhappy canal-crossing, the savage parties, the wild race, the disconnected scenes of Colonel Blount's film, and the desolate battle scene, all add up to one statement - the emptiness and confusion of twentieth-century life. Waugh is able to do this with a great deal of economy. There is no need for explanation or description. We are conducted with gusto from scene to exaggerated scene, each reiterating the theme of the one before, making an indelible impression on the reader's mind.

Black Mischief reveals Waugh's skill with suggestive details that carry us swiftly from one episode to another, linking each, while at the same time creating a tension in the reader, an impression of terror. For example, in the first chapter there are indications of barbarism: hangings, drums in the night and shooting. Later we are casually told that Seth's father was eaten by cannibals. Still later we learn that native soldiers, not knowing what else to do with their newly-issued boots, eat them. Then there are the cruelly ironic statements of Basil and Prudence: '"I'd like to eat you."' '"So you shall my dear."' All of these incidents repeat the theme of barbarism, preparing the stage for the shocking climax: Basil's eating Prudence at a cannibal party. So not only does each individual detail, each hint, act in the particular episode in which it occurs, but it also performs a function in the whole, contributing to the tension from

which the emotional shock of the final act of cannibalism is derived. So what at first appears incidental, almost irrelevant, is later seen as an integral part of the whole, a significant part of the total structure of the book.

Waugh's more serious, three-dimensional novels, like his fantasies, contain no mystery, no complication, no tracing of a sequence of events, or consequence of a certain situation, from beginning to end. In the war trilogy, for instance, he is concerned with more important aspects than the telling of a thrilling story or the satisfaction of some naive expectation in the reader. He is interested in revealing character and creating a picture of twentieth-century war with all its faking, absurdity and arbitrariness. To do this Waugh writes these three books in a series of episodes. He begins with one character, Guy Crouchback, whom we follow through a variety of situations, meeting many people in many and varied circumstances. So there is an expansion horizontally or spatially into scenes, social setting and environment, friends and acquaintances. This produces an episodic, but not necessarily disjointed, random novel. For in spite of its apparent randomness it has unity. First, because it is mainly about Guy Crouchback's quest for meaning, most of the episodes revolve around him, most of the action gravitates towards him, revealing him. For example, Men at Arms is divided into four books, each portraying a certain phase of Guy's experience, and most of the episodes

within each emphasize the theme of the book. The first book, 'Sword of Honour', is a series of incidents linked by third-person narration, revealing Guy's family background. The scenes of the second, 'Apthorpe Gloriosus', show how Apthorpe, the projection of Guy's wish to be "simpatico", triumphs in his sympathies. Book three, 'Apthorpe Furibundus', expresses the theme of Apthorpe's lunacy and his replacement in Guy's loyalities by Richie-Hook, the projection of his intense Romanticism. All the scenes in 'Apthorpe Immolatus' show the triumph of Richie-Hook and the death of Apthorpe. The episodes in each book are linked by their tendency to express the same theme, and they all add up to a unified whole because together they reveal a stage in Guy's progress.

For example, some critics have regarded the Thunder-box scenes of 'Apthorpe Furibundus' as not being an integral part of the book. They have seen them rather as a series of irrelevant episodes injected only for their comic effect. However, the Thunder-box incidents are very much a part of the total structure of the novel. Frederick Stopp says they comprise a

> 'tense personal drama', played out against a military and a liturgical background, and resulting in the transference of Guy's allegiance from Apthorpe to Richie-Hook.[6]

The shattering of the Thunder-box symbolizes the breaking of Apthorpe's hold on Guy. The way is now clear for the Brigadier to work his magic. He holds a potent spell over Guy when he speaks:

> 'Gentlemen', he began, 'to-morrow you meet the men you will lead in battle'.
> It was the old, potent spell, big magic. Those two phrases, 'the officers who will command you...', 'the men you will lead...', set the junior officers precisely in their place, in the heart of the battle. For Guy they set swinging all the chimes of his boyhood reading....[7]

So Richie-Hook is identified with Guy's story book hero, Captain Truslove. This spirit of Truslove is strong in the Dakar incident, in which Guy follows Richie-Hook on an unofficial expedition and rescues him in true Truslove style. Guy's smuggling the bottle of whisky to Apthorpe, who is sick with a fever, continues this theme to its logical conclusion; for this act kills Apthorpe and purges Guy, thus bringing one phase of his life to an end.

Of course, not all incidents have such a direct bearing on Guy's progress. But Waugh's use of the picaresque hero enables him to reveal a variety of characters, to give us many incidents that in a more static plot would be digressions from rather than contributions to the unity of the book. The vast amount of seemingly disconnected detail is Waugh's way of establishing reality, of making the book like a slice of life, imposing on it the unity of life. For Waugh's world is like God's: instead of action developing into a climax followed by a denouement, one gets a series of hopes and illusions, little rises and falls. Instead of a neat plot, one gets much arbitrariness of incident. Instead of a single action, one get a sort of epic sweep: a variety of character studies, much historical detail, and numerous

episodes in many different settings, giving a varied, realistic picture of communal existence. So the apparent digressions form a vaster unity; they may not be directly connected to Guy's quest but they are all aspects of the same total picture, creating the impression of the chaos and the absurdity of life during a time of war.

Not only are Waugh's novels well constructed to present a picture of society but also to show the contrast between people as they are and as they appear to others. In the dramatic novel "both appearance and reality are the same... character is action, and action character".[8] In Waugh's novels, however, action does not spring out of character, things just happen to people. Paul Pennyfeather, for instance, is subjected to numerous misfortunes but they are all accidental and do not bring self-knowledge. In other words, action does not change Paul; he exists only to be exposed. His failures and misfortunes are never really serious and exist mainly for their comic possibilities, and it is this consistent rapidity of misfortune that helps make all of Waugh's novels, in spite of their lack of suspense and mystery, such delightful reading.

Because Waugh's novels deal with topics (decline and fall of the aristocracy, Mayfair, Antics of the Bright Young People, the war) that have long since ceased to be of much interest to present-day readers, one is likely to conclude that they are of period interest only and that they have lost their entertainment value. Both conclusions

would be false, for his books, expecially his early satires, are as capable of entertaining now as they ever were; although they speak of a former time, they still move us to laughter. Edmund Wilson in writing of these novels says:

> I think they are likely to last and that, in fact, Waugh is the only first-rate comic genius since Bernard Shaw.[9]

Why is it that these books are likely to last? Why is it that most, if not all, of Waugh's books are of more than period interest? D.W. Kleine observes that

> ...they represent a species of topical comedy both odd and rare - a species whose relevance outlives its immediate subject because it has a secret subject. Waugh's weird world is not ...just a quaint and faded relic of not-so-recent social history. It is also our world, in which the molecules blindly run. The vagaries of chance in a random universe are Waugh's secret subject.[10]

A world "in which the molecules blindly run" is that of everyman. It is the world of Candide, subject to the whims of endless misfortune, of Paul Pennyfeather who through error is sent sprawling into exile, and of Trimmer acclaimed a hero in spite of his stupidity and cowardice.

Waugh's comic characters also give his books a touch of universality. Some of them, especially Captain Grimes and Trimmer, are as timeless as Falstaff and Don Quixote. Grimes, for example, is condemned, reviled, imprisoned, yet he lives to vilify and mock those who punish him. He is the epitome of freedom, one with whom we can identify, with whom we can all laugh, and in so doing enjoy

vicariously his life of freedom. Such a comic figure does not belong to any country to any period, he is "of the immortals".

It is true that Waugh has few heroes with whom we feel very close, who deeply engage our sympathies, and none have epic proportions. Yet there is nothing parochial about Guy Crouchback's Aeneid or Tony Last's search for a city. Each of us like them has engaged in a search, and each of us has experienced illusion at every turn; everyman has known his dreams shattered by reality. There is a universality about their search for meaning in life.

Waugh's lively sense of the absurd cannot be confined to any one period in history, it can still teach us a great deal. Waugh has mocked the rational and orderly and the attempts to confine life to systems. He has shown us where we are; he has pointed out the absurdity in our lives and has taught us to laugh at it. In this sense he is a healer, a physician, for when man can laugh at his society, when he can laugh at himself, he will, undoubtly, grow more tolerant, more reasonable, more humane. Perhaps Waugh has contributed to this dim possibility.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

1. Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh (London, 1964), p. 7.

2. A. A. DeVitis, Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh (New York, 1956), p. 84.

3. Donat O'Donnell, Maria Cross (London, 1952), p. 134.

4. Bradbury, op. cit., p. 8.

5. Rose Macaulay, 'Evelyn Waugh', Horizon XIV (December, 1946), p. 363.

6. Frederick J. Stopp, Evelyn Waugh (Boston., 1958), p. 163.

7. Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms (London, 1962), p. 208.

8. Edwin Muir, Structure of the Novel (London, 1963), p. 47.

9. Edmund Wilson, 'Never Apologise, Never Explain', New Yorker, XX (March 4, 1944), p. 68.

10. Don W. Kleine, 'The Cosmic Comedies of Evelyn Waugh', The South Atlantic Quarterly, LXl (Autumn, 1962), p. 533.

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