

THE PROGRESS OF SATIRE IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF EVELYN WAUGH AS A NOVELIST

by

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## PREFACE

Thirty-seven years ago Evelyn Waugh startled the public with a witty and audacious satire, Decline and Fall. It was followed by Vile Bodies and Black Mischief written in a similar vein. The criticism they provoked concerning the author ranged from comic freak to comic genius. When A Handful of Dust appeared later, the public recognized a new element of seriousness in the savagery of Waugh's satire. When suddenly, however, Waugh's gravity resulted in a parochial novel, Brideshead Revisited, the public evinced alarm. A controversy of critical opinion developed. Going beyond the limits of satire, Waugh ceased to be as popular. A biting satire, The Loved One, followed, and the public was shocked, but delighted. The war trilogy, Men at Arms, Officers and Gentlemen, and The End of the Battle, has brought a proliferation of commentary but very little good literary criticism. Despite the reader's controversial, and sometimes embarrassed, opinions of Waugh's status as a writer, an analysis of his work seems to indicate a gradual evolution from the simple to the complex forms of satire. The development in technique parallels a similar change in outlook on life. This study is significant not only in determining Waugh's development as a writer but also in offering a basis for an understanding and appreciation of Waugh's particular contribution to the twentieth century novel.

I wish to thank Professors Samuel H. Woods, Jr., and Mary Rohrberger who gave so generously of their time in the writing of this thesis, the Department of English for financial aid granted in a graduate assistantship, and my husband for his continual help and encouragement.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A survey of our English literary heritage reveals the absence of a poetics for the novel, an omission attributable more to the difficulty of accomplishment than to the lack of literary initiative. D. H. Lawrence expresses the point of view that the novel is the one "living" genre because it refuses to be absolute, to be governed by a code.<sup>1</sup> In "The Art of Fiction," Henry James wrote "that the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."<sup>2</sup> With the suggestion of unlimited horizons that the novel as art offers in the twentieth century, it is significant that Walter Allen observes in The English Novel that Joyce and Lawrence in their opposed ways took the English novel as far as it has yet gone and that none of their younger contemporaries has come near catching up with them. They are still the advance guard.<sup>3</sup>

Further present literary criticism reiterates

with alarming frequency that the English novel of the last thirty years has diminished in scale: that no writer has the moral urgency of a Conrad, the verbal gifts and wit of a Joyce, the vitality and all-consuming obsession of a Lawrence; further, that the novel has forsaken its traditional role of delineating manners and morals, and, finally, that the novel is

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, "The Novel," Discussions of the Novel, ed., Roger Sale (Boston, 1960), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," Major American Writers, ed., Howard Mumford Jones and Ernest E. Leisy (New York, 1935), p. 1495.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York, 1954), p. 439.

in a decline from which rescue is virtually impossible. Granted that these claims do have partial substance, nevertheless one must insist that the novel of the last three decades or so--the post-Ulysses novel--contains the vitality and vigor worthy of a major genre.<sup>4</sup>

In assessing the contemporary English novel in this manner, Frederick Karl distinguishes Evelyn Waugh as one of several established writers, who, though missing the "intellectual excitement" of the work of the early part of the century, has returned to "more self-contained matter while retaining many of the technical developments of the major moderns."<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, the vision of Evelyn Waugh is restricted in comparison with that of the earlier writers of this century. For the most part his writings encompass the period of the depression and the Second World War. James Hall designated Waugh as "the best British novelist of the depression decade."<sup>6</sup> But he also comments upon a feeling of embarrassment which his friends share about reading Evelyn Waugh, as though they "were too old for such tricks and ought to be giving one more try to the Great Books."<sup>6a</sup> Hall sees Waugh's narrowed view of reality and choice as largely responsible for this feeling. Yet few novelists of the period after 1930 are still being read by college students with the enthusiasm that Waugh is today. On the one hand, he is censured as a "comic freak" and, on the other hand, praised as "the only first-rate comic genius that has appeared in English since Bernard Shaw."<sup>7</sup> The controversy over Waugh's status as a writer reveals that there has been little scholarly criticism of his works.

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<sup>4</sup>Frederick R. Karl, The Contemporary English Novel (New York, 1962), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> & <sup>6a</sup>James Hall, The Tragic Comedians (Indiana, 1963), p. 45.

<sup>7</sup>Edmund Wilson, Classics and Commercials (London and New York, 1951), p. 140.

Frederick Stopp, one of Waugh's biographers and critics, attributes the absence of a general study of Waugh's art first to the "common assumption that the comic genius is a freakish gift of nature, which neither calls for nor repays lengthy examination by the literary critic" and secondly to the fact that "Mr. Waugh holds, and does not hesitate to express, many opinions which provoke opposition." (The inference is that "irritation is a poor guide to insight.")<sup>8</sup>

Waugh's independence is evidenced in his refusal to identify himself with any literary movement. Stopp notes that Waugh refuses "to be drawn by those who seek to detect cosmic significance in his work; to relate it to fashions in philosophy, social predicaments or psychological tensions."<sup>9</sup> Waugh's antipathy to critical analysis makes the critic's work difficult, for Waugh asserts his only positive aims as a writer to be two-fold: he writes to delight an audience, and he produces books as would a craftsman.

Most critics would agree that Waugh's first objective, to delight an audience, is revealed in the initial stage of his writing. In characterizing Waugh's early work, Charles Rolo, comments upon the singular brand of comic genius implied in the phrase, "pure Evelyn Waugh," an expression which "evokes a riotously anarchic cosmos in which only the outrageous can happen, and when it does happen, is outrageously diverting; in which people reason and behave with awesome inconsequence and lunatic logic."<sup>10</sup> However, Rolo qualifies his opinion by asserting that when Waugh remains detached, as he does in the early novels, he is certainly the finest comic

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<sup>8</sup>Frederick J. Stopp, Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London, 1958), "Preface," p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>10</sup>Charles Rolo, The World of Evelyn Waugh (Boston, Toronto, 1958), p. v.

artist to emerge since the nineteen-twenties. However, when he becomes serious as in Brideshead Revisited and later works, he is apt to become parochial. Rolo writes, "When he is being comic and the moral criticism remains implied, he achieves a certain universality."<sup>11</sup>

A. A. DeVitis, a critic of Waugh's Catholic novels, sees, however, in Brideshead an important breaking away from the comic convention that distinguished Waugh's earlier work. He asserts that

although the sermonizing and the insistence on the religious theme tend to make the novel an intellectual masterpiece first, an experience of life second, Brideshead is a magnificent tour de force, extremely sensitive in its evaluation of human motives."<sup>12</sup>

Stopp, whose approach to Waugh's work is both biographical and analytical, sees 1939 as the year when Waugh began to develop a new style of writing. From that point on the mixed elements of farce and tragedy were to be subordinate.

/In an analysis indicating a pattern of development, The earlier works, as satire /writes Stopp/, had involved no statement of the norm by which the social scene had been judged and found wanting; as myth they had provided the innocent with no way forward from loss of innocence, no way back from dispersion. The disintegration of A Handful of Dust had to be answered by some process of re-integration, whether by flux and transformation in the hero's own character, or by the transfiguration of a world of chaos into a vision of order.<sup>13</sup>

The supernatural offered the way. From this point on, the order of dispersion, re-orientation and of concentration becomes the basic pattern of Waugh's structure.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. x, xi.

<sup>12</sup>A. A. DeVitis, Roman Holiday (New York, 1956), pp. 82, 83.

<sup>13</sup>Stopp, p. 203.

In an analysis of Waugh as a satirist, Stopp recalls Waugh's comments in 1946, "Satire...is aimed at inconsistency and hypocrisy. It exposes polite cruelty and folly by exaggerating them. It seeks to produce shame."<sup>14</sup> Stopp comments further upon the appropriateness of this assertion to Waugh's own works: "the exposure of polite cruelty and folly in A Handful of Dust, of inconsistency and hypocrisy in Black Mischief, the production of shame in The Loved One."<sup>15</sup> But Waugh disclaims for himself and for his age the privilege and the possibility of producing satire, for satire presupposes homogenous moral standards. In Waugh's early novels there is only rejection of the modern world, assumedly no moral indignation (the usual basis of satire). DeVitis suggests that the theme of the innocent implies a moral perspective in that "innocence proves to be tougher than life."<sup>16</sup> Stopp suggests also that Waugh's search for a solution to society's ills and the rejection of those which experience offers, is one in which the author is engaged, but not his characters. Contrary to the techniques of many writers of the twentieth century, Waugh, as narrator, abstains from comments on the processes in the minds of his characters. Stopp asserts that

the main figures and their behaviour being so much the product of an intense inner vision, the author's conscious intention is largely freed and directed toward matters of style and construction<sup>17</sup>...

the fulfillment of Waugh's second objective.

The absence of extensive literary criticism is obvious when one realizes there are only three major works that comprise the total in

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>16</sup>DeVitis, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup>Stopp, p. 195.

that field: Stopp's, a book length analysis, DeVitis's, a short discussion of Waugh's Catholic novels, and Rolo's, a compilation of excerpts from Waugh's novels preceded by a short introduction. The many minor articles written in praise or blame of particular works are restricted chiefly to criticisms of Waugh's views of society and religion. Leo Hines in "Waugh and His Critics" remarks that

Evelyn Waugh, as if a recalcitrant child, was warned many years ago by America's most distinguished literary critic that to keep on in the direction he was tending would most certainly lead to artistic if not personal debacle. His gift was for comedy, he was told, not for saccharine religiosity; his talent was to spoof the Establishment, not endorse it; only an immature artist assumes the necessary burden of trying to make an (apparently) uninteresting figure, Guy Crouchback, the subject of an interesting story.<sup>18</sup>

It is the changing pattern in Waugh's writing that arouses so much controversy among critics. When a recent critic expressed regret that nobody nowadays writes social comedy like Vile Bodies, Black Mischief, and A Handful of Dust, James Hall remarked that nobody can, least of all Waugh himself, because the culture and a writer's own emotional development are too closely intertwined.<sup>19</sup> Hines rightly sees the antipathy to Waugh stemming from his insistence on countermarching "to the forces of intellectualism which dominate the world of literary criticism."<sup>20</sup>

It becomes increasingly evident in surveying the criticisms of Waugh that there is a need of delineating Waugh's development as a writer. A chronological reading of his work suggests a correspondence

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<sup>18</sup>Leo Hines, "Waugh and His Critics," The Commonweal, LXXVI, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup>James Hall, The Tragic Comedians (Indiana, 1963), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup>Hines, p. 60.

between Waugh's use of techniques of satire and this development. Since the origin of English satire in the sixteenth century, the word "satire" has assumed different significations. From a specific narrow identification of meaning it has progressed to an abstract broad interpretation suggesting attitudes rather than genre or literary form. This altered conception of the word is clearly analyzed by David Worcester in The Art of Satire, the basis of the terms used in this thesis. Worcester's study is based on his assumption that a natural evolution has occurred whereby complex and subtle forms have arisen out of simple and primitive ones. He remarks that "the tendency of satirical novelists is to progress from burlesque [a simple form] to irony of manner and finally to dramatic irony [a complicated form], in which follies and vices speak for themselves without assistance."<sup>21</sup> Worcester believes that a comprehension of irony, according to him one of the most powerful, though one of the most subtle, principles of literary art, not only gives new meaning and delight to reading, but also opens a new dimension in criticism.<sup>22</sup> A study of the progress of satire in Waugh's development as a writer reveals that with his gradual loss of detachment in the evolutionary process from the simple to the complex forms, he achieves a victory in the synthesis of the tragic and the comic but a defeat in his failure to eliminate the personality of the artist. The nine novels comprising the basis of this study were selected in

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<sup>21</sup>David Worcester, The Art of Satire (New York, 1960), pp. 120-121.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., "Preface," p. vi.

chronological order according to the techniques of satire that in the opinion of the writer best exemplified Waugh's development as a novelist.<sup>23</sup>

Waugh's early work, consisting of Decline and Fall, Vile Bodies, and Black Mischief, is characterized by his use of burlesque, a technique of satire in which an air of detachment produces the effect of dissociation from life. From his vantage point as an observer, Waugh looks down upon his characters as they become involved in circumstances beyond their control, and he consistently refuses to interfere in their actions. The aesthetic distance in his early work creates the impression of an oversimplification of life. There is no compassion or feeling. The obvious implication is that in a hostile or indifferent universe, what else could one expect? The comic brilliance of this early phase of his

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<sup>23</sup>The following novels are the primary sources for this study:

Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall (New York, 1928).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies (New York, 1930).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief (New York, 1932).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Handful of Dust (New York, 1934).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (New York, 1944).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Loved One (New York, 1948).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms (New York, 1952).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, Officers and Gentlemen (New York, 1955).

Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

Evelyn Waugh, End of the Battle (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1961). Hereafter indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

writing is attributable to his use of burlesque, a medium that "offers the greatest freedom to the artist and /yet/ exacts the most from him in terms of creative imagination."<sup>24</sup> In extracting "comedy from chaos" Waugh pictures in Decline and Fall an irrational world into which the innocent hero is catapulted and from which he ultimately returns unscathed and uncorrupted. In Vile Bodies, Waugh reveals a picture of a barbaric society which the Bright Young People covet, but it proves to be meaningless for them. Black Mischief is a fantasy of barbarism, a tragic comedy of a conflict of cultures: primitive savagery and civilized barbarity. Even within the first stage of his development changes in technique are occurring, particularly in respect to the beginning of a loss of detachment, implicit in his comparison of societies.

Waugh's increasing involvement, appearing in the transitional phase of his development as a writer, becomes apparent in his employment of the macabre, in effect an admission of opposite scales of value-- the eccentric and the normal. Fundamentally, a conflict of ideas is implicit in creating a scale of values at variance with common standards. The isolated elements of the grotesque and eccentric which appear in Waugh's early writing contribute to the humor in revealing the absurdity of men's behavior. The extensions of these elements in his subsequent work; namely in A Handful of Dust and The Loved Ones, produce a seriousness that brings Waugh closer to the real world and therefore to humanity. In this transitional period of his writing, the function of grotesque satire appears to be to shock people into an awareness of the relativity of things by the process of dislocating absolute values.

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<sup>24</sup> Worcester, p. 49.

In the first novels, Waugh had rejected the modern world in all its barrenness and sterility but had offered no alternatives to the status quo. The ingenu hero had been a plain, matter-of-fact man who had occasional flashes of insight but no sustaining philosophy of life. Later in Waugh's writing the innocent hero, Tony Last in A Handful of Dust, becomes conscious of the presence of both good and evil and seeks to find his identity in the world. The polarity of ideas reveals itself in Waugh's manipulation of the point of view. He maintains sufficient detachment to use the grotesque with satiric force but establishes contact with the real world (and incidentally, at times wins the sympathy of the reader) through his still innocent but partially initiated hero. Waugh maintains the aesthetic distance also by satiric description of the fantastic events which speak adequately for themselves.

The transition to serious circumspection and eventually to religious affirmation in Brideshead Revisited indicates a change in Waugh's technique. For the first time he establishes a moral frame of reference, characteristic of a conventional style--a decided innovation with Waugh. With the abandonment of the usual satirical approach, however, Waugh had to devise a method whereby he could maintain the aesthetic distance sufficient to manipulate his characters convincingly. It is through his hero--narrator, Charles Ryder, that Waugh maintains a semi-detachment but, at the same time, establishes contact with the real world. The domination of the religious theme at the expense of comic invention, however, tends toward excessive intellectuality and monotonous homily. Nevertheless, this experiment in the use of the traditional form

has the ultimate advantage of bringing Waugh into the realm of real human experience, the results of which become significant in the war trilogy.

DeVitis, one of the critics of the Catholic novels of Waugh, has the following to say in appraisal of Brideshead Revisited:

Brideshead Revisited reveals the complete maturity of Evelyn Waugh as an artist. The novel is brilliantly conceived and brilliantly executed. The integration of plot, character and action with the theme denotes the most competent artistry. It is wrong, I think, to condemn the novel as flagrantly romantic, as Edmund Wilson does; or to insist that romantic adolescence is 'Waugh's only touchstone of significance for human existence' and therefore inadequate, as D. S. Savage does. To do either is to miss the meaning. Brideshead Revisited essentially portrays a real experience of life. But it does much more than this: it is a considered and mature evaluation of the place of religion in the modern world. It is true that there are elements that at times intrude-- Waugh's snobbery and his preoccupation with the aristocracy make themselves uncomfortably apparent. But the impression the novel makes is a universal and valid one because it does deal with the real world convincingly.<sup>25</sup>

The changing pattern in the use of satiric techniques culminates in the complete loss of objectivity in the war trilogy in which Waugh indicates finally an awareness of the real world and identifies himself ironically with humanity. From an overly-exaggerated, oversimplification of life in the initial stage of his writing, Waugh has arrived at a realization of the complexity of life's experiences, a far truer picture of reality. His final understanding that life is a mixture of sadness and joy constitutes a minor "realism." The trilogy is a synthesis of all that Waugh has learned in his developing maturity as a writer. It contains some of the humor of his early satire integrated

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<sup>25</sup>DeVitis, p. 52.

now into the tragic structure of the novel; it embraces the romantic idealism of Waugh's interest in aristocratic heritage integrated into the religious theme; finally it realizes in irony an intellectual instrument that fulfills a creative purpose--to reveal that the human enterprise may be doomed to failure but that man himself has an individual commitment.

Granting that there is less sheer entertainment in the trilogy than there was in the early novels, Voorhees asserts that it is highly unreasonable of critics to complain of new developments, as such, in a writer whose early work has pleased them. They can hardly expect that a novelist will continue writing the same kind of novel all his life. Even though critics may prefer Basil Seal to Guy Crouchback, Waugh is probably wiser in recognizing he had reached his limitations in depicting that type.<sup>26</sup> That a writer cannot always give the public what it wants but must proffer what he himself has to give is the judgment of a mature writer. However, Waugh has failed to realize that the "personality of the artist...finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself..."<sup>27</sup> Waugh stands alone against the prevailing tide, exactly where he chooses to be. In the face of so much controversial criticism over Waugh's status as a writer, the study of the progress of satire in his work affords the researcher the peculiar pleasure of not only witnessing the growth of a writer but of appreciating his particular contribution to the twentieth century novel.

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<sup>26</sup>R. J. Voorhees, "Evelyn Waugh's War Novels," Queens Quarterly, LXV, 1958, pp. 61, 62.

<sup>27</sup>James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York, 1960), p. 215.

## CHAPTER II

### BURLESQUE FANTASY

Evelyn Waugh once defined a writer as one who possessed "an added energy and breadth of vision which enables him to complete a structure."<sup>1</sup> Whereas Waugh's novels reveal a fundamental criticism of the modern world, it is in his singular use of devices of satire that the "added energy" of the writer is revealed. Waugh's particular use of burlesque, the first level of satire in his development as a writer, affords the author an opportunity to expose various aspects of society without overt criticism or explanation on his part. Frederick J. Stopp, one of Waugh's biographers and critics, asserts that Waugh has constantly rejected the idea that a novel is a medium for the propagation of views.<sup>2</sup> Although satirists often use this particular genre as a vehicle of reform, Waugh uses it for the revelation of the hypocrisy and oddity of human behavior. However, because satire presupposes a standard of value, it therefore implies a comparison of the ideal and the real. The subtlety with which Waugh reveals these comparisons which enlighten the reader without offending him is attributable to the medium he employs. "Satire becomes a sort of glass, wherein beholders generally discover everybody's face but their own."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stopp, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Swift, "Preface" to Battle of the Books, Gulliver's Travels, Tale of a Tub, Battle of the Books, etc. (London, New York, Toronto, 1942), p. 540.

The aesthetic distance which Waugh has maintained has often been regarded as snobbishness by his critics. Classify it as one will, his removal from his characters makes his satire more malicious, pointed, and devastating. His early work creates the singular impression that satire offers him exercise in an intellectual sport. However, it is to Waugh's advantage that many readers enjoy that form of exercise.

The freedom which Waugh's detachment allows him results in the full exploitation of his comic ingenuity, which finds expression in the revelation through burlesque of life's absurdities and imperfections. Waugh puts on a comic show for his reading audience--a veritable minstrel show in its sequence of acts. David Worcester claims that the satirist's best appeal to reason lies in the use of the comic, for "intuitive and instantaneous, the comic perception is a flash that exposes whatever is anti-social or egotistical or inelastic in nature."<sup>4</sup> This peculiar ability of Waugh, "to distill comedy" from the incongruities and inconsistencies of men's behavior, produces a spontaneity and audacity of treatment that not only delight the reader but characterize Waugh's early writing.

Decline and Fall, written in 1928, is based upon a burlesque absurdity--that, unbelievable as it may seem, "monstrous injustice is as much a part of life as the morning cup of tea and hardly more remarkable."<sup>5</sup> Such a comic absurdity is extended until it becomes the central design of the novel: the unheroic hero, Paul Pennyfeather, who at the beginning of the novel is a theological student at Scone College, Oxford, passively accepts the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that cause his dismissal from Oxford, force him to a preposterous life as schoolmaster

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<sup>4</sup>Worcester, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Linklater, The Art of Adventure (London, 1948), p. 46.

at Llanabba Castle and eventually send him to prison for a crime he did not commit. The Epilogue reveals Pennyfeather again at Oxford as a theological undergraduate with a new identity but with the same characteristic mildness of manner and calm acceptance of whatever life has to offer. Like Donatello in the Marble Faun, he has "travelled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do, and now comes back to his original self," but unlike Donatello there has been no "inestimable treasure of improvement won from an experience of pain."<sup>6</sup> Waugh might well have characterized Paul's whole experience outside the intellectual atmosphere of Oxford in the same terms he characterized Paul's reaction to Margot's final visit to him in prison: "he was greatly pained at how little he was pained by the events of the afternoon." (p. 399)

Paul Pennyfeather becomes the first of Waugh's ingenu heroes, all of whom are characterized as mild-mannered, passive observers in a fast-moving, barbarous society. By using the innocent hero as the central character Waugh maintains his detachment, and the reader looks on in tolerant amusement. In Decline and Fall, Waugh imagines the shadow of Paul Pennyfeather, the innocent, "flitting" about through the narrative, witnessing the unusual events of a dream world, and occasionally materializing into the

solid figure of an intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted young man, a man who could be trusted to use his vote at a general election with discretion and proper detachment, whose opinion on a ballet or a critical essay was rather better than most people's, who could order a dinner without embarrassment and in a creditable French accent, who could be trusted to see to luggage at foreign railway stations and might

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<sup>6</sup>The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed., Norman Holmes Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 840.

be expected to acquit himself with decision and decorum in all the emergencies of civilized life.  
(p. 329)

The dream world itself, exemplary of various aspects of "civilized" society, is peopled with heterogeneous persons whose appearances enforce the satire of the different aspects of society. The burlesque portraits of these figures are drawn around the innocent hero, who becomes a passive, but doomed, spectator in the several realms of society Waugh burlesques. Professor Silenus, the self-styled Professor-Architect whom Margot engaged to build a new modern home to replace the original Tudor of King's Thursday, psychoanalyzes Paul quite accurately in the following passage:

'Now you're a person who was clearly meant to stay in the seats and sit still and if you get bored watch the others. Somehow you got on the wheel /of life/, and you got thrown off again with a hard bump. It's all right for Margot, who can cling on, and for me, at the centre, but you're static. Instead of this absurd division into sexes they ought to class people as static and dynamic. There's a real distinction there, though I can't tell you how it comes.' (p. 410)

It is the intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted undergraduate at Oxford, Paul Pennyfeather, to whom the reader is first introduced on the night of the annual orgy of the aristocratic Bollinger Club at Scone College, Oxford. As the "Prelude" opens, the traditional atmosphere of the college is suddenly broken with the first shattering of glass in Sir Alastair Digby--Vaine Trumpington's rooms, and the reader first begins to realize that appearances at Oxford differ from reality. The world of disorder supplants the normal quiet. The strength of Waugh's burlesque lies in the calm manner in which he presents the contrast between the traditionally ideal and the absurdly real.

Waugh writes:

There is tradition behind the Bollinger; it numbered reigning kings among its past members. At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles. What an evening that had been! (p. 227)

The element of the shocking resulting from the meaningful juxtaposition of material (an aristocracy stooping to cruelty to animals) and produced with perfect control of tone and timing, startles the reader into a realization of the true nature of things.

Occasionally even, Waugh's burlesque effects are directed at the aristocracy. The fashionable wealthy undergraduates at Oxford (suggestive of Matthew Arnold's barbarians of culture and anarchy) appear as ludicrously distorted images in the opening scene, designed primarily to establish the appropriate milieu for Paul's debagging to take place.

A shriller note could now be heard rising from Sir Alestair's rooms; any who have heard that sound will shrink at the recollection of it; it is the sound of the English country families baying for broken glass. Soon they would all be tumbling out into the quad, crimson and roaring in their bottle-green evening coats, for the real romp of the evening. (p. 228)

Waugh's unexpected use of the word romp which purposely diminishes and degrades the object of his satire constitutes an effective technique of low burlesque. The tendency to create the impression of the animality of aristocratic society, their utter disregard for other human beings, suggests the world into which Paul is soon to be precipitated. It is the world of disorder evident in the figurative "broken glass." Often Waugh anticipates an event by a preliminary glimpse, a distortion of singular importance.

The very obliquity with which Waugh treats the sudden interruption of Paul Pennyfeather's sojourn at Oxford lends an air of detachment that

adds not only to the sense of the comic but also enforces the satire. As the innocent hero makes his unsuspecting way home on this particular evening of the Bollinger "beano," he is observed by the Junior Dean, Mr. Sniggs, and Mr. Postlethwaite, the Domestic Bursar, who are safely ensconced in Mr. Sniggs's room overlooking the garden quad. The tone in which Waugh describes their conversation is matter-of-fact, polite, and intentionally deceptive. It reveals the most flagrant hypocrisy and the most outrageous inconsistency in manners and conduct.

'They appear to have caught somebody,' he (the Domestic Bursar) said. 'I hope they don't do him any serious harm'

'They appear to be tearing off his clothes.'

'Dear me, can it be Lord Rending? /Waugh makes use of every available device for emphasizing the ridiculous./ I think I ought to intervene.'

'No, Mr. Sniggs,' said Mr. Postlethwaite, laying a hand on his impetuous colleague's arm. 'No, no, no. It would be unwise. We have the prestige of the senior common-room to consider. In their present state they might not prove amenable to discipline. /Waugh often uses understatement as a method of achieving satiric force./ We must at all costs avoid an outrage.' /The ludicrous inconsequence of such a remark exposes the invasion of the irrational world upon the rational./

The crowd parted, and Mr. Sniggs gave a sign of relief.

'But it's quite all right. It isn't Rending. It's Pennyfeather--someone of no importance.'

'Well, that saves a deal of trouble. I am glad, Sniggs; I am, really. What a lot of clothes the young man appears to have lost!' (p. 230)

The purely arbitrary system of "justice" implied in their comments suggests further the world of disorder in which an innocent like Paul could be a victim of such circumstances. The power of Waugh's burlesque is evident in his ability in scenes like the one just described to lure his audience into a passive acceptance of things as they are, until suddenly the distortion is revealed in a moment of insight often occurring some time later.

The summary of life's minor absurdities following Pennyfeather's dismissal from Oxford for indecent behavior constitutes for Waugh an indirect way of not only revealing the callous injustice of it, but also the insensitivity of the men who were responsible. The Bursar called Paul's attention to two minor cigarette burns for which there was exacted a small payment. (It is a noteworthy fact that his limited allowance permitted him three ounces of tobacco a week.) The Junior Dean brightly extended a parting query, "Just off?," as he met Paul crossing the quad. The chaplain offered a few hypocritical words of congratulations on Paul's colossal good fortune in discovering his unfitness for the priesthood before it was too late and even went so far as to suggest that Paul might possibly bring to the great world of business some of the ideals he had learned at Scone. Even in the first phase of Waugh's writing, he employed the device of irony, often unexpectedly under the most natural appearing circumstances. It is a form of Olympian irony, however, in which Waugh looks at human behavior with an indulgent humor, although at times a touch of malice. There is no compassion in his attitude, although there is an underlying awareness of the futility of man's efforts. Paul leaves Oxford without even a second chance-- for that matter, without even a first opportunity to exonerate himself. The culminating irony in the series of parting incidents appears in the form of a casual remark of the Oxford porter:

'I expect you'll be becoming a schoolmaster, sir. That's what most of the gentlemen does, sir, that gets sent down for indecent behaviour.' (p. 232)

Whereas the reader's immediate reaction is to reject this idea as impossible, in Waugh's view of society, the irrational is often the only true reality. A seeming incongruity of this sort is a frequent device

of structure for the purpose of underlining the satire. Structure often becomes theme. The strong sense of unity produced by the common association of these diverse incidents gives added force also to the satire and produces an additional sensibility in the reader.

Waugh's technical skill in creating a later incident which has retroactive significance is a particular device for not only emphasizing a satiric observation, but also for vivifying it and even enlarging its scope. Waugh himself once wrote:

Writing is an art which exists in a time sequence; each sentence and each page is dependent on its predecessors and successors; a sentence which he admires may owe its significance to one fifty pages distant.<sup>7</sup>

In Decline and Fall when, many pages after his dismissal from Oxford, Pennyfeather is undergoing an oral examination (one of the most effective of the burlesque scenes) soon after his admittance to the Blackstone Gaol, his interrogator, the medical officer, callously reads the following question to him:

'Have you at any time been detained in a mental home or similar institution? If so, give particulars.'

'I was at Scone College, Oxford,' said Paul.  
(p. 368)

Suddenly the reader is shocked into a realization that, like Huckleberry Finn, he has been there before. The most startling revelation, however, is the significance of the comparison between Oxford and a mental institution. At this time the reader becomes fully aware of the lunatic logic, the lunatic behavior, of those responsible for Paul's expulsion. When the satiric reaction is superimposed upon the comic action of the

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<sup>7</sup>Stopp, p. 50.

burlesque, as it is in this instance, the total significance of the satire becomes clear.

It becomes apparent in Waugh's early work that he would agree with Jonathan Swift's opinion that he had "as good a title to laugh as men have to be ridiculous."<sup>8</sup> Waugh was undoubtedly born with the sardonic vision, for he is always able to see the elements of absurdity and ridiculousness in the hypocrisy, the stupidity, and the inadequacy of human action in the many different aspects of society. Often it would appear that both rationality and irrationality in behavior produce the same idiotic results in the modern world.

Northrop Frye, in his discussion of the nature of satire, asserts that in order "for society to exist at all there must be a delegation of prestige and influence to organized groups: the church, the army, the medical and teaching professions, the government..."<sup>9</sup> Individuals within these institutions are of necessity given more than individual power; that is, they are given representative power which they exert according to their tendency toward good or evil. When a satirist exposes a clergyman, for example, as a fool or a hypocrite, he is actually revealing an evil person who is "protected by the prestige of an institution." The satirist's purpose is to rid society of such stumbling blocks. It is not the purpose of this thesis to attribute such motives to Evelyn Waugh. However, the method of treatment in exposing individuals whose behavior is suspect within the social institutions they represent would appear to be that of the satirist. For the most part, Waugh selects individuals

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<sup>8</sup>From The Intelligencer, III /1728/, in The Works of Jonathan Swift, ed., Sir Walter Scott (Boston, 1883), IX, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup>Northrop Frye, "The Nature of Satire," The University of Toronto Quarterly, XIV (1944), p. 80.

who occupy responsible positions in society, and he proceeds to unmask their pretensions, their hypocrisies, their conventional respectabilities. Through the medium of burlesque, Waugh magnifies the actions of his characters by giving them heroic appearances and then reduces them by exposing their real motives. The fiction is always transparent, however, for the characters' actions belie their words. The greatest achievement in Waugh's satire is that it focuses the reader's attention sharply upon the contrast between things as they should be and things as they are, for while the reader is envisioning the ideal image, Waugh is continually furnishing him with the distorted reflection of it.

The satiric portraits, distortions drawn from the various realms of society, materialize in relation to their associations with the ingenu hero. When Paul Pennyfeather was forced to become a part of the world outside the university, he entered through the only door he knew--that of education, as the porter had so rightly imagined. The scholastic agent for Church and Gargoyle, Mr. Levy, whom Paul contacted for employment in a school, had the most to offer in duplicity. Waugh's ability to alter the "true" image is revealed in the brief burlesque exchange between Paul and the agent, most of which consists of a dramatic monologue by the agent. Officially discounting Paul's dismissal for indecent behavior under the classification of "education discontinued for personal reasons" and just as blatantly recommending Paul to a position for which he was not fully qualified, Mr. Levy, in a self-revelatory passage, continues to persuade Paul that the position of junior assistant master at Llanabba Castle, North Wales, might have been made for him:

'It doesn't do to be too honest,' said Mr. Levy.  
'It's wonderful what one can teach when one tries.  
Why, only last term we sent a man who had never been  
in a laboratory in his life as senior Science Master

to one of our leading public schools. He came wanting to do private coaching in music. He's doing very well, I believe. Besides, Dr. Fagan can't expect all that for the salary he's offering. Between ourselves, Llanabba hasn't a good name in the profession. We class schools, you see, into four grades: Leading School, First-rate School, Good School, and School. Frankly,' said Mr. Levy, 'School is pretty bad /the status of Llanabba was School/. I think you'll find it a very suitable post. So far as I know, there are only two other candidates, and one of them is totally deaf, poor fellow.' (p. 235)

His words are a direct contradiction of the ideal principles by which such an organization should function. Waugh has succeeded in stripping away the facade of pretension to reveal the absurd illogical inefficiency beneath, yet the author himself has said nothing. Waugh has maintained the detachment which makes his satire so effective.

In discussing satire as an art, David Worcester suggests that burlesque is based on an imitation which extends no deeper than the surface. Once the reader's affinity with the model has been established, the more extravagant and ludicrous the action, the more pleased the reading public becomes.<sup>10</sup> Herein lies the secret of Waugh's early popularity, for his audacity and skill in creating original incidents make his work hilariously funny and deceptively malicious. In presenting the figure of Dr. Fagan, the sanctimonious, hypocritical headmaster of Llanabba Castle, a recollection of Dickens's Fagan, the corrupter of youth, Waugh becomes malicious. The reader has little difficulty establishing affinity with the model, a stereotype figure in demeanor, as Waugh first describes Dr. Fagan: "He was very tall and very old and very well-dressed; he had sunken eyes and rather long white hair over

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<sup>10</sup>Worcester, p. 49.

jet-black eyebrows." (p. 235) Here is a Merlin-like picture of venerable dignity and aged wisdom. However, the animal appearance of hairy hands and fingers crooked like claws suggest the opposite aspect--the savagery of his nature camouflaged by his outward mien. Dr. Fagan's words too would suggest integrity and nobility: "You will find that my school is built upon an ideal--an ideal of service and fellowship."

(p. 236) Then the unmasking occurs, and the ideal image is revealed as a distorted image of idealism. One absurdity follows another in the process of stripping away the false fronts of respectability and propriety. Outwardly, Dr. Fagan is an impressive figure, dressed in velvet dinner jacket at home, or pale gray morning coat and sponge-bag trousers on special occasions. His entrance into the school hall would command anyone's attention: "As the bell stopped ringing Dr. Fagan swept into the hall, the robes of a Doctor of Philosophy swelling and billowing about him. He wore an orchid in his buttonhole." (p. 251)

To all outward appearances, he is a veritable giant in his profession--the epitome of dignity and poise. Unmasked, he becomes the humbug whose selfish interests dictate the policies and activities of Llanabba Castle. Working on the principle that "we schoolmasters must temper discretion with deceit," (p. 242) Dr. Fagan unexpectedly programs an Annual Sports Competition for the benefit of several elite families whose eccentric sons attend the Welsh Academy. (In his fourteen years at Llanabba, Fagan had permitted only six sports' days and two concerts, all of which had ended disastrously.) With insane excitement, he plans the activities: Paul, "a distinguished athlete," is put in charge of the sports; the festival will feature everything that money can buy: foie gras sandwiches, champagne, flags, flowers, music, fireworks--

everything festive that comes to his mind or anyone else's at the moment; the Press must send a photographer for whom Philbrick must obtain some whiskey. (Dr. Fagan recalls the unfortunate experience at a former sports activity when the omission of the whiskey resulted in a most unfortunate photograph.) The idea of the prizes gives Dr. Fagan pause for thought concerning the expense, for "undue extravagance" might give "the boys the wrong idea of sport." (p. 265) Of course, there was too the consideration of whether Lady Circumference would think it odd if asked to present parsley crowns. Dr. Fagan righteously feels that there should be a fair distribution of prizes about the school with little Lord Tangent and Beste-Chetwynde winning something, for their parents would be present. As the pretensions are put aside, the real image emerges.

A burlesque fantasy, consisting of the most extravagant and ludicrous action that Waugh's fertile imagination could conceive, results from these well-laid plans of the inimitable Dr. Fagan. The start of the races is slow and discouraging amidst rain, and mud, and cold. The mile race turns into a sprint toward the comfort of the dormitories. The hurdles sent as replacements for those burned for firewood the previous year "seem," in the words of Dr. Fagan, "to be the wrong sort" (p. 277)-- an obvious understatement, for the substitutes were spiked iron railings five feet high. Grimes, a veteran in experience in handling the "yearly" competition, nonchalantly resolves the whole problem by making out the program of winners "over the fire," the proper place for such decisions. The preliminary contests are never held, but the winners are programmed for the finals. The height of the ridiculous appears in Grime's answer to Paul's comment that Clutterbuck seems to have done

pretty well, "Yes, he's a splendid little athlete." The irony is that he never finished a race, but his name was registered as a winner in response to Dr. Fagan's desire to ingratiate himself with the wealthy families.

Such underhanded tactics produced the most incongruous results in the finals the following day. An attempt to give the appearance of official conduct of the races--an effort which the reader knows to be a farce--ends in near tragedy when Prendergast fires an old service revolver to start the first race. The drunken Prendergast has indeed "drawn the first blood of the day." Waugh's use of hunting language is a technique whereby he reveals that Prendergast has allied himself to upper society where such disorder is apparent. In the typical Waugh manner of telling his story with that "studied understatement of the shocking,"<sup>11</sup> Waugh writes, "Clearly Tangent was not going to win; he was sitting on the grass crying because he had been wounded in the foot by Mr. Prendergast's bullet." (p. 284) The nonchalance with which subsequent results of this incident are narrated creates an extraordinary sense of horror and injustice that significantly reveal the extent of the satire. Waugh's world is one in which man's futile race toward his destiny is circular. "Round and round the muddy track the athletes trotted while the silver band played sacred music unceasingly." (p. 287) The sacred music is another incongruity in the series of absurdities, for the Looney band is definitely handicapped mentally as well as musically. Described above, the last race, the Three Miles Open, designated as a course of six laps, is won by the winner Clutterbuck in five to win. The event in

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<sup>11</sup>Stopp, p. 64.

question turns the sports into a fiasco, with the final contest being engaged in by the visiting aristocrats, outraged sportsmanship glinting in their eyes, as they take sides over the dubious victory of the winner. Dr. Fagan had frequently adjudged Clutterbuck as winner of the renamed five furlong race and the other boys as first, second, third, fourth, and fifth in the three miles. The imperturbable, genial Dr. Fagan, admitting that "clearly there had been some confusion," suggests the only possible British solution--to serve tea. That society tolerates such stupidity and foolishness is the ultimate conclusion from Waugh's distortion. Waugh himself again maintains his aesthetic distance while any condemnation appears to the reader through analogy with the reader's own conception of the normal. The series of absurdities, appearing as part of the structure, enforces the satire and thereby the theme. Life is irrational.

When the ingenu hero later in the novel reflects on the justification of his having accepted a prison sentence for Margot, he assures himself in a rare moment of insight that if anyone had to suffer for Margot's crime, surely it had to be he, for "anyone who has been to an English public school will always feel comparatively at home in prison." (p. 392) Waugh demonstrates that there is little difference between the school and the jail; Prendergast finds that the prisoners are just as bad as boys. His work as a "Modern Churchman" with full pay but not committed to a definite belief is equally as frustrating in prison as his school teaching had been at the Llanabba Castle. The criminals complicate his work by confessing dreadful things to him to see what his reaction will be, and they sing the wrong words to hymns to insure his unpopularity. Such an environment is open sesame for distortion similar to that used

to ridicule practices at the school. But in effect Waugh is asserting that a similar irrational and abnormal series of events illustrates merely another sphere in which the insanity of the modern world is apparent.

Dr. Fagan has his counterpart in Sir Wilfred Lucas--Dockery, the idealistic Governor of Blackstone Gaol. In typical burlesque fashion, Waugh magnifies the heroic qualities of the governor out of all proportion, only to destroy the giant-myth by exposing his actual hypocrisy and stupidity. Sir Lucas's desire to serve in the public life of his generation is superseded only by his ambition to be recognized for some singular aspect of his social reform.

His initial interview with Paul Pennyfeather, in which his new approach to the Code of Penology is the predominant feature, has an affinity with a psychoanalyst's technique and is extravagantly ludicrous in its incongruous imitation.

'You must understand,' he said to Paul, 'that it is my aim to establish personal contact with each of the men under my care. I want you to take pride in your prison and in your work here. So far as possible, I like the prisoners to carry on with their avocations in civilized life. What was this man's profession, officer?'

'White slave traffic, sir.'

'Ah yes, well, I'm afraid you won't have much opportunity for that here...' /In its characteristic understatement such a remark is typical of the Waugh method of shocking the reader into a realization of the true nature of things./ (p. 372)

Waugh is ridiculing Sir Wilfred's failure to realize that if the men continue in their avocations, they will persist in crime.

As the reader envisages the modern idea of reclamation and reform in the prison code, Waugh selects and exaggerates the ideals that are unwise and impractical. On the surface the principle of individual regeneration is desirable, but its impracticality on certain levels is evident. It is

essentially false pride that generates Sir Lucas's interest in the Lucas--Dockery Experiments through which he seeks public recognition both in the present and in the future. His preoccupation with his case studies prevents his consideration of such practical problems as the presence of skin disease plaguing kitchen workers but allows him opportunity for alterations in statistics. The ridiculous reclassification of sexual offenses under the notation "essentially acquisitive" reveals humorously and instantaneously the counterfeit passing for truth. His concern is with method, not reality.

'The human touch,' said Sir Wilfred after Paul had been led from the room, 'I'm sure it makes all the difference. You could see with that unfortunate man just now what a difference it made to him to think that, far from being a nameless slave, he has now become part of a great revolution in statistics.'  
(p. 373)

The irony of the human touch as applied to something as anonymous as statistics receives added emphasis by the juxtaposition of the subsequent warning of the Chief Warden about the increase in the number of suicides since sharp tools had been issued to the Arts and Crafts School. Sir Lucas had come to the "significant" conclusion many years before that almost all crime was due to the repressed desire for aesthetic expression. Consequently, he had introduced the reclamation-by-culture program into the prison. This modern innovation had odd consequences: the men in the Bookbinding Shop ate the paste in preference to their porridge (Sir Lucas starts an investigation into the nutritive value of the paste), and the messianic carpenter is given the tools of his trade with which he decapitates the Prison Chaplain Prendergast. ("Prendergast was not 'cut out' for the happy life," commented Grimes.) (p. 393) The extremes to which Sir Lucas's ideas of reformation lead him provide a comic yet

forceful satiric device for illustrating the contrast between the appearance of things and the actual reality. The spheres of society in which man might expect rationality are actually characterized by irrationality.

Waugh draws his satiric portraits from the distorted reflections of life in several settings. When Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's limousine of dove-gray and silver stole soundlessly onto the athletic field on the memorable day of the Annual Sports at the Llanabba Castle, she herself stole just as unobtrusively into Paul's life. Dr. Fagan's three light skips to her car, where he is outmaneuvered by the footman, attest to the importance of this very beautiful member of the "upper-crust" British society. In the first description of Margot as she emerges from the interior of the limousine Waugh makes the most of the noticeable tendency of burlesque satire to particularize: "like the first breath of spring in the Champs Élysées: two lizard-skin feet, silk legs, chinchilla body, a tight little black hat pinned with platinum and diamonds, and the voice that may be heard in any Ritz Hotel from New York to Buda-Pest." (p. 288) Seen through Paul's innocent eyes, she is a "different species" of womanhood, a remark that has greater satiric significance as the story progresses. Whereas Paul's experience with women had been limited to Dr. Fagan's bargain basement proffer of his daughter Louise to Paul, Professor Silenus has sufficient insight to see that the inevitable variations, "a few millimetres here and a few millimetres there," (p. 335) are small, "but obtrusive like the teeth of a saw." (p. 336) In his observation that "in ten years' time she will be almost worn out" he rightly compares her position to that of the women for whom Margot has provided employment in the only occupation for which civilization has

prepared them. Furthermore, with methodical skill Waugh makes certain that society proves Silenus right by Margot's own later admission to Paul that she is selling her business. Outwardly she attributes her ostracism from society not to her business but to her advancing age! The double significance of the two remarks about age appearing so far apart in the novel is a very effective satiric device for exposing Margot's true nature, hidden under the respectability of position and influence. The masquerade is over when she not only decides to marry Maltravers to become Vicountess Metroland, but also retains Alastair Trumpington, her young man, as her lover. She is still in business. Peter Pastmaster, Margot's son, aptly assesses the situation when he tells Paul at the end of the story that "it was a mistake you ever got mixed up with us. We're different somehow." (p. 415) Waugh has expressed the difference by dexterously removing the superficial exterior and exposing the farce of people's outward behavior.

In Decline and Fall, the minor ironies which are treated incidentally in the form of rhetorical comments or thoughts of the characters have major results. Paul, oblivious to the true nature of Margot's business, interprets her desire to aid the girls who have been sent to Rio in the Entertainment Company, as solicitous consideration of their welfare. It leads to his imprisonment for white slave trafficking. The judge at Paul's trial ironically remarks, in passing sentence, about the

'callous insolence with which, on the very eve of arrest for this most infamous of crimes, the accused had been preparing to join his name with one honoured in his country's history, and to drag down to his own pitiable depths of depravity a lady of beauty, rank, and stainless reputation.' (p. 365)

Society not only condemns the wrong individual but also protects the guilty one. That Paul had shielded Margot from the consequence of her crimes and not from some misfortune or injustice is ironically ambiguous. He had acted according to his principles of gentlemanly behavior, but Margot had failed to respond like a lady--Paul was convinced that "there was something radically inapplicable about the whole code of ready-made honour that is the still small voice, trained to command, of the Englishman all the world over." (p. 391) Ultimately, however, Paul resigns himself to the fact that it would have been impossible to imprison the Margot who had committed the crime; the burlesque image of Margot in prison strikes the reader too as impossible. Margot emerges in Paul's mind at the time of his transferral to the Egdon Prison as she did at the time of her introduction to the reader, as a scent-- "the delectable savor of the Champs Elysees in early June." (p. 392) Perhaps the innocent eye can see only innocence--an idea that Hawthorne reflected upon in The Marble Faun.

In the early stage of his writing, Waugh uses the burlesque device of particularization as a method of mild satiric description indicative of the savagery and irrationality of the modern world. Often his observation of people results in a caricaturist's distortion through the use of recognized animal characteristics. The backs of Dr. Fagan's hands were hairy and his fingers were crooked like claws, a detail suggestive of his acquisitiveness and desire for self-gratification. Lord Parakeet, a guest at Margot's, walks around "birdlike and gay, pointing his thin white nose." (p. 338) The red-haired messianic carpenter "turned his ox-like eyes (red-rimmed) on Paul and gave a slight snarl of welcome." (p. 381) He is dumb as an ox but vicious. The ten men of the Llanabba

Silver Band "advanced huddled together with the loping tread of wolves, peering about them furtively as they came as though in constant terror of ambush." (p. 278) As a pack they faced the terrors of civilization.

Lastly, Paul

...now saw that there was a young man /Professor Silenus/ sitting beside her, with very fair hair and large glasses, behind which his eyes lay like slim fish in an aquarium; they woke from their slumber, flashed iridescent in the light, and darted toward little Beste-Chetwynde. (p. 334)

Nothing escapes the eyes of the professor.

The choice of details is often unexpected and humorous or mildly shocking. Waugh purposively uses these as a device of satire; seemingly irrelevant, they contribute to the complete picture of the insane world of the twentieth century. Little Beste-Chetwynde to whom Paul, devoid of experience in organ, must teach the instrument, pulled out the vox humana one day and played Pop Goes the Weasel. Grimes, always in the soup, is offered a beer tester's job to replace the man who had the D. T's. (It is ironical that this offer comes too late, a week after he has "conveniently" married Dr. Fagan's daughter.) The bigamous union is graced by a lecture on conjugal love in which the vicar states: "...how much more beautiful to see them when they have grown to full manhood and womanhood coming together and saying, 'Our experience of life has taught us that one is not enough.'" (p. 316) In jail Paul's name is inscribed with "some difficulty" in the "Body Receipt Book." The church services in prison are voluntary--that is, the prisoners must either attend all or none. The prisoners use hymn time for conversation: "All over the chapel the men filled their chests for a burst of conversation."

'O God, our help in ages past,' /sang Paul/.

'Where's Prendergast today?'

'What, ain't you 'eared? 'e's been done in.'

'And our eternal Home.' (p. 387)

There is infinite variety of invention to insure the total impression of the inconsequence, the incongruity, and the irrationality of men's behavior.

Even the humorous device of using detailed, suggestive names is part of Waugh's satiric technique. Paul Pennyfeather is a man of no consequence, a weightless drifter in experience; Captain Grimes, who is irregular about washing, is "not out of the top drawer." Lady Circumference, whose son is named Tangent, engulfs everyone by monopolizing conversation and asserting her opinion in uncontradictory terms. Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine--Trumpington and Mrs. Margot Beste-Chetwynde are definitely high class--the vain and the best.

Much of Waugh's best satire, mild as it might be, appears in the slightly exaggerated manner in which he often treats his minor characters.

Silenus

...first attracted Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's attention with the rejected design for a chewing-gum factory which had been reproduced in a progressive Hungarian quarterly. His only other completed work was the decor for a cinema film of great length and complexity of plot--a complexity rendered the more inextricable by the producer's elimination of all human characters, a fact which had proved fatal to its commercial success. He was starving resignedly in a bed-sitting room in Bloomsbury...when he was offered the commission of rebuilding King's Thursday. 'Something clean and square'--he pondered for three hungry days upon the aesthetic implications of these instructions and then began his designs.

'The problem of architecture as I see it,' he told a journalist who had come to report on the progress of his surprising creation of ferro concrete and aluminum, 'is the problem of all art--the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form. The only perfect building must be the factory, because that is built to house machines, not men.... All ill comes from man,' he said gloomily; 'please tell your readers that...' (pp. 329, 330)

Left alone by the reporter's departure, Silenus ponders, in remarkable parody of Shakespeare's, the nature of man ending with

...on one side the harmonious instincts and balanced responses of the animal, on the other the inflexible purpose of the engine, and between them man, equally alien from the being of Nature and the doing of the machine, the vile becoming! (p. 330)

Two hours later Silenus

...had not moved from where the journalist had left him; his faun-like eyes were fixed and inexpressive, and the hand which held the biscuit still rose and fell to and from his mouth with a regular motion, while his empty jaws champed rhythmically; otherwise he was totally immobile. (p. 330)

Waugh's readers are probably becoming aware at this stage of his writing that the author has eliminated "the human element" from his "consideration of form" even as Silenus eliminated it from architecture.

Much of Waugh's early satire was characterized by a keen wit and an extraordinary imagination which lent an air of geniality and levity to his work. Within his comic vision, however, there is a tragic awareness of life. In Vile Bodies, written in 1930, Waugh directs his satire with fairly historical accuracy at the social disintegration and disillusionment that occurred following World War I. As in Decline and Fall, Waugh observes the aesthetic distance which produces the effect of a dissociation from life and thereby allows him to burlesque the incredible actions of various social groups with little reflection on either himself or his reader. Whereas the satire in Decline and Fall was directed at institutions, in Vile Bodies it focuses on the activities of the Bright Young People.

The element of absurdity in Vile Bodies is enlarged until it becomes the central design of the novel. The frame is itself ludicrous in its unique treatment of the ingenu's futile search for value in a meaningless world. The rough channel crossing at the opening of the story anticipates

the buffetings of fate to which the hero, Adam Fenwick-Symes, is subjected during his on-again, off-again romance with Nina Blount. At debarkation, the Dover customs, conscientious supporters of the Home Secretary's campaign to stamp out literature, burn Adam's memoirs, which the chief has been reading with evident appreciation. At Adam's objection the chief asserts, "I knows dirt when I sees it or I shouldn't be where I am today." (p. 24) The action of Waugh's characters reveals more effectively what they are than the author's comments could. The result is that the satire becomes more convincing and the humor more devilish. As a result of losing his manuscript, Adam, with "no money left in francs and very little left in anything else" (p. 14) is unable to marry Nina. Adam's vacillations between solvency and insolvency determine the main course of the absurdities that follow one another. When Fate seemingly drops a thousand-pound bonus into Adam's lap, he immediately gives it, for a racing wager, to a drunken major whose identity he fails to learn. At Nina's suggestion, Adam visits her father at Doubting Hall and receives rather unexpectedly a check for another thousand pounds. On the basis of this seeming security, Adam seduces Nina at a hotel in Arundel only to have her confess the following morning that the check is false, for her eccentric father has signed it Charlie Chaplin.

Seeking something permanent, the innocent Adam attends the motor races with several of the Bright Young People, foremost of whom is the Honourable A. Runcible's daughter, Agatha. Adam finds himself playing hide and seek with the still drunken major who "scarcely knew him from Adam!" Agatha herself, designated spare driver for race car 13 in order to gain admittance to the pits, dutifully fulfills the qualifications

for which her arm-band entitles her by substituting for the murdered driver. In her drunken haze she takes a short cut across a field and disappears from the course. The very absurdity of the action helps to create a sense of detachment, at the same time giving the reader the sense of suspension in time. As might be expected, the pointless existence of the young people of this generation produces disastrous results. A short time later Agatha dies in a nursing home where she has been taken after the accident that ended her race. Nina, convinced that marriage to Adam is an improbability, decides on the moment to marry Ginger, an old childhood acquaintance. The innocent hero, more perceptive than Paul Pennyfeather, perpetrates a fraud by selling Nina to Ginger for the sum of his hotel bill and then proceeds to impersonate Nina's husband on a Christmas vacation at Doubting Hall. Adam eventually finds himself on the battlefield of World War I where he learns from the drunken major that the money which is now available is worthless. Underlying the comic action of the burlesque narrated above is the serious question: How is it possible to achieve value in a universe that is either hostile or indifferent? The disillusionment found in the attitude of the Bright Young People indicates that there is little hope of finding it in the modern world. The burlesque picture as Waugh presents it from his remote position leaves the impression that life is futile and that the absurd efforts of the bright people are, in the terms of the young people themselves, "bogus." Father Rothschild observes that the young generation

...won't make the best of a bad job nowadays...  
Instead of following the old principle of 'If a thing's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well,' the young people, rightly or wrongly say, 'If a thing's not worth doing well, it's not worth doing at all.' (p. 113)

Their behavior indicates a "radical instability" in their search for stability. Waugh's ironical title of "Happy Ending" for the last chapter gives added satirical force to the pointlessness of this existence. Life ultimately ends on the "biggest battlefield in the history of the world" where life is indeed meaningless.

The scope of Waugh's sardonic vision embraces all phases of society: the members of the government, the old aristocracy, and the Bright Young People. Wherever he finds them, Waugh exposes conventional respectabilities which are revealed as absurdities or oddities in conduct, accepted unconsciously by a custom-bound or unthinking society. The Right Honourable Walter Outrage, M. P., last week's Prime Minister, physically represents an ideal government figure, but mentally is an idiot hampered by the lack of a true conception of what government means. In a moment of self-pity he thinks of himself as

...poor, poor old Outrage, always on the verge of revelation of some sublime and transfiguring experience; always frustrated....Just Prime Minister and nothing more, bullied by his colleagues, a source of income to low caricaturists. Was Mr. Outrage an immortal soul, thought Mr. Outrage; had he wings, was he free and unconfined, was he born for eternity? He sipped his champagne, fingered his ribbon of the Garter, and resigned himself to the dust. (p. 112)

His ignorance and stupidity, characteristics incompatible with the ideal statesman, are shockingly revealed in his reactions to various situations which Waugh takes evident delight in distorting. When Father Rothschild comments on the possibility of an imminent war in illustration of a point in his discussion of the young generation, the Prime Minister reveals his vacuity of thought when he says very sharply:

'What war?...No one has said anything to me about a war. I really think I should have been told. I'll be damned,' he said defiantly, 'if they shall

have a war without consulting me. What's a Cabinet for, if there's not more mutual confidence than that? What do they want a war for, anyway?' (p. 114)

It is small wonder that his Cabinet treat him like a child and often ignore his attempts to assert himself. The reader is already aware that government officials might not be "out of the top drawer." On the channel crossing at the opening of Vile Bodies, the tipsy Fanny Throbbing had commented with satiric naivete to her tipsy twin, Kitty Blackwater, "I don't think one finds quite the same class as Prime Minister nowadays, do you think?" (p. 14) On seeing Outrage in action, the reader is inclined to agree that any likeness to the ideal statesman is quite accidental or if intentional, only for the purpose of establishing an affinity with the model. From this point on, Waugh has deliberately distorted the image until it appears utterly incongruous. The distortion begins with the two ladies' remark about the class of Prime Minister but continues with a more personal appraisal. Waugh makes full use of the quality of low burlesque to diminish or degrade when he introduces the comments concerning whether Outrage has IT or not. Kitty appreciates "his very nice figure for a man of his age," but Fanny protests, "Yes, but his age, and the bull-like type is so often disappointing." (p. 14) There follows an apparent dichotomy of his public life in government and of his private life as a citizen, both equally ineffectual and inane. Known to his "public-looking detective sergeants" as the "Right Honourable Rape," he nevertheless falls short of this image also because as Waugh readily explains "that was more by way of being a pun about his name than a criticism of the conduct of his love affairs, in which, if the truth were known, he displayed a notable diffidence and the liability to panic." (p. 13) His dalliance in a love affair with the little Japanese wife of the Ambassador illustrates humorously how ineffective any activity of his

actually is. When Lottie Crump interrupts his tête-à-tête with his Japanese visitor by a telephone call complaining about "tearing the clothes off the back of a poor innocent girl" (p. 42) (Agatha Runcible had just finished telling Lottie about her "almost surgical" experience at the hands of the customs who mistook her for a jewel thief), Mr. Outrage was confused because "the phrasing of this accusation was not wholly inappropriate to his mood. It was some minutes before he began to realize that all this talk was only about Miss Runcible." (p. 42) He "slides back down the path of self-confidence he had so laboriously climbed" (p. 43) and reassures himself that, like Prufrock, he "really would have brought matters to a crisis if it had not been for that telephone." (p. 43) His desire ends in characteristic inertia.

The psychological exaggeration of his interior monologue following the interruption reveals his spiritual stagnation and psychic sterility:

(Oh, for words, words! That massed treasury of speech that was his to squander at will, to send bowling and spinning in golden pieces over the floor of the House of Commons; that glorious largesse of vocables he cast far and wide, in ringing handfuls about his constituency!) pp. 43,44

The familiar impression of Outrage is that had he the words at his command, he, like Prufrock, would not "dare disturb the universe." Waugh's particular use of high burlesque in magnifying the object of his satire is singularly carried out in the extravagant language and the vivid figures of the quoted passage above. Through this method Waugh exposes and mocks the rationalizations that often govern human behavior.

Ironically, Outrage himself reveals unconsciously his true nature when he suggests

'...that success in this world depends on knowing exactly how little effort each job is worth...

distribution of energy....And I suppose he adds,  
 most people would say I was a pretty successful man.'  
 (p. 113)

That society supports and even protects such incompetents in the field of public service is ridiculous but true.

The picture of the aristocracy as seen at the Anchorage House Party is drawn with the suggestive lines of the caricaturist. Mrs. Hoop, dreaming of eighteenth century elegance, envisions the ghosts of Pitt, Fox, Burke, Lady Hamilton, Beau Brummel and Dr. Johnson (a remarkable "concurrence of celebrities," Waugh notes) wearing buckled shoes! Baroness Yoshiwara, annoyed by the facade of propriety maintained by Mr. Outrage in the presence of other guests, breaks through with, "Oh, twenty damns to your great pig face." (p. 109) His swinish stupidity reveals itself in his response, "For East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet" (a poor conclusion for a former Foreign Secretary, says Waugh). (pp. 109, 110)

With caricaturist detail Waugh describes the eldest daughter of the Duchess of Stayle, Lady Ursula:

She wore a frock such as only Duchesses can obtain for their elder daughters, a garment curiously puckered and puffed up and enriched with old lace at improbable places, from which her pale beauty emerged as though from a clumsily tied parcel. (p. 110)

The outward lack of style and accompanying grace prepare the reader for the passive, unenthusiastic personality within. The total effect in the absence of cosmetics is one of colorlessness and apathy. Her future fiance is one of the "bad hats," equally as drab and apathetic. The "joy" that the Duchess of Stayle imagines for them is ironical, for they scarcely have the capacity for it as Waugh depicts them. The implication is that with the social barriers being broken, there is little of value

left even in the conventional aspects of society. When "the old order changeth yielding place to new," there is no fulfillment, only a sense of futility.

In mildly satiric description Waugh pictures the older generation through the lorgnette (the social mirror) of Lady Circumference, the representative symbol of aristocratic British society. The series of negatives, a technique of particularization, lends added emphasis to the unpretentiousness of this group:

She saw...a great concourse of pious and honourable people (many of whom made the Anchorage House reception the one outing of the year), their women-folk well gowned in rich and durable stuffs, their men-folk ablaze with orders; people who had represented their country in foreign places and sent their sons to die for her in battle, people of decent and temperate life, uncultured, unaffected, unembarrassed, unassuming, unambitious people, of independent judgement and marked eccentricities, kind people who cared for animals and the deserving poor, brave and rather unreasonable people, that fine phalanx of the passing order, approaching, as one day at the Last Trump they hoped to meet their Maker, with decorous and frank cordiality to shake Lady Anchorage by the hand at the top of her staircase. Lady Circumference saw all this and sniffed the exhalation of her own herd.  
(pp. 108, 109)

Waugh's gift of seeing things absurdly is particularly effective in revealing the bovine contentment and self-aplomb of Lady Circumference.

In direct contrast was her vituperation of the "young toads," a very appropriate term for the Younger Generation. "As the topic of the Younger Generation spread through the Anchorage House company like a yawn," (p. 111) Royalty directed its attention to the meaningless existence the young people were leading, their futile attempts to avoid boredom; these attempts constitute the focal point of Waugh's satire. The reader reflects upon the early morning activity of the younger set the day of the channel crossing when they indulged in the unusual sport of strapping

each other's tummies with sticking plaster (even the Honourable Miss Runcible had wriggled). Their promiscuity, their constant drinking, their scandalous behavior in seeking the novel, the bizarre, were all attempts to fill the void in their lives with something. Adam himself realized the futility of it all in his comment, "Oh, Nina, what a lot of 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, dull dances in London and comic dances in Scotland and disgusting dances in Paris--all that succession and repetition of massed humanity...those vile bodies...) (p. 106)

The rounds of parties brought little satisfaction to anyone, and the infinite variety was merely an attempt to camouflage the real disappointment experienced after each one. However serious the disillusionment of the young people might appear, Waugh ridicules their absurd behavior: their use of the Cockney accent, their blasé remarks to one another, and even their ludicrous appreciation of the members of their group. (A few daughters of the real aristocracy had joined the Bright Young People and were the most rabid devotees of the group.)

That social barriers were breaking down was soon evident in the Savage party that Archie Schwert gave. In the opening scene Waugh employs a unique device in which he chooses an unexpected word that alters the focal point of the sentence and has the added effect of introducing the comic spark.

At Archie Schwert's party, [writes Waugh], the fifteenth Marquess of Vanburgh, Earl Vanburgh de Brendon, Baron Brendon, Lord of the Five Isles and Hereditary Grand Falconer to the Kingdon of Connaught, said to the eighth Earl of Balcairn, Viscount Erdinge, Baron Cairn of Balcairn, Red Knight of Lancaster, Count of the Holy Roman Empire and Chenonceaux Herald to the Duchy of Aquitaine, 'Hullo,' he said. (pp. 44, 45)

Despite the exaggeration of the titles themselves, the author is able to establish a tone of narrative politeness or even matter-of-fact simplicity which beguiles the reader into accepting whatever event is to take place. Waugh expects his reader to be lulled in this manner so that the deflation experienced in the colloquial word "Hullo" (even the slovenly pronunciation is accurately reproduced) will startle the reader into a realization of the true situation. The contrast between the formality of the beginning and the informality of the final word has the added advantage in illustrating the social change that was represented by this particular fancy dress affair. Even the two gossip writers, the men of the noble names, are bored with the young people's boredom. (Their newspapers have reprimanded them for using the same monotonous material over and over again.) Their attempts to obtain variety end in the most mundane material about the Honorable Miles Malpractice dressing as a Red Indian and about Balcairn's mother, the former Countess Balcairn, Mrs. Panrast at present, being accompanied by her son. (Her son had just identified her as a Mrs. Panrast, whom he hesitated to acknowledge as his mother until he was forced to.)

The aimlessness and boredom of the Bright Young People find expression in their ridiculous behavior. Notable among the "vile bodies" was the financial sponsor of the party, a Miss Mouse (formerly of the wealthy aristocrats) who was experiencing unbounded joy in seeing "all that dull

money her father had amassed metamorphosed in this way into so much glitter and noise." (p. 46) She was so impressed by so many bored faces that the heretofore inhibited Miss Mouse dared to entertain a longing to tear down her dazzling frock to her hips and dance like a Bacchante before them all.

Miss Runcible, furious because she had not been asked to an Independent Labor Party she had heard someone mention, came anyway in Hawaiian costume and was the life and scul of the evening. She herself was always the most bored of the "bored;" her experiences which were notorious were always the "most shaming" or the most "shy-making"--a childish distortion of language. Waugh's comic invention is not confined to the minor observations such as the one concerning the Labor Party, but is found in incidents such as the one occurring at No. 10 Downing Street on the night and following morning of Archie's party. When the Bright Young People failed to obtain the satisfaction they sought early in the evening, they arranged a late party. The timid little guest of Mary Mouse, Miss Brown, finds herself the unexpected hostess for the late evening, and she is rapturous! Waugh writes,

It was a lovely evening for Miss Brown. Flushed with successful hospitality she trotted /how coltish/ from guest to guest, offering here a box of matches, there a cigar, there a fruit from the enormous gilt dishes on the sideboard. To think that all those brilliant people, whom she had heard so much about, with what envy, from Miss Mouse, should be here in papa's dining room, calling her 'my dear' and 'darling.' (p. 50)

Miss Runcible's request to spend the night at the Browns' initiates a hilarious series of incidents culminating in a victory for the press. In typical matter-of-fact narration, Waugh pictures the four quiet Brown girls assembling for breakfast. Into the early morning quietude walks

Miss Runcible, "not looking her best in the early morning light." (p. 51)

(She was still in costume.) Her affected Cockney breaks the startled silence,

'Good morning all....I've found the right room at last. D'you know, I popped into a study or something. There was a sweet old boy /the Prime Minister/ sitting at a desk. He did look surprised to see me.' (p. 51)

His surprise increases when, in the midst of his opening conversation with his family about having seen a half-naked dancing Hottentot appear in his doorway, he looks up and recognizes Agatha.

To relieve the tension Agatha picks up the newspaper and proceeds to read Vanburgh's account of the "Midnight Orgies at No. 10," interrupted here and there by her innocent comments on their activities. All of a sudden the revelation of Vanburgh's treason shocks her into taking action in escape from the eyes of the Brown family. "Trailing garlands of equatorial flowers" (p. 53), she flees out of the room into the avid reception of the press. And Sir Thomas Brown becomes another last week's Prime Minister.

As a technique to reinforce his satire, Waugh again burlesques a related incident which has retroactive force. The pastiche of the Aylesbury women who were discussing the "Orgies" with little understanding of the situation but with evident fervor ("They were both wearing hats like nothing on earth, which bobbed and nodded as they spoke") (p. 58) focuses the reader's attention on the contrast between things as they should be with things as they are.

'I no sooner opened the paper,' said one, 'than I was on the phone at once to all the ladies of the committee, and we'd sent off a wire to our member before one o'clock. We know how to make things hum at the Bois. I've got a copy of what we sent. Look. Members of the Committee of the

Ladies Conservative Association at Chesham Bois wish to express their extreme displeasure at reports in this morning's paper of midnight party at No. 10. They call upon Captain Crutwell--that's our member; such a nice stamp of man--strenuously to withhold support to the Prime Minister. It cost nearly four shillings, but as I said at the time, it was not a moment to spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar. Don't you agree, Mrs. Ithewaite?'

'I do, indeed, Mrs. Orraway-Smith. It is clearly a case in which a mandate from the constituencies is required. I'll talk to our chairwomen at Wendover.'

'Yes, do, Mrs. Ithewaite, It is in a case like this that the woman's voice can count.'

'If it's a choice between my moral judgement and the nationalization of banking, I prefer nationalization, if you see what I mean.'

'Exactly what I think. Such a terrible example to the lower classes, apart from everything.'

'That's what I mean. There's our Agnes now. How can I stop her having young men in the kitchen when she knows that Sir James Brown has parties like that at all hours of the night...' (p. 58)

Often Waugh's method includes a combination of techniques, as Mrs. Metroland's party for Mrs. Melrose Ape illustrates: comedy, wit, farce, and elements of satire. The character of Mrs. Ape, undoubtedly Aimee Macpherson, the American evangelist, is drawn with caricaturist detail. As she appears initially accompanied by her angels with the "worn wings," "she is nothing if not magnetic." Her masculinity is noted by Waugh's sharp eye: "looking (except that she had really no beard to speak of) every inch a sailor, [she] strode resolutely forward to the first-class bar." The image of the staunch sailor with his "thirst" juxtaposed against that of the fervent evangelist with a "thirst" also furnishes Waugh with one of his most ludicrous scenes.

'Double run,' she said and smiled magnetically at the miserable little collection of men seated about the room. 'Why, boys,' she said, 'but you're looking terribly put out over something. What's it all about? Is it your souls that's wrong or is it that the ship won't keep still? Rough? 'Course it's rough. But let me ask you this...Now, boys, I'll tell

you what we're going to do. We're going to sing a song together, you and me...There's only one great evil in the world today. Despair. I know all about England, and I tell you straight, boys, I've got the goods for you. Hope's what you want and Hope's what I got.' (p. 20)

Offering five bob to the steward if he can shout her down, she proceeds to lead the singing of "There ain't no flies on the Lamb of God." (p. 20)

The full effect of her missionary work is realized at the end of the voyage when she takes up a collection in the belief that "Salvation doesn't do them the same good if they think it's free." (p. 22) Waugh's artistry in creating a well-coordinated structure is demonstrated in the appearance of this unexpected incident in a climatic position where the satire is most biting.

Society does not underestimate the importance of Mrs. Ape's social "debut." Competition among the gossip writers for admission was keen and Balcairn was suffering the displeasure not only of the hostess, but also of his newspaper office, for recently he had committed a few blunders. (He had inadvertently chosen the photograph of the Dowager instead of the present Countess of Everyman, and he had had trouble with spelling so that he found it necessary to consult his stud book more frequently now.) The newspaper itself had thoroughly prepared for coverage--even to removing the "D" from Devonshire to allow more space. At times Waugh's caustic satire appears in an isolated absurdity of this type.

Amidst a brilliant social scene notable for its inclusion of opposite groups of society (direct testimony to Margot's achievement in restoring her social position by marriage), Mrs. Melrose Ape, magnificent in a gown of heavy gold brocade embroidered with texts, "began her oration about Hope."

'Brothers and Sisters,' she said in a hoarse stirring voice. Then she paused and allowed her eyes, renowned throughout three continents for their magnetism, to travel among the gilded chairs... 'Just you look at yourselves,' she said. (p. 87)

As self-doubt began to spread, every heart found something to bemoan.

But suddenly on that silence vibrant with self-accusation broke the organ voice of England, the hunting-cry of the ancien regime. Lady Circumference /she who had sniffed before/ now gave a resounding snort of disapproval: 'What a damned impudent woman,' she said. (p. 87)

There was no longer private recrimination, only the public scenes of wild religious enthusiasm that Balcairn's imagination could conjure up. "Little Lord Fauntleroy" was onto a good thing at last and he made the most of it--his swan song. The contrast achieved by the elevated style of the scenes as Balcairn described them with the sordid revelations of the notables themselves is an effective technique that establishes a time lag sufficient to increase the sense of the comic and of the author's detachment.

The confessions constitute some of Waugh's most effective burlesque. The rather trifling subjects are treated imaginatively with mock seriousness:

...The Hon. Agatha Runcible joined Mrs. Ape among the orchids and led the singing, tears coursing down her face.../this stopped the presses of the Excess/ (p. 91)

...barely had Lady Everyman finished before the Countess of Throbbing rose to confess her sins, and in a voice broken with emotion disclosed the hitherto unverified details of the parentage of the present Earl.../The assistant news editor demanded the photographs for these confessions./ (p. 91)

...the Archbishop of Canterbury, who up to now had remained unmoved by the general emotion, then testified that at Eton in the eighties he and Sir James Brown...(p. 92)

...The Duchess of Stayle next threw down her emerald and diamond tiara, crying 'a Guilt Offering,' an example which was quickly followed by the Countess of Circumference and Lady Brown, until a veritable rain of precious stones fell onto the parquet flooring, heirlooms of priceless value rolling among Tecla pearls and Chanel diamonds. A blank cheque fluttered from the hands of the Maharajah of Puckapore...(p. 92)

For the first time in his journalistic experience, Balcain was happy about his work and gladly went about the process of dying while Lord Monomark was ironically planning a raise for "the great lad" who came to the party in a false beard.

Some of the aspects of reality seem as incongruous to Waugh as the imaginative actions in Balcain's last column. Much of Mrs. Ape's "business," for instance, is a result of her management of her troupe of angels: Faith, Charity, Fortitude, Chastity, Humility, Prudence, Divine Discontent, Mercy, Justice, and Creative Endeavor. The roll call has the suggestive power of that of the "fallen" angels. Yet another incongruity appears not only in the varied reaction to the hymn singing on board ship, but also Waugh sees in Mrs. Hoop's reaction that of the modern citizen who uses religion selfishly, if at all. Mrs. Hoop came to the hasty conclusion that she was "through with theosophy after the journey." (p. 21) She reckoned she would "give the Catholics the once over." (p. 21) These isolated aspects of reality appear unexpectedly throughout the narrative and increase the total effectiveness of the satire.

At times Waugh employs minute details of language to refocus the reader's attention on some incongruity that might seem natural behavior but appears very unnatural as the true impression is realized. Under the guise of the strict discipline of the senior partner Pampole, who is really a benign old gentleman, Sam Benfleet proceeds to cheat the

innocent Adam by a very "straightforward arrangement"--a contract that obligates Adam for his first twelve books. When Mary Mouse "went off to Monte Carlo with the Maharajah of Puckkepore," the mice were furious. However, she was "just receiving religious instruction before her official reception as a royal concubine" (p. 159) (The effectiveness of Waugh's technique lies in the sudden contrast that appears in the way things should be and the way they are.) At the racetrack when Agatha Runcible, substitute driver of Car 13, shot out into the middle of the road, missed a collision by a foot, and disappeared with a roar up the road, Adam asks Archie Schwert if it is "all right being tight in a car if it's on a race course, if anyone will run her in or anything." (p. 148) Adams accepts as Archie's rational assurance that it is all right, for all are tight on the race course. Later the true significance of the remark appears when death "runs her in."

As in Decline and Fall, Waugh devises suggestive names for his characters and places. Adam, the innocent; Mary Mouse, the timid soul; Mrs. Ape, the barbaric imitator of her antecedent; all seem humorously appropriate. "Outrage" is extravagant in its conception although Lottie Crump shows some perception when she says, "Outrage your name and Outrage your nature." Archie Schwert, a common and dull ordinary man, affecting manners, Agatha Runcible, fantastic child of destiny,<sup>12</sup> and Ginger Littlejohn, an avid promoter with little intelligence: all suggest a singular aspect of character. Doubting Hall reveals appropriately the environment in which the irrational supersedes the rational. The

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<sup>12</sup>Waugh often uses fantastic names to illustrate a fantastic world. One recalls the runcible spoon of Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat": "They dined on mince and slices of quince, which they ate with a runcible spoon." Agatha herself is a child of fantasy.

Daily Excess is the medium for exaggeration of social activities, for Mr. Chatterbox's revelations of the extraordinary characters such as Conat Cincinnati going into Espinosa's in a green bowler, the data that though popular at one time became so unpopular with the editor that Adam was fired when Nina unknowingly used it for his column.

The element of fantasy which is used so extensively in Waugh's later work has its beginning in the eccentric behavior of Colonel Blount. Nina's father, confused and vacant, flounders in his own attempts to achieve security in a world that suddenly has become meaningless to him. Insufficient himself, he can give Adam only a counterfeit check. In trying to identify himself with something of value (in his conception the movie production company), he cannot at first realize that the producers are in a major way exploiting his resources just as he in a minor way is taking advantage of the rector's motor car. The encroachment of modernity brings with it destruction of the old ideals and resultant corruption. Implicit in the satiric description of the events surrounding this encroachment evident in the activities at Doubting Hall is a clash of ideas. Waugh emphasizes this conflict by shocking the reader's complacent, everyday sense of reality through the fantastic revelation of the odd, the eccentric, the irrational conduct of affairs at Doubting Hall.

Adam's second visit takes place amidst the oddest circumstances. His entrance to the estate is interrupted by someone shouting, "They're shooting in front." (p. 120) Wondering what kind of sport this could be, Adam indulges in a bit of fantastic imagining quite appropriate to the milieu in which he subsequently finds himself. He imagines Colonel Blount hibernating in the country

...to devote himself to shooting on his estate where richly stocked coverts in front of the house offer

excellent shooting but often humorously complicates the arrival of visitors. Colonel Blount has the curious eccentricity of being unable to shoot his best except to the accompaniment of violin and 'cello.' (pp. 120, 121)

Adam is intercepted by a strange Bishop whose introductory question scarcely seems in keeping with the priesthood, "Here, what in hell do you want?" (p. 121) But then the whole recital of the Bishop's that follows the question is one of grotesque and macabre detail that leaves Adam speechless at the cold-blooded bigotry:

'They're just shooting him now....He's just one of the Wesleyans, you know--we're trying to polish off the whole crowd this afternoon while the weather's good....I daresay you'd like to come around to the front and see the fun. I should think they'd be singing the last hymn now....Why, yesterday, they kept Miss La Touche waiting the whole afternoon, and then the light was so bad when they did shoot her that they made a complete mess of her--we had the machine out and ran over all the bits carefully last night after dinner--you never saw such rotten little scraps--quite unrecognizable, half of them. We didn't dare show them to her husband... (p. 121)

By exaggeration of macabre details, Waugh establishes perfect control of tone and timing in preparation for the disorder and irrationality that soon reveals itself in the frantic efforts of the Wonder-Film Company of Great Britain to make the movie of "that great social and religious reformer John Wesley" a stepping stone in the development of the British Film Industry. As seen through Adam's eyes the burlesque of the Company's activities includes duels, escapes, struggles of mounted grenadiers "plunging despairingly up the main drive." (p. 126) ("The grenadiers, part of Butcher Cumberland's army, give more educational value," explained Mr. Isaacs.) Even if this scene is not used in "Wesley," Isaacs continued, "A hundred foot or so of galloping horses is always useful." (p. 126) Minor mishaps abound. Once even the chief cameraman

found that he had forgotten to put in a new roll of film! Hampered by insufficient money, inadequate management, and only amateur experience, one can expect that such inadequate efforts will bring inadequate results. This zany behavior is Uhrquart's "madpash bedlam," a phrase he used in translating Rabelais.

Waugh's technique in relating one part of the structure to another for satiric emphasis is demonstrated in the showing of this film later in the story. The first night performance at the Rector's during the Christmas weekend when Nina and her new husband (alias Adam) visit the old home for a traditional Christmas "was not really a success." Colonel Blount as usual showed an exaggerated inconsideration of everyone: "he put an end to any frivolity of 'this' kind the Rector's wife had prepared coffee and chocolate biscuits by plunging them all in darkness" (p. 176) in which they remained during all the preliminary preparations; he stands upon the piano and without asking permission puts "a couple of screws in the wall." The whole performance is ludicrous from the moment four uniformed horsemen gallop backwards down the drive until the Rector's household is plunged into darkness by a short in the voltage. The film had gone on for a half hour:

One of its peculiarities was that whenever the story reached a point of dramatic and significant action the film seemed to get faster and faster. Villagers trotted to church as though galvanized; lovers shot in and out of windows; horses flashed past like motor cars; riots happened so quickly that they were scarcely noticed. (p. 179)

Beyond the mirth and the gayety of scenes like this one are serious implications that in a modern world of disorder and sterility (a wasteland) there can be no value. There is nothing, Hemingway's nada of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" in which the waiter acknowledges "it was all a nothing and a man was nothing too." The activities of the Young

Generation--the Bright Young People--in search of a place for themselves would indicate then a nihilistic answer to their problem. Waugh evidently rejects their solution as futile but offers no answer to the problem. He remains detached and remote; otherwise his comedy would become tragedy.

In Waugh's first two novels there have been obvious signs of the encroachment of modernity on a traditional way of life. Margot in Decline and Fall had asked for something "big and square" and Silenus had built her an all-metal house in which the human element had, to the satirist's eye at least, been omitted. In Vile Bodies the old regime was disintegrating and a form of modern barbaric society was infiltrating the ranks or class structure. Lottie Crump's hotel seemed to be the only oasis, where "one parched with modernity [could] go and still draw up, cool and uncontaminated, great healing draughts from the well of Edwardian certainty." (p. 33) Waugh is noticeably an enemy of modernism.

In Black Mischief Waugh's satire is based upon a conflict between two cultures which reveals the futility that awaits a civilized, as well as a barbaric, society. The very matter of fact, straightforward narrative style of the beginning precludes any suspicion by the reader of the absurdities that develop as the ludicrous structure of the novel. The element of shock which appears in successive incidents with such deliberate timing and pace gives added emphasis to the satire. Waugh opens his narrative with a brief, comparatively mild, history of Azania, a large imaginary island in East Africa, which had been originally settled by the Portugese, later by the Arabs. (The details are purposely included to give the appearance of reality.) At a difficult time in the political development of the country, Amurath, "a slave's son, sturdy,

bow-legged, three-quarters Negro," assumed leadership of the country and instituted a few modern improvements: an inland capital, a railway, and a form of government administration. As the country became more civilized, Seth, grandson of Amurath, Chief of Sakuyu, Lord of Wonder and Tyrant of the Seas, Bachelor of the Arts of Oxford University, inherited the ruling power which, at the opening of the story, was being threatened by the insurrection of Seyid, Seth's uncle. Seth sees the conflict as one between Progress and Barbarism and envisions himself as a symbol of the New Age--The Future. It is Seth's vision which forms the basis of the fantastic developments in his modernization program for Azania. The novel becomes one long burlesque of aspects of this program.

Seth's monomania begins with his refusal to believe that his one tank had proved ineffective in the settling of the insurrection. The victorious Major General Connolly had been forced to use psychology based on native customs to win: in contradiction of Seyid's lie that Seth had deserted to the Church of England (as a photograph of Seth in his Oxford cap and gown might indicate), Connolly used the picture as an identification of Amurath reincarnated in another form. The deserters returned, bringing with them real fighters as well--not "dressed-up mission boys." The reader has no sooner accepted the seeming absurdity of the superiority of such barbaric weapons when the full impact of the irreconcilability of cultures is brought home to him by the savagery of the natives when Seyid surrenders to them. The satiric contrast between the style of polite conversation and the grotesque significance of the event itself brings into sharp focus the conflict of cultures:

Seth asks, 'And the usurper Seyid, did he surrender?'  
 'Yes, he surrendered all right. But, look here,  
 Seth, I hope you aren't going to mind about this, but you  
 see how it was, well, you see Seyid surrendered and....'

'You don't mean you've let him escape?'

'Oh, no, nothing like that, but the fact is, he surrendered to a party of Wanda...and, well, you know what the Wanda are.'

'You mean...'

'Yes, I'm afraid so. I wouldn't have had it happen for anything. I didn't hear about it until afterwards.'

'They should not have eaten him--after all he was my father...It is so...so barbarous.' /Here again is that understatement of the shocking./

'I knew you'd feel that way about it, Seth, and I'm sorry. I gave the headmen twelve hours in the tank for it.'

'I'm afraid that as yet the Wanda are totally out of touch with modern thought. /Waugh's tendency toward understatement is a very important aspect of his technique./ We must start some schools and a university for them when we get things straight.'  
(pp. 222, 223)

Such an incongruous picture, burlesque at Waugh's best, presented with obvious complacency and assumption of conceivability constitutes for Waugh an effective technique of satire.

Once the satiric tone has been established, exaggeration, absurdity, and incongruity--important aspects of Waugh's shock treatment--are employed with very little restraint. The reader recognizes and accepts the extravagant and ludicrous action or behavior as part of the total "fable." Seth's single-minded purpose, to modernize Azania, is the catalyst of many of the burlesque absurdities that occur in this fable.

Seth's first effort in his plan to adopt modern ways, which would constitute a visible sign of progress, was to put the railway into operation. Arrangements, embodied in an elaborate proclamation, in Sukuyu, Arabic, and French were made by the Emperor himself for the formal departure of the train to Debra-Dowa. The incongruous situation in the burlesque scene at the railroad station is extremely comical in the unexpectedness of events which affect the formal dignity of the occasion:

'His Majesty is now ready to start.'

The station master waved his hat to the driver; the guards once more presented their arms. The drums and fifes struck up the national anthem, the two daughters of the director of the line scattered rose petals round the steps of the carriage. The engine whistled, Seth continued to smile...nothing happened. At the end of the verse the band music died away; the soldiers stood irresolutely at the present; the Nestorian Metropolitan continued to beat the time of some interior melody; the goats and turkeys wandered in and out among the embarrassed spectators. Then, when all seemed frozen in silence, the engine gave a great wrench, shaking the train coach by coach from the tender to the mule boxes, and suddenly to the immense delight of the darkies on the roof, shot off by itself into the country.

'The Emperor has given no orders for a delay.'

'It is a thing I did not foresee,' said the station master, 'our only engine has gone away alone. I think I shall be disgraced for this affair.' (pp. 269, 270)

Such a scene brings out in striking contrast the ridiculous attempts of a barbaric society to imitate civilized practices. The burlesque is highly successful in its outrageous imitation.

Seth increasingly felt the need of "a man of culture, a modern man... a representative of Progress and the New Age" (p. 270) to assist him. It is ironic that the man he finds for this position is a man of little refinement, the Mayfair Adventurer, dissolute, ruthless and unprincipled--Basil Seal. As Waugh first describes him in England, Basil would scarcely appear as a representative of Progress:

He stood in the doorway, a glass of whiskey in one hand, looking insolently round the room, his head back, chin forward, shoulders rounded, dark hair over his forehead, contemptuous grey eyes over grey pouches, a proud rather childish mouth, a scar on one cheek. (p. 245)

He is indeed a "corker" as one of the girls remarked. Perhaps Waugh is posing the satiric question: Is Basil truly a representative of the New Age? If so, he is doomed to failure. As an ingenu hero, Basil Seal is

as much a pawn in the circumstances of fate as either Pennyfeather or Adam Symes, but he is not the same passive figure. The son of a famous Conservative, Basil first appears in London expecting to go into politics like his father, but he is unable to cope with reality. He escapes by going on social whirls for excitement and finally is arrested in the very constituency which had been carefully selected to insure his election. He is weak and vapid. His mother's continuing confidence in his acceptance of responsibility is betrayed when he steals her emeralds and absconds to Azania. His instability and aimlessness, characteristic of his continuing immaturity, make him an easy pawn in Seth's scheme to civilize Azania. His childish cruelty and sadistic bent, however, detract from the air of innocence associated with the typical naive hero, with the result of a minor loss of detachment but a major loss of spontaneity so characteristic of Waugh's first two novels.

In Seth's eyes, however, even after a separation of three years, "Basil still stood as the personification of all that glittering, intangible Western culture to which he aspired." (p. 279) Basil is just the type of scoundrel, "insolent, sulky, and curiously childish," (p. 286) who could as Minister of Modernization, promote Seth's One-Year Plan. His first act--to gain control of all Departments of the Government--was almost totally successful, but the Nestorian patriarch and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army "continued to muddle through the routine of their departments in the same capricious, dilatory, but independent manner as before the establishment of the new regime." (p. 285) However, Basil was there to stay. With "one firm stab of indelible ink" all the work was gladly relegated to him and in one month's time the Ministry of Modernization was a "going concern."

The stark impossibility of suddenly imposing a European culture on savage barbarism is satirically revealed in the disastrous attempts of the ministry to change the clothing, the customs, and finally the monetary system (the final climax of events which defeats even Basil). As a private money-making scheme of Youkoumian, the stocking-footed financial secretary, one thousand pairs of army boots are foisted upon Major General Connolly's troops despite his vehement objections. Seal pays a visit to the gullible Seth and insinuates that Connolly might be somewhat opposed to progress. Provoked to immediate action and motivated by a mental picture of the booted Guard's regiment at Buckingham Palace, Seth issues an immediate announcement to the effect that he would hang any man he saw barefooted. (In typical caricaturist detail a minor gallows stood on the south side of the Palace Compound--a manifestation of Progress and the New Age.)

When Boots Day arrived, a great celebration was held in honor of the boots--savagery in its most primitive aspects: "Cook-pots steaming over the wood fires; hand drums beating; bare feet shuffling unforgotten rhythms; a thousand darkies crooning and swaying on their haunches, white teeth flashing in the fire light." (p. 298) All seems perfectly normal until in typical Waugh unexpectedness the distortion appears, this time in the form of a remark in a passing conversation:

'So the boots went down all right with your men after all, Connolly,' /Seal commented to Connolly the next day. Waugh often makes use of a play on words to focus the reader's attention on a later revelation./

'They went down.'

'No cases of lameness yet I hope?'

The general leant over in his saddle and smiled pleasantly. 'No cases of lameness' he replied. 'One or two of bellyache though. I'm just writing a report on the matter to the Commissioner of Supplies--that's our friend Youkoumian, isn't it? You see my adjutant made rather a silly mistake. He hadn't had much

truck with boots before and the silly fellow thought they were extra rations. My men ate the whole bag of tricks last night.' (pp. 298, 299)

Waugh always shows perfect control of tone and pace; his timing has the effect of increasing the comic and, consequently, the satiric. It also has the additional result of insuring the author's detachment.

Seth's "little knowledge" learned through contact with "civilization" at Oxford proves a dangerous thing. (Seth was educated at Oxford where he first met Basil.) "Ideas bubbled up within him, bearing to the surface a confused sediment of phrase and theory, scraps of learning half understood and fantastically translated." (p. 307) Waugh's bizarre imagination conceives in a chance phrase regarding birth control an opportunity to satirize not only what seemingly would appear to be an aspect of modern progress but what would also be a vulnerable practice of a barbarous society. In the selection of material lies the incipient force of Waugh's satire. Incorporating the idea of birth control into his scheme of modernization, Seth suggests that a plan to "popularize it by propaganda--(to) educate the people in sterility" (p. 292) would be best. For this reason he arranges a pageant of contraception--an irrational move that eventually contributes to his downfall. "To convey to the illiterate the benefits of birth control" he devises a large highly colored poster, copies of which were displayed all over Debra-Dowa, in the interior at vice regal-lodges and headmen's huts, and hung up at prisons, barracks, gallows and juju trees. It is ironic that the real support for Seth's program suddenly comes from the tribesmen and villagers who saw these posters. There had been much opposition to the program from the Churches (British Anglican excepted), from the Conservative party, rallying under the leadership of the Earl of Ngumo who took

great pride in his progeny, and from the smart set (under the leadership of Boaz), composed of cosmopolitan blacks, courtiers, Younger sons and a few of the decayed Arab intelligentsia, who adopting a sophisticated attitude that they had always known about these things thought in terms of contraception becoming middle class. But the support of the lower class was a direct result of the poster cleverly conceived in Waugh's sardonic vision to represent reason and instinct:

It portrayed two contrasted scenes. On one side a native hut of hideous squalor, overrun with children of every age, suffering from every physical incapacity--crippled, deformed, blind, spotted and insane; the father prematurely aged with paternity squatted by an empty cook-pot; through the door could be seen his wife, withered and bowed with child bearing, desperately hoeing at their inadequate crop. On the other side a bright parlour furnished with chairs and table; the mother, young and beautiful, sat at her ease eating a huge slice of raw meat; her husband smoked a long Arab hubble-bubble...while a single, healthy child sat between them reading a newspaper. Inset between the two pictures was a detailed drawing of some up-to-date contraceptive apparatus and the words in Sakuyu: Which Home Do You Choose? (pp. 305, 306)

The pretension that "Nowhere was there any doubt about the meaning of the beautiful new pictures" (p. 306) is a device of satire, a form of litotes, which is calculated to shock the reader into a realization of the true nature of things as it is revealed subsequently in the native's interpretation of the poster. The manipulation of the point of view and the abbreviated style of the fragments constitute a very effective method for stressing the importance of the contrast between the intended significance and the actual meaning in the conception of the natives:

See: on right hand: there is rich man: smoke pipe  
like big chief: but his wife she no good: sit eating  
meat: and rich man no good: he only one son.

See: on left hand: poor man: not much to eat: but  
his wife she very good, work hard in field: man he  
good too: eleven children: one very mad, very holy.

And in the middle: Emperor's juju. Make you like that good man with eleven children. (p. 306)

The language creates an impression of finality and decisiveness which corroborates the opinion of the natives: there is indeed no doubt! So they celebrate the new birth control devices as fertility gods.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure in satire is to see the victory of intelligence or common sense over stupid power--to see the giant reduced to normal size. So it is that Basil Seal's newspaper account of the support for the program has ironic significance:

Once more wrote Basil Seal, in a leading article in the 'Courier,' the people of the Empire have overridden the opposition of a prejudiced and interested minority, and with no uncertain voice have followed the Emperor's lead in the cause of Progress and the New Age. (p. 306)

Waugh's technique in extending the process of reductio ad absurdum into the field of the satiric is successful in its revelation of the consequences of disorder and irrationality.

The absurdities increase as Seth's knowledge of books increases. His mounting obsessiveness leads to an extravagance of reforms which he inevitably announces in the form of decrees. He has actually no conception of what his plans might mean to the natives. Communal physical exercises and community singing to promote good health might be advantageous in Germany but scarcely in Azania. On one of Seal's visits to Seth's quarters, Seth matter-of-factly remarks, "Come in, Seal, I'm just rebuilding the city. The Anglican Cathedral will have to go...Look, here is Seth Square...I'm calling this Boulevard Basil Seal." (p. 290) With his indiarubber at hand he finds it convenient to erase boulevards at will, to placate some individuals or to penalize others. In a later observation, this project is satirized again with double significance

when Basil remarks, "'Heaven knows what will happen if he ever discovers psycho-analysis,' gloomily foreseeing a Boulevard Kraft-Ebbing, an Avenue Oedipus, and a pageant of coprophagists." (p. 302)

The Emperor's preoccupation with his ideas becomes so fanatic that he issues orders in rapid succession regardless of the possibility of their fulfillment. Each suggestion is to be magically brought about immediately. One morning's chit included a request to abolish the death penalty, marriage, infant mortality, mortgages, inhumane butchery, totemism, emigration, and the Sakuyu language and all native dialects. When Seth introduces fiat money, emblazoned with a large medallion portrait of Seth himself in top hat and European tail coat, public faith in the regime disappears, and the conservative rebellion assures a return to barbarism. Native resistance, irrational as it may be, is final.

The influence of "civilization" is felt from another direction, the British diplomatic service. The burlesque portrait of the minister, Sir Samson Courteney, "a man of singular charm and wide culture," reveals him as an extremely introverted "Envoy Extraordinary." From a very auspicious beginning, which prediction immediately establishes an affinity with the model in the reader's mind, he deteriorates into a rather jejeune, ineffective fraud. The history of his failure to live up to expectations constitutes the first of the revelations of his character. The rest appear by direct contradiction through his actions. His penchant for childish activities is responsible for his frequent transfers: at Peking he devoted himself to building a cardboard model of the Summer Palace at the expense of neglect of his duties and in Washington he conceived a sudden enthusiasm for bicycle racing which necessitated long absences from duty. In Sweden he had to resort to pidgin English, for

his knowledge of French had suddenly disappeared. His uncles are noticeably loyal, besides being in a position in the Foreign Office to assure the family honor. An extension of Sir Samson's childish interests can be observed at his post in Azania where his eccentricities appear unexpectedly in the usual evening pleasure, knitting, and in "chance treats" such as playing with an inflated indiarubber sea-serpent that had been left in the bath. Waugh resorts to the very effective device of low burlesque in diminishing and degrading his subject.

Satire measures human conduct against an ideal; it is the distorted image of that ideal that Waugh creates with such skill. Sir Samson's preoccupation with his own private interests at the expense of the public good is deftly revealed in a shift in the point of view during a visit from the Bishop. The Envoy Extraordinary (the term Waugh prefers to use for the purpose of taking incisive jabs at the object of his satire) finds the

incursions from the outside world increasingly disturbing and exhausting...The Bishop would insist on talking about problems and Policy, Welfare, Education and Finance. He knew all about native law and customs and the relative importance of the various factions at court. He had what Sir Samson considered an ostentatious habit of referring by name to members of the royal household and to provincial governors, whom Sir Samson was content to remember as 'the old black fellow who drank so much Kummel' or 'that what-do-you-call-him Prudence said was like Aunt Sarah' or 'the one with glasses and gold teeth.' (pp. 230, 231)

When, during the Bishop's visit, the conversation veered toward the danger of a massacre, the Envoy Extraordinary expressed immediate concern over the repetition of tinned asparagus in the daily luncheon menu and vacantly admitted he had not thought much about the possibility or the probability of a massacre. That the Envoy has no conception of

the true situation is evident in his remark, "Still, I daresay it'll all blow over, you know," (p. 231) followed by his resumption of the interrupted discussion of asparagus. (In a humorous contrast the French Minister had taken every precaution and "was keeping his last cartridge for Madame Ballon.") (p. 231)

The extent of Waugh's distortion of the image is revealed in the ironical comment of the Bishop when he tries almost in vain to recover the Envoy's interest in the immediate problem of news. "Up here you must know what is going on." (p. 232) But all Sir Samson knew was society news. In desperation the Bishop finally asks,

'But is there no news about the war?'

'No I don't think so. Can't remember anything particularly. I leave all that to Walsh, you know, and he's down with fever at the moment. I daresay when he comes back we shall know something. He keeps in touch with all these local affairs....There were some cables the other day, now I come to think of it.' (p. 232)

The loss of the cypher book which precluded any possibility of decyphering the cables caused little immediate concern except that, "there might be something wanting an answer." (p. 233) The Envoy's ignorance of and lack of interest concerning both his people and the natives make a startling contrast with the ideal image of diplomacy. It would appear that the natives' resistance to change and the diplomats' inertia alike might produce a stagnant civilization. The effect is dramatically brought out by the juxtaposition of contrasting scenes of the British serving tea as usual and of the bloody bands of Sakuyu warriors "playing hide and seek among the rocks, chivvying the last fugitives of the army of Seyid, and the women creeping out to rob the dead." (p. 234)

The forces of barbarism overcome Prudence also. Bored with life, as were the Bright Young People, she attempts to satisfy her erotic

desires by an affair with William, one of the few eligible men at the legation. (She tempts "sweet, sweet William with a lot of new ideas to try" (p. 233) but is not satisfied until the advent of Basil Seal.) Her excessive imagination also offers her an escape from boredom as well as a minor satisfaction. (She is writing a book of the Panorama of Life, for which the prophetic words of Basil "You're a great girl, Prudence, and I'd like to eat you," (p. 334) constitute a grotesque ending. She is devoured in a stew which the natives prepared as a funeral feast for Seth, and Basil shared as a guest.) Waugh's use of grotesque satire anticipates a subsequent development of this technique, the function of which is to shock men into an awareness of the relationship of things. In this instance, Prudence was a victim of the very forces of barbarism which civilization was attempting to change. Waugh's increasing tendency to use irony in which fate takes a part is evident in Prudence's untimely death.

With the influx of European culture in all its absurd manifestations, it is not surprising that Waugh conceives the idea of bringing representatives of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to Azania for the purpose of investigating the methods of hunting. Humane consideration in a savage country would suggest the possibility of regeneration on more than the lower level. The introduction of the comical Dame Mildred Porch and her travelling companion, Miss Sarah Tin, is well-timed, for not only does it constitute a device for creating a naive point of view from which the story of the conservative revolution can be seen, but more important still, it reveals the close proximity of the rational and the irrational in people's behavior. At the basis of all incongruous imitation found in burlesque is an element of truth.

So it is that in revealing the distorted or unnatural actions of Dame Mildred, Waugh illustrates that the rational behavior that one expects from a civilized world becomes irrational in a barbarous world. In Dame Mildred's humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of "dumb chums," she not only neglects but also ignores the human plight. She writes in her diary:

Fed doggies in the market place. Children tried to take food from doggies. Greedy little wretches.... Road to station blocked broken motor lorry. Natives living in it. Also two goats. Seemed well but cannot be healthy for them so near natives. (p. 315)

In reality her treatment of humanity is no better than that of the savage is. Idealistically, Dame Mildred was applying the civilizing influences of a European culture to a primitive society; realistically she brought only another form of barbarism.

Two extenuations of the burlesque stem from misunderstandings at the "Imperial Banquet for welcoming the English Cruelty to Animals." The first occurs in an exchange of French, the official language for the banquet. When the Lord Chamberlain, concerned over the ladies' refusal to accept brandy, offers other alcoholic beverages, he is rebuffed in the following manner with the following consequences:

'Mon bon homme...il vous faut comprendre que nous ne brivons rien de tout, jamais; an announcement which considerably raised their prestige among the company; they were not much to look at, certainly, but at least they knew a thing or two which the Azanians did not. A useful sort of woman to take on a journey, reflected the Lord Chamberlain, and inquired with polite interest whether the horses and camels in their country were as conveniently endowed.'  
(pp. 324, 325)

The emphasis on the animal nature of this incident is no accident. The women, belonging to a rational group in the strata of society, are reduced in scale to that of primitive man or beast in whom the physical predominates

over the mental. Waugh's particular use of low burlesque in this instance assumes added dimensions when seen as part of the total burlesque.

The second of the two incidents concerns the ladies' mission to Azania. The dedication in the menu gives the first indication that there might be some ambiguity as to the ladies' visit. Again Waugh reduces their status to that of the savage when Boaz, the Minister of the Interior, in his complimentary address to the motley assembly at the banquet, says:

'...It is my privilege and delight this evening to welcome with open arms of brotherly love to our city Dame Mildred Porch and Miss Tin, two ladies renowned throughout the famous country of Europe for their great cruelty to animals. We Azanians are a proud and ancient nation but we have much to learn from the white people of the West and North. We, too, in our small way, are cruel to our animals (here he digresses to recount in hideous detail his own cruelty to a wild boar) but it is to the great nations of the West and North, and specially to their worthy representatives that are with us tonight, that we look as our natural leaders on the road to progress. Ladies and gentlemen we must be Modern, we must be refined in our Cruelty to Animals. That is the message of the New Age brought to us by our guests this evening.' (pp. 326, 327)

The juxtaposition of the "open arms of brotherly love" with "refinement in cruelty" provides an effective contrast in the satire. It is ironic that what the savage has to learn from civilized man is merely a refinement of barbaric customs, not something of value which emanates from a refinement of culture. The most the Minister can offer the ladies in a toast is the coveted attainments of a barbaric culture--"old age and prolonged fecundity." A representative of barbarism has the final word, and the reader begins to feel like Dame Mildred that she is wasting her time here.

As in his first two novels, Waugh used the aspect of exaggerated particularization to enforce the satire, so in Black Mischief he isolates small facts and minute observations to create a total impression of futility. The Victory Medal which the Emperor designed was to be modern, the obverse side bearing the head of Seth in European top hat, spectacles, evening dress, collar and tie; the reverse, bearing the figure of Progress, holding in one hand an aeroplane, in the other some small object symbolic of improved education, possibly a telephone. When Seth promotes General Connolly to the rank of Duke, he makes the suggestion that the General discard the unusual term of endearment, Black Bitch, which seemed to emphasize the racial distinction, in favor of one more suitable to his new status. Connolly agrees but concludes it will be difficult for "he'll always think of her as Black Bitch somehow." (p. 223) "Bless her little black heart," (p. 296) he says later when she becomes overly excited at an invitation to dine at Madame Ballon's and he has to "thump her soundly on the head and lock her in a cupboard for some hours before she could be reduced to a condition sufficiently subdued for diplomatic society." (p. 296)

Basil finds it continually necessary to handle many small details in the Campaign for Progress. The occasion came when entertainment for the Wanda notables presented a major problem, for Seth had forbidden raw beef. Basil circumvents the issue by serving it raw as "steak tartare."

The menu for the Imperial Banquet in honor of the visiting ladies was handled by Seth himself (illustrating the self-sufficiency of Azania since the advent of modernization). The "So-English" menu attested to the fact that Seth had become vitamin conscious: Vitamin A--Tin Sardines,

Vitamin B--Roasted Beef, Vitamin C--Small Roasted Suckling Porks, Vitamin D--Hot Sheep and Onions, Vitamin E--Spiced Turkey, Vitamin F--Sweet Puddings, Vitamin G--Coffee, Vitamin H--Jam. Dame Mildred reported her version of the banquet in her diary: "the food was nasty--course after course of different kinds of meat, over-seasoned and swimming in grease," little of which she ate even though everyone else was "eating and drinking at a great pace." (p. 325)

The Emperor bombarded her with detailed questions, some of which Dame Mildred was unable to answer: How many suits of clothes had the King of England? Did he take his bath before or after his breakfast? Which was more civilized? What was the best shop to buy an artesian well? Such is the total picture of inconsequence and futility that Waugh creates.

The burlesque image of Lady Courteney, drawn in fine detail as most of Waugh's minor characters are, supplements by a sort of incrementation the total effect. She

devoted herself to gardening. The bags came out from London laden with bulbs and cuttings and soon there sprang up round the Legation a luxuriant English garden; lilac and lavender, privet and box, grass walks and croquet lawn, rockeries and wildernesses, herbaceous borders, bowers of rambler roses, puddles of water lilies and an immature maze. (p. 229)

When Sam later mentions trouble between William and Prudence, Lady Courteney remarks, "'I've been meaning to mention it for some time, Sam, only I was so worried about the antirrhinums.'" (p. 300) Later, during the time of the threatened massacre, "Lady Courteney appeared among her guests, wearing gum boots and pushing a barrow and spade. Emperors might come and go, but there was heavy digging to be done in the lily pond." (p. 351) Even when the legation is being deserted, Lady Courteney is getting her bulbs in!

The skill in the choice of details and in the manipulation of the points of view produces a humorous "realism" in the burlesque, but the absurdity of the situations themselves assures the author's detachment. This singular treatment is realism with a difference; the purpose is to shock our complacent routine sense of reality by contrasting scales of value, a method Waugh is to use more fully in subsequent novels.

Waugh's increasing use of irony reveals the underlying theme that civilized culture is unable to compete with the force of barbarism. In A Handful of Dust Waugh pursues this idea, extending it into the area of civilized society where another type of savagery defeats the traditional elements of culture and refinement.

An examination of the three novels which comprise the initial stage of Waugh's writing reveals common characteristics which distinguish his work in this period: a remarkable comic ingenuity, the author's removal from the world of his invention, and an extravagance of tone and incident. The method of burlesque offered Waugh the most suitable medium for the exploitation of these techniques. The strength of his burlesque lies in his power as a satirist to reveal the comparison of the real behavior of men through the author's distortions and the ideal conduct as the reader envisions it. The comic vitality of Waugh's early work depends not only upon the originality of his invention, but also upon the air of detachment which he maintains. The burlesque itself appears in the structure of the novels as the essential design or fable which is in each case ludicrously absurd. In repudiating the modern world, Waugh presents a picture of disorder and inconsequence which from his Olympian height he finds ridiculous and hilariously funny. In reality the author's position is an escape--an insulation against the injustice

and indifference of the world. One would then expect Waugh's characters to be satiric portraits, burlesque images, whose actions, inconsequential and irrational, would be as futile as life itself. With matter-of-fact blandness Waugh magnifies or deflates, whichever suits the immediate purpose better, but eventually the true image appears. Waugh's ability to alter this image through particularization, often by caricaturist exaggeration or by mild satiric observations, increases the comic and ultimately, therefore, the satiric. Waugh meant his readers to laugh; it is obvious that much of the reader's pleasure is a result of the gay, comic, fantastic inventiveness of Waugh's genius. However, beyond the gayety and levity lies a tragic view of the futility of life which the reader is intended to experience also. Waugh is a master of the shock treatment through which, with rare control of tone and forward movement, indispensable elements of burlesque, he focuses the reader's attention upon the contrast between aspects of life as they should be and as they are. One must admit that Waugh has created structurally admirable works that fulfill his requirements of a novel, but one must also admit the absence of compassion and feeling--the purely human element that gives meaning to life. Herein lies the success of his early work. All the techniques and devices of the satirist culminate in proving that life is devoid of heart--the message that underlies his youthful conception of life.

### CHAPTER III

#### GROTESQUE REALITY

The presence of sterile degeneration in a civilized society has occupied Waugh from the very beginning of his career as a writer. Its initial appearance in the earliest novels occurred as distorted reflections of different aspects of life humorously depicted in a mood of levity and audacity. Subsequently its insistent influence upon Waugh's imagination took the form of a humorous satire on the conflict of cultures in Black Mischief, with, however, an underlying current of grotesque and macabre seriousness. It culminates in a tour de force that shocks the reader by the grotesquerie and savagery of its satire. A Handful of Dust illustrates a distinct alteration in Waugh's technique. In the novels of the initial period of his writing, Waugh had remained aloof from the fantastic world of his creation. In A Handful of Dust he comes closer to the real world in his "study of other sorts of savages at home and the civilized man's helpless plight among them."<sup>1</sup> Taking his cue from the Ecclesiastical influence in The Wasteland, Waugh demonstrates with ironical force that man is truly doomed to a living death if, like O'Neill's Hairy Ape, he cannot find some worthwhile identification in life. He might as well be confined to a cage with no escape if decency, love, and humanity have disappeared.

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<sup>1</sup>Stopp, p. 100. (N. B. Waugh had written a short story about a man trapped in the jungle, ending his days reading Dickens aloud. Waugh's reflections concerning the possibility of man being kept a prisoner disturbed him until he put the details into a novel for which the short story afforded the conclusion.)

Waugh once remarked of A Handful of Dust, "It dealt entirely with behaviour. It was humanist and contained all I had to say about humanism."<sup>2</sup> The new emphasis indicates a change in Waugh's technique. The tone became more serious and more tragic, and savagely ironic. In its callousness and unconcern for humanity the opening incident illustrates the insidious irony which sets the tone for the total "fable."

'Was anyone hurt?' /asks John Beaver of his mother./

'No one I am thankful to say,' said Mrs. Beaver, 'except two housemaids who lost their heads and jumped through a glass roof into the paved court. They were in no danger. The fire never properly reached their bedrooms I am afraid...' (p. 9)

The world of Mrs. Beaver with all of its inhumanity to man constitutes the environment against which the Victorian world of the hero, embodied in his life at Hetton, is juxtaposed.

Waugh's ability to see only aesthetic values in subjects that are surrounded with sentiment in the minds of most individuals gives him an objectivity that makes his satire effective. In revealing the savage society that destroys Tony, Waugh shows that he is very much aware that the revelation of a bizarre way of life will shock his readers by compelling a shift in their point of view away from the normal. Therefore, he concentrates on the presentation of the odd, the macabre, and the eccentric. A clash of ideas is implicit in the process of creating a scale of values opposed to the common standards of humanity. It is this conflict that serves as a basis for Waugh's satire in A Handful of Dust. On the one hand, Waugh satirizes the idealized world of Tony Last,

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<sup>2</sup>Stopp, p. 100.

symbolized in Hetton Abbey, pure English nineteenth-century Gothic where "there was not a glazed brick or encaustic tile that was not dear to Tony's heart." (p. 16). With customary ingenuity Waugh selects precise details that create the impression of the anomalous world in which Tony lives. The rooms of the Victorian Gothic Abbey are incongruously named after the members of the Arthurian Courts--Guinevere, Lancelot, Galahad, and others. Morgan le Fay, Tony's childhood room, with its framed picture of a warship, school photograph, and miscellaneous "fruits of a dozen desultory hobbies," suggests the immaturity, the childish illusion of Tony's ideal. Living in the Tennysonian world of the Idylls of the King, Tony dreams of restoring Hetton Abbey to its former baronial prestige. Using the technique of caricature, noticeably more extensive than in his former novels, Waugh draws the portrait of Tony with exaggerated detail. In Brenda's words Tony is "madly feudal;" in reality this is only a pose. On Sundays he assumes the role of a Victorian country gentleman by putting on a dark suit and stiff white collar for the purpose of attending church where he sits in the ancestral family pew (his thoughts of improvements at Hetton are occasionally interrupted by phrases from the liturgy) and afterwards chats affably with the vicar and the villagers. On his way home past the greenhouses he selects a "button-hole." The ritual is climaxed by a glass of sherry in the library. To all outward appearances he represents an upright, God-fearing gentleman of the old school. His desire to emulate the baronial manner leads him to indulge in activities that he normally detests. Although he does not enjoy killing animals, he sponsors fox hunts, the symbol of a traditional way of life. Preferring isolation, he tolerates only the necessary social activities, mostly

seasonal, forcing Brenda, his wife, to an unfamiliar and detestable loneliness. This false assumption of feudalism is ironically a method of escape from reality. Tony is not the same innocent protagonist as Paul Pennyfeather was in Decline and Fall. Whereas Paul was a genuine naif, largely untouched by his fantastic experiences, Tony becomes a conscious introvert, ultimately destroyed by his refusal to face reality, to understand the world in which he lives. Hetton Abbey becomes a retreat from the barbarism of the modern age.

Just as the outmoded Victorian idealism was satirically identified with the Victorian architecture of Hetton Abbey, the materialism of the civilized society of the modern age is sardonically associated with the "innocuous" London flat, Brenda's one-room efficiency apartment that was to "fill a long felt need," (p. 43) Its very inaccessibility to Tony illustrates how untenable Victorian principles of morality are in a savage society of Polly Cockpurses and Mrs. Beavers.

Waugh's method of ironic contrast indicates a much more serious approach to the subject of worldliness and its effect upon civilization than his earlier work suggested through the lighter forms of satire. Tony agrees to postpone renovations at Hetton so that Brenda may afford her flat in town. "'I don't really deserve it,' she said, clinching the matter," (p. 58) The implication is full of dramatic irony for the reader. Later, when Brenda attempts to provide a mistress for Tony, whom he declines, Brenda's friends comment: "'What does the old boy expect?...You've done far more than most wives would to cheer the old boy up?'" (p. 95) In arranging for the divorce, Tony, in accordance with the practice in the best social circles, assumes the responsibility for the separation: "It was thought convenient that Brenda should appear

as the plaintiff." (p. 131) When Tony refuses to sacrifice Hetton so that he could "buy Beaver for Brenda," (p. 153) Reggie St. Cloud ironically states, "I do think you are behaving rather vindictively in the matter...you seem rather to be taking the line of the injured husband." (p. 150) A noticeable economy of narrative increases the force of the satire.

Often the ironic contrast is brought out by a choice of rhetoric, a technique Waugh uses more and more. When Tony compliments Brenda on her heroic treatment of Beaver during his visit, she admits, like Lady Brett, that she is "bitching him." Waugh particularly uses the distinction in terms: the romantic "heroic" juxtaposed against the realistic "bitching." Later when Tony remarks that Beaver is not like him, the reader becomes increasingly aware of the difference. Brenda suggests that the "flat Tony is thinking of is something quite different to her." (p. 57) The reader's recognition of what Brenda had in mind is not altered by her explanation of

a lift and a man in uniform and a big front door with knobs, and an entrance hall and doors opening in all directions, with kitchens and sculleries and dining rooms and drawing rooms and servants' bathrooms. (p. 57)

The full significance of the expression "the habit of loving and trusting Brenda" (p. 132) becomes increasingly evident as the ironic unfolding of the plot occurs. Often a single word shocks the reader into a realization of the scale of values. At the time when Tony's collusion in the interest of his divorce seems complicated by recurrent aspects of respectability: Tony's overtures of friendship with the detectives, the presence of Milly's "Awful child of popular fiction" and Tony's natural instinct for social amenities, the detective in

frustration comments ironically: "'Our trouble is always the same--to make the clients realize that divorce is a serious matter.'" (p. 139)

Grotesque contrast appears also in the dialogue, a technique Waugh has carried over from a less serious emphasis in his early novels. When the news of her son's, John Andrew's, death is relayed to her through Jock Grant-Menzies, a friend, Brenda is confused by the name John which both her lover and her son share. Waugh seems to take aesthetic pleasure in allowing the dialogue to reveal the conflict of values which it implies. The author maintains characteristic silence.

'What is it, Jock? Tell me quickly. I'm scared. It's nothing awful is it?'

'I'm afraid it is. There's been a very serious accident.'

'John?'

'Yes.'

'Dead?'

He nodded.

She sat down on a hard little Empire chair against the wall, perfectly still with her hands folded in her lap, like a small well-brought-up child into a room full of grown-ups. She said, 'Tell me what happened? Why do you know about it first?'

'I've been down at Hetton since the weekend.'

'Hetton?'

'Don't you remember? John was going hunting today.'

She frowned, not at once taking in what he was saying. 'John...John Andrew...I...Oh thank God...' Then she burst into tears. (p. 121)

With increasing emphasis on the tragic view of life, Waugh resorts to the technique of dramatic irony, a step forward in the use of complex forms of satire. The erratic thoughts that disturb Tony after his son's death convey to the reader a picture of the true nature of things, for the reader's superior knowledge reveals the bitter irony of Tony's words.

'It's going to be so much worse for Brenda. You see she's got nothing else much, except John. I've got her, and I love the house...but with Brenda John

always came first...naturally...and then you know she's seen so little of John lately. She's been in London such a lot. I'm afraid that's going to hurt her.' (p. 112)

The cumulative force of these words ends in the "most unkindest cut of all," "But you see, I know Brenda so well." (p. 112) The ironic tragedy is that Tony had never tried to understand her from the time of her five or six years of marriage during which to her worldly friends in London she became a legendary figure--"the imprisoned princess of a fairy story," (p. 59) to the time of his full awareness of her worthlessness when the terms of the divorce settlement are discussed. The preservation of Tony's innocence in regard to his wife's infidelity until the last moment enforces the implicit condemnation of Brenda and her modern world.

Despite its tragic implications, the Brighton seaside experience has the impression of burlesque, the most suitable medium for illustrating the unreality of Tony's situation. Waugh uses the element of descriptive particularization to create a sense of the ridiculous.

Milly in her best evening frock, backless and vermillion, her face newly done and her bleached curls brushed out, her feet in high red shoes, some bracelets on her wrists, a dab of scent behind the large sham pearls in her ears, shook off the cares of domesticity and was once more in uniform, reporting for duty, a legionary ordered for active service after the enervating restraints of a winter in barracks; and Tony, filling his cigar case before the mirror, and slipping it into the pocket of his dinner jacket, reminded himself that phantasmagoric, and even gruesome as the situation might seem to him, he was nevertheless a host, so that he knocked at the communicating door and passed with a calm manner into his guest's room; for a 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 outrageous circumstances in which he found himself, no new mad thing

brought to his notice could add a jolt to the all-encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears. He smiled at Milly from the doorway. (p. 140)

The next morning Tony put on a dressing gown, entered Milly's room, got into bed beside her, pulled his dressing gown tight around his throat, watched the tray bearing his second breakfast brought in (he had inadvertently eaten one breakfast earlier with Winnie), got back out of bed and put on his clothes. So much for his infidelity! Life continued in its seeming routine. Milly turned over to sleep again and Tony took Winnie to the beach.

In a world bereft of order, appearance is different from reality. At the beach, onlookers interpret Tony's desire to please Winnie as a mad desire to drown her and a reference to his two breakfasts as an act of a madman. In an aside Waugh comments satirically that "Tony's conduct confirmed the view of human nature derived from the weekly newspapers which they had all been reading that morning." (p. 147)

In Waugh's early writings he made occasional use of the tendency of burlesque satire to particularize. In A Handful of Dust, by choosing grotesque details of description, he shocks the reader's complacent, everyday sense of reality and increases his awareness of opposing scales of value. The caricaturist picture of Reggie St. Cloud, spokesman for the divorce-and-settlement faction, is deliberately repulsive and excessively exaggerated in grotesque detail.

Reggie Was prematurely, unnaturally stout, and he carried his burden of flesh as though he was not yet used to it; as though it had been buckled onto him that morning for the first time and he were still experimenting for its better adjustment. (p. 148)

The device of cataloguing repulsive details produces the impression of a barbarous scavenger.

He [Reggie] ate in a ruthless manner, champing his food (it was his habit, often, without noticing it, to consume things that others usually left on their plates, the heads and tails of whiting, whole mouthfuls of chicken bone, peach stones and apple cores, cheese rinds and the fibrous parts of the artichoke. (p. 150)

The reader correctly expects him to be just as inhuman in his proposals for the settlement. Furthermore, Waugh has remained detached from the barbarous world he depicts so grotesquely.

The early novels of Waugh demonstrated the futility of man in an irrational world. Whereas life seemed like a circus in these novels, in A Handful of Dust, the irrational world is grotesque. Following his customary practice of running and hiding, Tony escapes the modern world by following a grail--a substitute dream, seemingly as incorruptible as Gatsby's and derived like his from an Empsonian pastoral ideal. Dr. Messinger leads Tony in search of a Lost City in Brazil. But he discovers that the irrational world is everywhere. Waugh ironically chooses Tony's irrational imaginings for the revelation of truth.

'Listen to me. I know that I am not clever but that is no reason why we should all forget courtesy. Let us kill in the gentlest manner. I will tell you what I have learned in the forest, where time is different. There is no City. Mrs. Beaver has covered it with chromium plating and converted it into flats... Very suitable for base love. And Polly will be there. She and Mrs. Beaver under the fallen battlements....' (p. 210)

Portents of doom appear like discordant ironies in the separate worlds of Brenda and Tony. Brenda comments to Jock, "'Is it absolutely safe?'" [for Tony] [Jock replies], "'Oh, I imagine so. The whole world is civilized now....'" (p. 175) But the civilized Dr. Messinger is demonstrating the inadequacy of civilized man to discover anything of value even in a barbaric country because he himself is inadequate.

Satirically, the doctor's "discovery of genuine scientific value" (p. 183) in the contrary flowing of the Amazon system of rivers [which turns out to be the Waurupang River at the site of their first camp] is about as futile as Jock's discussion of the pig question in the House.

The crescendo of fear begins with Tony's feverish hallucinations in which Waugh demonstrates through the disjointed remarks of Tony's delirium that although Tony has gained wisdom it has come too late. The vision of the City leads him to the home of Mr. Todd where ironically he finds security but not sanity. The Dickens' lover, Mr. Todd, is just as much an anomaly to the jungle as the Vicar of Hetton, who had spent much of his life in India, was to England when he sermonized about the "harsh glare of an alien sun" when the snow lay round in drifts and about the "ravening tiger and the exotic camel and the ponderous elephant instead of the "placid ox and ass of Bethlehem." (p. 62) Often a seeming irrelevancy is merely a method for achieving satiric force through the structure. With Waugh structure frequently becomes theme.

The apparently casual remarks of the madman about a black Englishman who had read to him for many years, followed by the author-comment that Tony used to enjoy sharing books with Brenda who hated being read to, suggests Tony's role in the grotesque future. It was no accident that the first novel chosen to be read was Bleak House, the most grotesquely ironic of Dicken's novels. The cross commemorating both the former reader's death and Tony's arrival ironically becomes not only a symbol of Tony's living death but also his death to the modern world.

Through the calm, forceful manner of Mr. Todd Waugh cleverly increases the tension. "'You will have time to finish the novel,'"

(p. 214) says Mr. Todd to Tony. "'You cannot build a boat until the rains come.'" (p. 215) Later, "The Indians will not build a boat in the rain." (p. 215) Only one plate of dried meat and farina was brought in and Mr. Todd ate alone. Next day a single plate appeared before the madman whose gun, cocked, lay on his knee. Tony resumed the reading. The grotesque horror increases as the reader realizes that the escape Tony sought is a mirage. There is no escape from responsibility.

As Tony is drawn to the lcelandstone rock through the potion Mr. Todd prepares for him, ironically he is thinking of a search party which might be only a few hour's journey from him. In typical Waugh shock treatment, the full force of the ironic conclusion comes from the madman's bland rhetoric. The particular ironic device of understatement is a staple technique of Waugh's shock treatment.

Tony questioned 'Guests?'

'Why, yes. I have been gay while you were asleep. Three men from outside. It's a pity you missed them...they had come all the way to find you, so....As you could not greet them yourself I gave them a little souvenir, your watch. They wanted something to take back to England where a reward is being offered for news of you. They were very pleased with it. And they took some photographs of the little cross I put up to commemorate your coming. They were pleased with that too. They were very easily pleased. But I do not suppose they will visit us again, our life is so retired...no pleasure except reading....Let us read Little Dorritt again. There are passages in that book I can never hear without the temptation to weep.' (p. 220)

The necessity for time lag in understanding the full significance of the final statement increases the intensity of the satire itself. The incongruity of the suggested contrast brings the reader a horrifying awareness of reality.

Waugh takes an artistic pride in destroying his characters. The circular conclusion seemingly achieves a form of poetic justice. But

fate is ironically just. "This is the way the world ends."<sup>3</sup> Brenda is freed and marries Jock Grant-Menzies, as all had thought she would before Tony came along. Tony is imprisoned, separated forever from the timeless, idealistic world of Hetton Abbey. A pattern of futility is beginning to punctuate the novels. New regimes come and go; they come with a "bang" but end in a "whimper." Seth in Black Mischief is unable to realize his ideal even as Tony is defeated in the realization of his. That Teddy hopes by the silver fox farm at Hetton to restore it to the glory it had enjoyed in the days of Tony has ironic significance, for in the age of Tony it had become a handful of dust. The true inheritors of Hetton are the ravening silver foxes behind the estate. The effort to cling to a medieval ideal proved to be too hopeless in the face of the barbarity of the modern world.

Whereas the aesthetic distance Waugh maintained in his early novels allowed the author the pleasure of observing life humorously, the detachment he maintains in A Handful of Dust allows him to look at life in all its grotesqueness without becoming emotionally involved. In progressing to the more complicated forms of satire involving the grotesque he brings the real world closer by shocking men into an awareness of the relativity of things.

Brideshead Revisited might seem to be inappropriate in an examination of the progress of satire, but it is important in revealing Waugh's development as a writer. In Brideshead Revisited Waugh loses the objectivity that so clearly defined his earlier work. In A Handful of Dust Waugh comes closer to the real world in his subject matter--that of marital infidelity, the basis of his juxtaposition

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<sup>3</sup>T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," Poems (New York and Chicago: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1909-1925), p. 128.

of the ideals of the past against the barrenness of the modern age. When he turns to a religious theme--the working of the divine purpose in a pagan world--as he does in Brideshead Revisited, he is forced to abandon his position of detachment. The author's contact with the real world is made through Charles Ryder, the skeptical onlooker, who ultimately finds his own identity through the supernatural. Waugh deliberately abandons the ingenu hero, except as Charles Ryder recaptures a lost youth at Oxford.

With the elimination of the satirical approach also, Waugh finds it necessary to devise another method of removing himself from the immediate world of the Marchmain family in order to manipulate his characters convincingly. Thus, Charles becomes not only the spokesman for Waugh but also the narrator as well. His dual function as hero and author's link with the real world marks a distinct change in Waugh's technique. Like the blind Tiresias in The Wasteland, Charles represents the eye of the mind, a universal contemplative consciousness that absorbs reality through all the experiences that it sees. The process of initiation before spiritual awakening occurs is demonstrated for Charles vicariously through the conflicts between belief and doubt that persist in disturbing the members of the Marchmain family. That these conflicts represent the Catholic views of Waugh indicate just how much Waugh has become involved.

Reflecting these views, Waugh's treatment of the past in Brideshead Revisited shows a marked difference from the ironical manner used in A Handful of Dust. At the end Tony Last was, ironically, forever separated from Hetton Abbey, the focus of his Victorian idealism; Lord Marchmain was brought back to Brideshead, the "household of the faith"--Catholicism. Whereas Tony's Victorian idealism was an integral part of his country

house, Lord Marchmain's faith was imposed upon Brideshead by his marriage. The struggle for the survival of Catholicism is represented in Lady Marchmain's determination to carry on "the harsh traditions of a people at war with their environment," (p. 129) even if it means destruction of personal happiness. Although Charles at first finds Sebastian's faith an enigma (Sebastian entertains such notions as the Nativity being a lovely idea and he believes in the efficacy of prayer in solving even the most trivial problems), Charles is finally brought to the realization that "these quaint observances" express a "coherent philosophic system and intransigent historical claim."<sup>4</sup> It is this claim, unemotional and unequivocal, that Waugh uses to justify his metaphor, "the twitch upon the thread" which eventually brings the recalcitrants back to Catholicism. In A Handful of Dust Victorian architecture and Victorian morality are out of date; in Brideshead Revisited Catholicism offers spiritual hope and permanence. Waugh has assumed a new role, that of defender of the faith. In Waugh's development as a writer, he has at last affiliated himself with the real world, but unfortunately he has become "parochial."

In Brideshead Revisited Waugh lapses into sentimentality, a poor substitute for his former techniques. The sacred and profane memories of Captain Charles Ryder take the captain back nostalgically to his past experiences with Brideshead Castle where his association with the Marchmain family help him recapture the languor of youth and bring him through self-realization to a spiritual identification.

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<sup>4</sup>Stopp, p. 29. (N. B. Catholicism to Waugh meant merely a realization of the undeniable historical presence and continuity of the Catholic Church. Father D'Arcy, who instructed and received Waugh into the Catholic Church, has said that he seldom had anyone to instruct whose approach was so objective, factual and unemotional.)

In the process of relating this transformation, Waugh takes the opportunity to sentimentalize the role of the aristocracy in maintaining the traditions of the past. Lady Marchmain explains in great detail the obligations that money places upon the rich to be gentle and kind to the poor, the favorites of God and his saints. She, like Tony Last, detests the hunt, but, unlike Tony, she thinks a day's hunting will transform Sebastian. Even Julia dreams sentimentally of the "eligible" men who would be accepted by her society. Always in the background Catholicism is associated with this tradition. Waugh's lapse into such flagrant sentimentality does not occur again.

Waugh uses the satiric method as the most effective means of contrasting the worldly environment with the idealism of his theme. In the early part of the novel Waugh envisions through Ryder's imagination the mechanical efficiency of the modern age and the sterility of its people. As Ryder's army unit breaks camp, Ryder likens the scene to a disinterment at a later date by a party of archeologists:

He muses The Pollock diggings provide a valuable link between the citizen-slave communities of the twentieth century and the tribal anarchy which succeeded them. Here you see a people of advanced culture, capable of an elaborate draining system and the construction of permanent highways, overrun by a race of the lowest type. The measure of the newcomers may be taken by the facts that their women were devoid of all personal adornment and that the dead were removed to burying places at a great distance from the settlement--a sure sign of primitive taboo. (pp. 12, 13)

To Charles Ryder, Hooper becomes a symbol of Young England with all its characteristic inertia, its sterility, its disillusionment. But Charles shows a sympathetic feeling for Hooper because both are victims of the age. Later, however, he comments ironically on the good young men who must die to make a world for Hooper. These were the Catholic men:

"...the Aborigines, vermin by right of law, to be shot off at leisure so that things might be safe for the traveling salesman, with his polygonal pince-nez, his fat wet hand-shake, his grinning dentures." (p. 130) Like the merchant, Mr. Eugenides, in Eliot's Waste Land, the salesman is the representative of the new age. Waugh's devotion to detail again is suggestive of his technique of satiric particularization.

The vacuity of the modern world is illustrated by the soulless characters whom Waugh satirizes. Juxtaposed against the life-like figures of Julia, Sebastian, and Charles, they offer a startling contrast. Celia, Charles's wife, is a caricature, scarcely a human being. Waugh takes evident delight in reverting to his earlier techniques in depicting Celia.

In satiric vein Charles analyzes his wife:

'My wife's softness and English reticence, her very white, small, regular teeth, her neat rosy fingernails, her schoolgirl air of innocent mischief and her schoolgirl dress, her modern jewellery...her ready, rewarding smile, her deference to me and her zeal in my interests, her motherly heart which made her cable daily to the nanny at home--in short, her peculiar charm--made her popular among Americans, and our cabin on the day of departure was full of cellophane packages--flowers, fruit...from friends she had known a week.' (p. 115)

With caricaturist emphasis Mr. Samgrass, another of Waugh's soulless characters, later speaks of Celia as having "a bird-like style of conversation, pecking away at the subject in a most engaging way, and a school-monitor style of dress which could only be called saucy." (p. 117)

Rex Mottram, "...the burlesque of power and prosperity," (p. 112) is another soulless character of satire who assumes the catalyst's role of influencing the fate of Julia. The caricaturist details abound: Rex's Christmas gift of a small tortoise with Julia's initials set in diamonds in the living shell, his kind of hectoring zeal as if he were thrusting

a vacuum cleaner on an unwilling housewife, his barbaric desire to get a woman, the best on the market, cheap--and a marriage settlement. His sudden solution to the marriage problem by becoming a Catholic culminates in typical Waugh understatement when Rex says, "'I don't pretend to be a very devout man...nor much of a theologian, but I know it's a bad plan to have two religions in one house. A man needs a religion. If your church is good enough for Julia, it's good enough for me.'" (p. 176)

At Lady Marchmain's assurance that she will make arrangements for his instruction, he answers, "'...Instruction will be wasted on me. Just you give me the form and I'll sign on the dotted line.'" (p. 176)

Father Mowbray's remark that "'One has to take a chance sometimes with semi-imbeciles'" (p. 177) and Lady Marchmain's reference to treating him like an idiot child anticipate Julia's summation of his character when she tells Charles later that Rex

'...simply wasn't all there. He wasn't a complete human being at all. He was a tiny bit of one, unnaturally developed...I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was something absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny bit of man pretending he was the whole.' (p. 183)

Waugh's soulless characters drawn in caricaturist exaggeration prove to be far more picturesque than the sentimentalized conventional type. Rolo perceptively commented that when Waugh abandons the ironic stance, he emerges as the champion of a romantic archaism which only a few readers can take seriously.<sup>5</sup> Voorhees suggests that in Waugh's books up to Brideshead Revisited Waugh

...had drawn with a few bold strokes pictures of a world which, however caricatured it might seem by

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<sup>5</sup>Rolo, p. xi.

comparison with the world of 'realistic' fiction, was vivid and convincing. Now, however, some of the lines are no longer fantastic at all, and much of the space between them is filled in. Waugh's technique has ceased to be one of implication.<sup>6</sup>

In turning from implication to explication of his theme, Waugh assumes the role of the advocate. When he does, he becomes dull.

As if in embarrassment at having abandoned his usual medium, Waugh returns to his earlier techniques with "...a little nightmare produced by the unaccustomed high living of a visit to Hollywood."<sup>7</sup> His grotesque attack on the California burial practices is shocking; it is intended to be. By revealing the abnormal point of view through an exaggerated emphasis of the grotesque, Waugh deliberately shocks his readers into a realization of opposing scales of value, a method he fully exploits in The Loved One. The ultimate emphasis is on ideas. Basically, Waugh illustrates that the physical concept of death as symbolized by the Forest Lawn Cemetery is a denial of the spiritual teachings of Christian mortality. In essence the conflict is between the secular and the religious. Waugh had in A Handful of Dust caustically introduced the secular attitude toward death when Tony Last remarked after his son's death, "After all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion." (p. 118) It seemed to Waugh that the twentieth century conception of death deprived death of its religious heritage. The element of grotesque subject matter has been quantitatively much enlarged since Black Mischief.

Waugh's sardonic vision, as in the earlier novels, is extended to the total "fable." Dennis Barlow, a young English poet recently discharged from a Hollywood studio, accepts a position as an assistant in

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<sup>6</sup>Voorhees, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup>Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, Frontispiece.

The Happier Hunting Ground, an animal pet mortuary patterned after that of Whispering Glades (an imitation of Forest Lawn Memorial Park in California).

When his friend, Sir Francis Hinsley, commits suicide by hanging, Barlow visits the Whispering Glades Mortuary to make funeral arrangements. Aimée Thanatogenos, a mortuary cosmetician, one of the standard products of Hollywood culture, thereafter becomes the subject of a grotesquely exaggerated rivalry between Dennis who woos her with classic poetry taken from the Oxford Book of English Verse and Mr. Joyboy, the chief embalmer, who woos her with his choicest cadavers transfixed with radiant smiles. Aimée (loved and beloved) cannot choose between them. When Aimée's continual efforts to seek help from the advice-to-the-lovelorn column of the newspaper culminate in the final advice of the drunken and despondent Guru Brahmin (alias Mr. Slump) to jump from a tall building, she accepts the decision as inevitable. Mr. Slump's self-justification, "'Well for Christ's sake, with a name like that?'" (p. 172 seems to indicate ironically the appropriateness (Thanatogenos--born of death--born to die) of her higher destiny. Such trifling with death suggests in satirical vein the lack of dignity associated with the modern conception of death. Aimée, in order not to present any special little difficulties to the embalmers, chooses an injection of cyanide and modestly and matter-of-factly lies down to pleasant dreams--by chance in Mr. Joyboy's workroom.

Ironically, Mr. Joyboy, an artist in the preservation of dead bodies, is completely unnerved by the reality of death and is forced to escape damage to his reputation by concealing the knowledge of Aimée's death and secretly disposing of her body. Ironically too, Mr. Joyboy

has to depend upon Dennis, whose occupation he had exposed when he invited Aimée to the funeral of his mother's parrot. The satiric ending achieves a rather shocking poetic justice in the incineration of Aimée's body in the Happier Hunting Ground Mortuary, the parody of Whispering Glades, and in the form of the standard card: "Your little Aimée is wagging her tail in heaven tonight, thinking of you." (p. 190) In the satiric description of events the acts speak for themselves. In Black Mischief the element of the grotesque was confined to isolated instances as in the chivvying of the bodies of the victims of the uprising and in the eating of Prudence in the funeral feast. Now it assumes the burden of the whole fable.

Waugh's growing involvement, evident in his abandonment of the innocent hero, results in his employment of the grotesque. His fantasy leads him in the pursuit of the odd, the macabre, the eccentric. The author's purpose is to compel a shift in the reader's point of view away from normality. In so doing, he not only imitates the unnatural, the odd, the distorted, but also creates a feeling of repulsion in the reader. Waugh often uses parody in The Loved One to achieve this effect. When the telephone at The Happier Hunting Ground rings on Dennis's first duty night at the opening of the novel, the reader's sympathy is immediately aroused at the distraught Mrs. Heinkel's reference to Arthur and hints of an accident. Her feelings of negligence and recrimination create suspense which accelerates as the plain black van makes its way to the house of mourning and an aluminum container is taken into the Bel Air residence. Mr. Heinkel's remark that this had been a terrible experience for Mrs. Heinkel and her response that she does not want to see him add to a sense of catastrophe. With no

change of tone Waugh writes, "The Sealyham lay on the draining board beside the sink. Dennis lifted it into the container." (p. 26) The sense of shock is intentional and effective. The parody continues with the exaggerated formality of funeral arrangements. Dennis follows the brochure, a type similar to that of Whispering Glades in its routine procedure. In language unintelligible to Mr. Heinkel the questions are posed: "'Interment or incineration [lapse of understanding]...Burial or burned?'" Would Mr. Heinkel require a niche in the columbarium for the urn (the best) or will the remains be kept at home?..."'What you said first.' 'The religious rites?' 'We're neither of us what you might call churchgoing people but on an occasion like this Mrs. Heinkel would want all the comfort you could offer!'" (pp. 26, 27) The Grade A service includes such unique features as at the moment of committal a white dove, symbolizing the deceased's soul is liberated over the crematorium. Every anniversary a card of remembrance is mailed, reading, "Your little Arthur is thinking of you in heaven today and wagging his tail." (pp. 27, 28) The reader's complacent, everyday sense of reality is shocked by these practices as it was meant to be. The greatest travesty occurs later in the novel when a coffin, containing an Alsatian, is lowered into a flower-lined tomb, and the Reverend Errol Bartholomew, non-sectarian clergyman, reads:

'Dog that is born of bitch hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay...' (p. 143)

Grotesque satire is characterized by a tendency to particularize, often revealed in a description of the unusual, a cataloguing of the repulsive, or simply in the choice or selection of minute details. This

tendency creates a sense of illusion such as that of happiness and peace in Whispering Glades even in the face of death. The illusion is created by Waugh's choice of euphemisms: the loved ones for the dead, the waiting ones for the living and "pass over" for die. The Mortuary Hostess's description of the zoning of Whispering Glades with appropriate art contributes to this illusion: Pilgrim's Rest (ironically situated behind the cemetery fuel dump and obviously intended for the poorest), Lake Isle (the most costly) where Mr. Kaiser, the inventor of the stoneless peaches, rests, Lovers' Nest, zoned about a replica of Rodin's statue The Kiss, and Poets' Corner, where Homer's statue stands. The question of leave-taking, either on the chaise-longue or in the casket (half-exposure), leads to further particularization. The accidental entrance of Dennis and the hostess into the Primrose Slumber Room reveals the wax effigy-like figure of an elderly woman, dressed as though for an evening party, lying on a sofa. "Her white gloved hands held a bouquet and on her nose glittered a pair of rimless pince-nez." (p. 60) By his use of such gross sentimentality Waugh demonstrates the fallacy that the pain of death can be alleviated by such ridiculous practices. In death man remains mere animal at all levels.

The assumed professional manner of speaking by the Mortuary Hostess adds a ritualistic tone to the description, but Waugh informs his reader of the true nature of things when he allows the vocabulary to lapse into a form of linguistic barbarism, the vernacular. In rehearsed tone the Hostess informs Dennis:

'Our crematory is on scientific principles, the heat is so intense that all unessentials are volatized. Some people did not like the thought that ashes of the casket and clothing were mixed with the Loved One's.

Normal disposal is by inhumement, entombment, inurnment, or immurement, but many people just lately prefer insarcophagusment.' (pp. 52, 53)

The same hostess continues later:

'We had a Loved One last month who was found drowned. He had been in the sea a month and they only identified him by his wrist-watch. They fixed that stiff,' said the hostess, disconcertingly lapsing from the high diction she had hitherto employed, 'so he looked like it was his wedding day. The boys up there in the embalming room/ surely know their job. Why if he'd sat on an atomic bomb, they'd make him presentable.' (p. 57)

Later back in the reception room she speaks briskly in her own jargon, "'Well, I guess I've got all I want out of you, Mr. Barlow, except your signature to the order and a deposit.'" (p. 62)

The matter of fact style in which the macabre details are revealed accentuates the grotesque in its attempt to conform to routine. Dennis's interview with the cosmetician in parody form implies an order or sanity when there is actually only disorder and insanity, a technique that enforces the satire. For the purpose of briefing the embalmers Aimée ascertains the disposition of the loved one. Her comments proceed blandly: the severe and philosophical expression is apparently the hardest to fix, but Mr. Joyboy makes it his specialty--that and the joyful smile for children. The classification of complexion: rural, athletic, and scholarly is reduced to red, brown or white. The monocle presents difficulties in regard to the inclination of the head once the flesh has firmed. With the eye closed the monocle has the added disadvantage of looking less natural. The mortuary caters to the individual too: a pipe in the Loved One's mouth, the toy in the hand of a child, even a musical instrument or telephone in others. The acquisition of the Essential Data ends with the assumption that Hinsley was undoubtedly

wearing his dentures for those who pass over by their own hand usually wear them. The invasion of the irrational world upon the rational is an old theme with Waugh, but never has it been so forcefully demonstrated.

Mr. Joyboy's artistry is pictured in realistic detail. Here is "humorous realism" at its most effective level. Gentility is the keynote. The terms "bodies," "cadavers," "the meat" (the term one jaunty young Texan used) were forbidden. "Mr. Joyboy had only to be seen with a corpse to be respected." (p. 81) His technique in manufacturing smiles with a piece of card reveals the skill of an expert.

The colloquy between Mr. Joyboy and Miss Thanatogenos over the corpse of Mr. Hinsley continues the humorous realism in its revelation of the macabre aspect of their artistry. The Loved One has "come up nicely" in Mr. Joyboy's hands (the poulterer's pinch to Hinsley's thigh gives added emphasis to the Senior Mortician's statement). The difficulty with the right eyelid had been ably overcome by Miss Thanatogenos. The brief formality is interrupted by the routine appearance of two more Loved Ones who are sent up for Mr. Joyboy's disposition. Mr. Joyboy discriminatingly elects to prepare the child's body. There is almost a sadistic joy in the mortician's manner. In direct contrast Dennis views the results of their efforts in a different way. The Loved One who confronts Dennis's eyes in the Slumber Room as he comes for the leave-taking is a "painted and smirking obscene travesty by comparison with which the devil mask Dennis had found in the noose was a festive adornment, a thing an uncle might don at a Christmas party." (p. 90) Aimée's triumph of art over death is a travesty of life as it is also a perversion of art.

Underlying the conception of The Loved One is the satiric appraisal of art. As a poet in the environment of displaced persons living in a primitive culture (in Southern California) Dennis's poetic art suffers. When he is initiated into life, strangely enough through association with death, he will gain the experience, "...that great, shapeless chunk of experience, the artist's load that he will take home to his ancient and comfortless shore." (p. 190) It will give him "...the moment of vision for which a lifetime is often too short." (p. 190) Seeking inspiration, Dennis is drawn to the Lake Isle of Innisfree, "...a poetic place to be planted in" (p. 97) according to the words of the boatman who brought him to the Isle. The details of the Isle duplicate Yeat's poem: the wattle cabin, the nine rows of haricots, and the sound of bees. As in the poem, the details create the atmosphere of "peace dropping slow," but in the novel it is not the atmosphere for composition; the voice of inspiration is silent. The ironic contrast indicates the impossibility of fulfillment: the hives are without bees (the sound of bees was created by electric motors); the peaches are without stones (the heart tasted like a "ball of damp, sweet cotton-wool"); the adolescent male is without his Eve (only couples frequent the Isle); and his poetic spirit is without its pain (he has not experienced suffering as he had in war-time). There is no "deep heart's core"; there is only death.

Waugh takes artistic pleasure in depicting Aimée, the decadent with the greenish, remote eyes with a rich glint of lunacy in them. Waugh's ability to alter the focus of a phrase by one unexpected word appears more and more frequently. "'My memory's very bad for live faces,'" says Aimée. As cosmetician for Whispering Glades her specialty is skill in

technique triumphing over death. She laments that her artistic creativity in the special soul treatment of loved ones is "impermanent," yet she cannot realize that her art can create only the artificial appearance of beauty because the real soul is absent. Dennis, realizing that the muse is stirred by her presence, begins his period of initiation into the realm of experience that will bring him pain and ultimate understanding.

When events culminate in the loss of his Eve, Dennis on his last evening in Los Angeles visits the strand that was littered with bones and wreckage. "He was adding his bit; something that had long irked him, his young heart." (p. 190) Experiences of pain bring a loss of youthful innocence and romance, but they bring a deeper intellectual insight.

Waugh's work has progressed from an absence of heart in his early satires through a transition period when heart dominated at the expense of satire, and finally with The Loved One he is abandoning his youthful heart to mature experience. In his war trilogy his maturity achieves an integration of the head and the heart, but the youthful spontaneity is conspicuous by its absence.

Waugh's emphasis upon the grotesque in this period of development as a writer signifies a growing involvement which increases as he becomes interested in the career of Guy Crouchback in the trilogy. However, many of the techniques of satire: exaggeration, caricature, and distortion, dominate the treatment of the irrational world whether Waugh looks at it comically or seriously. Even his device of suggestive names persists in A Handful of Dust and The Loved One. Tony Last proved to be ironically the last of his line, Dr. Messinger became the messenger of death, and the Beavers successfully constructed a barrier to life as the Lasts lived it. The Tennysonian names of the rooms at Hetton prove to be

ironical too" Brenda, the unfaithful, occupies the room Guinevere, and Beaver, the searcher of the Grail, sleeps in Sir Galahad. In The Loved One Mr. Joyboy is a mortician and Aimée Thanatogenos is dichotomously associated with love and death. The names serve as a constant reminder of the irrational world as Waugh sees it.

The same reliance on suggestive names constitutes a technique that Waugh consistently extends over into the war trilogy. In the trilogy, however, the emphasis on names assumes ironical significance: men at arms, officers and gentlemen, and happy warriors. Crouchback, the ineffectual protagonist; Mrs. Stitch, the mender of others' mistakes; and Colonel "Jumbo" Trotter, the supernumerary figure at Hazardous Offensive Headquarters, who wanted to run but was forced to trot: all provide a rhetorical underscoring of the satire. General Whale, the ineffectual Director of Land Forces, is equally as incongruous as Halberdier Shanks who requests leave to enter competition in the slow waltz. The whole war effort proves to be a series of incongruities and illogicalities: every officer's equipment must include a sharpened pencil even if only for a game of Housey-housey (Bingo), troops are ordered to defend a coastline of cliffs; shifting gear on the ship results in the disposition of motorcycles over the side of the ship. War represents merely the same irrational world on a larger scale.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IRONIC VISION

In his War Trilogy Waugh integrates the satiric and the romantic in a mature evaluation of man's place in the cosmos. Whereas in the early novels Waugh realizes the futility of life in the modern world, he offers no positive alternative to the status quo. In the trilogy he identifies the activities of war with all that is brutal and meaningless in human life. The ironic gap between expectation and fulfillment in the career of Guy Crouchback illustrates the difference between appearance and reality in the universe. Guy, one of the men at arms, whose career becomes the focal point around which the other characters receive their identities, represents a microcosm of the general human enterprise. Waugh's artistic purpose evident in the complete integration of structure and theme is to illustrate by ironic demonstration on a singular level the epitome of an irony in a broader context. The serious purpose demands serious treatment. The growth of maturity in Waugh as a writer is reflected in his subjective approach to the truth as he sees it and in his use of irony as an intellectual instrument for revealing the truth. The progress from the simpler forms of satire to irony indicates the high seriousness of purpose of Waugh's work and, therefore, his attainment of maturity as a writer.

Waugh illustrates the community of the human predicament in his description of the men at arms whose inadequacies in the face of the confusion of the modern world become obvious. The trilogy pictures the

futile efforts of soldiers in World War II to understand either the remote enemy abroad or the enemy of ignorance and inefficiency at home. Waugh suggests that the ultimate responsibility rests upon the individual himself. He must, according to his conscience, make his own small, sometimes paradoxical, effort to maintain integrity, morality, and sanity in a world where such values seem at times to be obsolete. Waugh's complete involvement in his theme indicates finally an awareness of the real world and man's role in it. This unexpected gravity in Waugh reveals his serious purpose and therefore his maturity.

Just as burlesque was enlarged to encompass the total fable in Waugh's early work, so irony assumes the onus of it in the war trilogy. At the opening of the trilogy, the protagonist, Guy Crouchback, in self-imposed isolation in Italy, is aroused from his lethargy by the crusading spirit brought on by the outbreak of war. He sees in the war an opportunity to dedicate himself to a cause--the defeat of the Modern Age in Arms, an enemy that has appeared before in Waugh's novels. The reader knows that disillusionment will follow, for England's Allies constitute part of that Age. The reader becomes part of the esoteric audience that watches the victim move toward his destiny. At the outset when Guy arrives in London to enlist in the nation's cause, he appears similar to Waugh's early naive heroes. Like them he is catapulted into an irrational world, this time the city of London as it prepares for war.

Waugh's work has always been notable for its satiric description. Often with typical exaggeration he punctuates his remarks with little rhetorical shocks, a habit of phrase which succeeds in creating an extra-sensory perception or meaning for the reader. The time lag in understanding enforces the impression. Guy's first picture of London's activity in preparation for war has this effect:

They spoke of various forms of service. Most were in uniform. Everywhere little groups of close friends were arranging to spend the war together. There was a territorial search-light battery manned entirely by fashionable aesthetes who were called 'the monstrous regiment of gentlemen.' Stockbrokers and wine salesmen were settling into the offices of London District Headquarters. Regular soldiers were kept at twelve hours notice for active service. Yachtsmen were in R. N. V. R. uniform growing beards. There seemed no opportunity for Guy in any of this.  
(p. 23)

The satire, which occurs frequently in similar descriptions, is entirely functional, integrated as it is into the theme. At the outset of war there were some who saw the early opportunity for personal comfort and advantage to be gained by advanced preparation and priority. Their conduct reflects that of the priest who had little enthusiasm for the Allied cause except as he saw "...in this terrible time of doubt, danger, and suffering in which we live" an opportunity to collect a capitation grant for which purpose he vainly sought from Guy a list of military members of the Catholic faith. Waugh's ironic vision encompasses all the action of the trilogy. For Guy the time was one of glory and dedication for which a classic experience in the life of Sir Roger Waybroke, an English Knight who in joining the Second Crusade had fallen in a local battle in Genoa and was canonized there, offered a comparison.<sup>1</sup> Waugh satirizes the lassitude of the present aristocracy by frequent references to the noble ideals of their forbears--an artistic device that reveals the seriousness of his purpose. Whereas in the early phase of Waugh's writing he would have seen much to ridicule, his mature judgment sees in the objects of his satire much to pity and love.

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<sup>1</sup>N. B. The comparison between Sir Roger and Guy becomes more significant as the trilogy advances because Guy's attempts to acquire glory are thwarted too by minor hindrances as were Sir Roger's by the local feud that took his life.

Just as in the early writings Waugh exposed vices and follies, he does so now with a more serious manner.

In stark contrast to Guy's shining idealism is the behavior of Lord Kilbannock who under false pretenses "got into" the Air Force uniform. Ironically, he actually seeks escape from both the dangers of active combat and those of the black-out. Paradoxically he wants to be known as one of the soft-faced men who although "in" the war did well "out of" the war. He is the epitome of the "summer soldier and the sunshine patriot." A sense of honor in the Modern Age seems to be just as outmoded as the old-fashioned drill. Waugh satirizes the Air Force in particular as the Modern Age in Arms--with "the weekend habit" and with regular hours, few obligations and "a nice crowd" as Mrs. Leonard imagines this Utopia to be.

Many of Waugh's earlier techniques in burlesque and caricature reappear in the satiric portraits of the men at arms. Of the group of young officers who joined the Halberdiers with Crouchback, "Apthorpe alone looked like a soldier. Burly, tanned, moustached and primed with a rich vocabulary of military terms and abbreviations," (p. 45) he seemed a veritable Miles Gloriosus, a braggart soldier of experience. But he is merely playing soldier. The "Old Campaigner," desiring the comforts of civilian life, defies orders by bringing along his "gear," including a private privy over which the first battle of the war takes place. But he is ironically a babe at arms as Waugh pictures him in caricaturist detail at Penkirk, ensconced on a "high collapsible bed, in a nest of white muslin illuminated from inside by a patent, incandescent oil lamp, like a great baby in a bassinette, smoking his pipe and reading his Manual of Military Law." (p. 166) The war game this incongruous figure

plays is ridiculous child's play--hide and seek over the chemically-operated field latrine, "Thunder-Box," Apthorpe's insurance against infection. With mock seriousness, a technique of high burlesque which dominated his early work, and exaggerated inconsequence, the saga of the field latrine is played. Apthorpe considers this contest as the basis of a serious appeal to the Army Council, except that they would undoubtedly not "meet the case with purely open minds." (p. 152) Guy's sagacity, exaggerated beyond belief, aids in clarifying the status of the latrine which in his opinion, not having achieved the rank of brigadier (Waugh deliberately makes this comment irrational through personification), is out of bounds in a location marked "Off limits to all below the rank of brigadier." (p. 151) The retrieval of the latrine is made possible by Guy, and Apthorpe withdraws into his "cocoon" again, satisfied by the unconditional surrender of his opponent, Brigadier Ritchie-Hook. However, he has not reckoned with the "biffing" tactics of the brigadier, the enfant terrible of the first World War, who first tries to frighten Apthorpe by arranging a potted geranium on the privy door as a trap. But Apthorpe prepares for this "ruthless and resourceful enemy" by wearing his tin helmet. The brigadier's tactics eventually prove effective when he booby traps the box and unseats Apthorpe. The mock battle of the portable latrine in which the brigadier displays his military offensive biffing tactics against the non-military withdrawal tactics of Apthorpe has greater significance too in revealing the ironic ambiguity of man who in trying to resist the infection of the modern age is drawn into war, the most prodigious booby trap of life. Civilized warfare means self-destruction.

Another of the satirical portraits, Ritchie-Hook, the "terror," first appears in the novel through a glass darkly,

...glaring balefully at the Captain-Commandant's guests, with a single terrible eye. It was black as the brows above it, this eye, black as the patch which hung on the other side of the lean skew nose. It was set in steel-rimmed monocle. (p. 68)

Waugh's emphasis of singular details achieves delineation of character, in this case the singleness of vision and self-containment of Captain Hook. Like a watch dog, he bares his teeth at the ladies, later flashes his huge eyeteeth at Mrs. Leonard, and clutches with his black claw (his black glove covers a maimed right hand--two surviving fingers and half a thumb) a cocktail for one of the guests. Thus in caricaturist detail Waugh pictures the animalistic ruthlessness of his nature, a technique which he uses more extensively in each successive novel.

When he ate he grasped his fork in his gloved fingers, impaled his meat, cut it rapidly into squares, laid down his knife, changed hands with the fork and ate fast and silently, plunging the pieces into horse-radish sauce and throwing them back to his molars. (p. 71)

To such a man war is a game of roulette in which one spends his men like a pile of chips that he has painstakingly gathered together. The individual does not count; he may be replaced. With unconcern for the consequences and in a spirit of schoolboyish adventure, frequently evident in his practical jokes--a collapsible spoon and fake-rimmed water glasses--Ritchie-Hook indulges in "a little bit of unofficial fun" (p. 226)--the unofficial invasion of the African beach. Guy, who has command of the reconnaissance patrol, is completely unaware of this deception until he rescues a wounded man, the ubiquitous Ritchie Hook, who has escaped with a souvenir--the head of a Negro sentry. Here the macabre of Black Mischief reappears, but it has ironic repercussions for Guy who is held responsible for the unofficial patrol.

The theme of disillusionment that furnishes the ironic tone of the trilogy begins with Guy's consciousness of the futility of the war effort, symbolized by the new world "bounded by barbed wire and reeking of carbolic" (p. 94); the same theme appears more strongly marked in Officers and Gentlemen. Guy sees the home front ironically under the Blitz in its obvious proliferation of staff members and useless organizations, of Air Marshals and Public Relations Officers. He sees the mockery of the Regimental Depot, with all the elements of the traditional life of a fighting unit removed for the duration of the war. Guy's work now is solely with officers and he feels none of the exhilaration of the previous year when Ritchie-Hook had said, "These are the men you will lead in battle." (p. 334)

But now officers are no longer gentlemen. The irony of the title becomes increasingly apparent. Appearing in the original list of Halberdiers was Trimmer,<sup>2</sup> the most unsoldierly of the men at arms. Rather effeminate with long eyelashes and a golden lock of hair struggling to escape from under his cap, he seems in the original cadre of Halberdiers incapable of the transformation for which the organization is renowned. The satiric portrait reveals him as the raw material from which modern officers are made, not gentlemen. Characterized by vulgarity, deceit, and gross inefficiency, he becomes the image of the people in arms. Ironically, Ian Kilbannock assesses the situation rightly when in a drunken outburst he says to Guy, "'Heroes are in strong demand. Heroes

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Tristran Coffin and Alexander M. Witherspoon, Seventeenth Century Prose (New York, 1946), pp. 756, 757. (N. B. Waugh's deliberate choice of names which have special significance constitutes a device of satire that he has employed throughout all his work. The character of a Trimmer is defined in Seventeenth Century Prose as a person who vacillates between opposing sides and then chooses the more popular.)

are urgently required to boost civilian morale....This is a People's War....We want heroes of the people, to or for the people, by, with and from the people.'" (p. 352) The future commandos will not be upper class, the "Fine Flower of the Nation" but Trimmers. Ironically, Trimmer is a fraud. Dismissed from the Halberdiers, knocked about a bit by the Jocks in whose regiment he falsely enlisted (it was rumored they threw him out a window the day before they embarked for Iceland without him), and recognized as an incompetent highlander who jammed his gun and failed to report it, he becomes nevertheless the modern hero in Operation Popgun, a publicity stunt planned by Headquarters. It is ironic that Trimmer was trying to escape from a predicament he found himself in when he was detected in Glasgow on a self-appointed leave with the evidence of a self-appointed promotion on his shoulders (on the train he had changed his lieutenant's stars for major's crowns). In assuring the gullible major from his battalion that he has been assigned special service with the commandos, he accidentally begins his rise to fame, an ironic trick of fate. The truth is that no one wants him and he is relegated to the demolition squad because they are short of officers.

The comic invention, the exaggeration, and the incongruity of Operation Popgun resemble the sports activities at Llanabba Castle in Decline and Fall. However, in the trilogy underneath the burlesque lies the horrible element of truth. The soldiers are real men. Operation Popgun, in effect a burlesque of Guy's raid at Dakar, begins in a state of confusion when Trimmer seems very vague about such things as the state of readiness of his section. (He is not actually sure of their location.) The submarine captain has difficulty finding the "bloody island" in the fog. Waugh completely integrates the burlesque

of Trimmer's courage into his theme--the rise of such men to public recognition as heroes. The details of the operation abound in inconsistencies: Trimmer falls flat as he debarks; he violates security by letting everyone smoke; Ian, the publicity man, brings a bottle along and becomes inebriated. At the sound of a dog's bark, Trimmer fires his pistol and alerts the enemy, a woman and her dog. In panic both he and Ian run until they trip over a railway line and realize they are on the coast of France. Frightened they race back to the dinghies and impatiently await the return of the others who, under the direction of the sergeant, succeed in laying a charge on the railway line. Ian's parody of the famous last words of Cranmer to Ridley "'Be of good comfort, Master Trimmer, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's Grace in England as I trust shall never be put out'" (p. 404) illustrates the travesty of heroism. In complete disregard of the unheroic behavior of Trimmer and his sappers, Ian writes a citation for McTavish, the modern hero who is without honor, without dignity, without even the basic knowledge of military strategy. The final irony is the Labor Minister's insistence that McTavish be found employment suitable to his merits. Accompanied by Guy's former wife Virginia, his mistress in the Leave Hotel in Glasgow, Trimmer is sent on a crusade to the industrial towns to stimulate arms production--"to boost civilian morale and Anglo-American friendship." (p. 410) As an enforcement to the irony Waugh portrays the public reaction through the venerable, kindly man who treats everyone as if he were a gentleman--Guy's father who proudly says:

'We've got no junker class in this country, thank God. When the country needs them, the right men come to the fore. There was this young fellow curling women's hair on a liner, calling himself by a French

name; odd trade for a highlander, you might think. There he was. No one suspected what he had in him. Might never have had the chance to show it. Then war comes along. He downs his scissors and without any fuss carries out one of the most daring exploits in military history.' (p. 406)

The force of the dramatic irony appears in Mr. Crouchback's remark to Miss Vavasour, who requests the newspaper picture of Captain McTavish, "He deserves a frame." (p. 407) As Waugh suggests by the title of this section of the novel, Trimmer is ironically "In the Picture."

The total picture, however, can only be seen through the fiasco in Crete where the men of battle, both officers and gentlemen, make decisions either on a point of honor or on the basis of expediency. Ritchie-Hook in traditional manner had never contemplated defeat, neither in theory nor in practice. But Guy discovers that this is modern war with its incompetence and bad management, and, like Lt. Henry after the retreat at Caporetto in A Farewell to Arms, he feels justified in abandoning a cause which he feels is no longer honorable.

Corporal-Major Ludovic writes in his journal "'We live in the age of Purges and Evacuation. To empty oneself, that is the task of contemporary man.'" (p. 411) When man's mind is without reason, he himself is reduced to animal level with only instinct left. Waugh's tendency to reveal this animalism began in descriptive details which suggested associations of this nature: the hairy hands of Dr. Fagan in Decline and Fall for example. The emphasis in The Loved One was enlarged to an implied comparison between man and animal through death. In the trilogy the comparison is exaggerated to the point of encompassing the total character. Major Hound (Fido to his friends--a familiarity that breeds only contempt) is, as the choice of name suggests, an exaggerated caricature of a dog. His behavior on the island of Crete is consistently instinctive. In his very first

temptation he loses control of himself and succumbs to hunger. Ashamed of himself, he moves to a place alone where he eats the tiny portion of the sergeant's rations for which he had bartered a few cigarettes. This action is merely the prelude to his ungentlemanly behavior in securing a place in a passing vehicle at the expense of a haggard young New Zealand officer. Only animal instinct had brought him to headquarters without even a message to deliver. "He was a bad dog; he had been off on his own, rolling in something nasty. He wanted to fawn and lick the correcting hand." (p. 456) Waugh reduces his behavior to the animalistic level where instinct overcomes judgment. The implication is that the war is no longer being fought by men of principle; it is being fought by individuals who are interested only in self-preservation. The ironic significance of the title becomes increasingly obvious. Officers are distinct from gentlemen.

When Ludovic finds Major Hound wandering in a wilderness of fear and exhaustion after running from his obligations to his men, Major Hound responds to the mention of dinner by automatically producing the chit from the DQMG, but it is his animal instinct that helps him overcome his physical handicaps. Following Ludovic, he reaches a point where he stands "with hanging head and closed eyes, out on his feet." In that moment

tiny, delicious, doggy perceptions began to flutter in the void. He raised his bowed nose and sniffed.... He pressed forward, he overtook Ludovic, he passed him, wordlessly, following his nose in and out of boulders, up treacherous scree, the scent stronger with every frantic step. (pp. 460, 461)

Animal-like he snatches at food. Waugh reveals the truth about life, that war reduces men to the state of animals. Its bestiality destroys. There is no honor on that level.

The ironic ambiguity of the title of the second book, Officers and Gentlemen, is increasingly enforced in the revelation of behavior on Crete. Among the officers and gentlemen Waugh introduces Ivor Claire, a man characterized by a singular disposition and an unconcern for honor and duty. His military unorthodoxy in carrying out a practice assault of the island shows a flagrant disregard for the principles of conventional strategy. Given the farthest to go of anyone, "to make Ivor do some work for a change," (p. 335) he hires a bus, which in military terms would represent "captured transport," to take his troops to their required objective. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that the commandos are expressly raised for irregular action, for seizing tactical advantages on their own initiative. Claire's decision is based on the probability of "a bus lying around somewhere" (p. 336) and despite the fact that the road used in the operation led through a battalion of light infantry-- a fact not indicated in the orders--Colonel Blackhouse had to accept the plausibility of the solution to the exercise. Guy's impression of Claire was that he was "another pair of boots entirely, salty, withdrawn, incorrigible." He remembered him in Rome putting his horse faultlessly over the jumps, "concentrated as a man in prayer. He was the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account." (p. 366) Ironically, he is the type of man, ingenious and resourceful, who knows what he wants and proceeds to get it by fair means or foul. What Guy suggests is probably true; Hitler did not think of the British officers in those terms.

Later, on the island of Crete, Ivor insists that it does not make any sense, "leaving the fighting troops behind and taking off the rabble." (p. 480) Much later Guy learns that Ivor has denied the

traditional code of honor by insinuating himself into the disembarkation for Alexandria. He is no gentleman although he is an officer.

Whereas Ivor Claire, who is an officer, is a deserter in the eyes of men of principle, Ludovic, who is not an officer, is a hero. He manages not only his escape by boat but Guy's also. It is Ludovic who recognizes the gentleman in Guy and also in Miltiades, a Greek general who exemplifies the principles of honor by staying with his dying driver. Ludovic demonstrates the theme of the book when he recognizes Guy's pleasure in the fact that the seventy-year-old General Miltiades is a gentleman. He writes, "He [Guy] would like to believe that the war is being fought by such people. But all gentlemen are now very old." (p. 444) Honor is old too. Guy finds himself ironically

back after a less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world, where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led blundering into dishonour. (p. 502)

The crusading ideal which dominated the first book of the trilogy is shattered when Guy finds the dead, but uninjured, body of an English soldier in a deserted Cretan Village. "The soldier lay like an effigy on a tomb-like Sir Roger in his shadowy shrine at Santa Dulcina," (p. 465) a fact suggestive of an illusion being laid to rest. Conformity to military discipline, however, was automatically carried out when Guy took the red identification disk. Ironically, Mrs. Stitch, knowing that a notebook containing incriminating evidence of Ivor Claire's desertion is in Guy's possession, later destroys the envelope containing the disc, which he leaves with her to deliver to the correct authorities. Unknown to her, Guy has already burned the evidence against Claire--a symbolic act in which he saves his country from the public disgrace of ignoble deeds by private persons.

The extent to which the ironic method serves as a revelation of underlying meaning becomes increasingly evident in the trilogy. The ironic gap between the expectation of adherence to principles of honor and duty by officers and gentlemen and the reality of their sacrifice of these principles to expediency illustrates the basic theme of the first two books of the trilogy.

Crouchback is a visionary, yet his indefinable numbness, a saturnine strain of the Crouchback family (Guy's father excepted) limits his capacity to embrace life in its richest aspects. When his ideal of a just cause is shattered, he has nothing to sustain the shock of the disillusionment and he withdraws. In The End of the Battle Guy's father expresses worry for his son's apathy, for his "sulking," and insists that "quantitative judgments" do not apply. "If only one soul was saved, that is full compensation for any amount of loss of face." (p. 8) The individual must accept his role even if it means suffering and injustice. Such is the ironic vision of life.

Before the last of the trilogy had appeared, Frederick Stopp wrote,

Presumably, the two volumes now written contain only the stage of dispersion, to be followed by that of reorientation and of concentration...the spirit of Broome will succeed the illusion of the crusade.<sup>3</sup>

Waugh's early works as satire had not offered reorientation through the establishment of a standard of values. The innocent was offered no alternative compensations for his loss of innocence. In A Handful of Dust the disintegration reached a point of no return. Brideshead Revisited, however, offered to the innocent the spiritual as an anchor

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<sup>3</sup>Stopp, p. 210.

in a chaotic world. In The End of the Battle Waugh suggests not only that religion is a means of reorientation but also of concentration. The element of the supernatural becomes the underlying determiner of the individual conscience and as such manifests itself in the noble deeds of unselfish action of the individual.

In The End of the Battle Waugh maintains an ironic attitude toward the secular world where values scarcely warrant one's total allegiance. When Guy returns to England from the Cretan invasion, disheartened and disillusioned, he chooses to soldier with the Halberdiers for two more years. He becomes "the ball of lead which in a vacuum falls no faster than a feather." (p. 417)

His disillusionment continues to furnish the ironic texture of the novel. Finding in the regular routine of a training program a temporary relief from the sense of futility that haunts him, he is psychologically unprepared for the refusal of his commander to let him accompany the battalion into active duty. The artificial excuse of age restrictions, Guy recognizes, is a camouflage for the personal prejudice of the new Brigadier--the commander who had chastised Guy so severely for his role in the death of Apthorpe (he had accidentally caused it by a gift of whiskey to the ill soldier). Waugh reveals that grotesqueries of this kind are perhaps normally indigenous to life itself, and are merely emphasized by the war. The grotesqueries work ironically to the advantage of some characters. "'Things have a way of turning out lucky for you, Tommy,'" (p. 423) Guy says to the commander of Hookforce, Colonel Blackhouse,<sup>4</sup> when he breaks his leg just prior to debarkation for the

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<sup>4</sup>N. B. The name Blackhouse appeared in the English editions as Backhouse, a much more appropriate name, for invariably he is left back of the front lines where he performs the duties that ironically, yet inevitably, lead to promotions.

front. The Colonel escapes the ignominious retreat and surrender. In the Cretan debacle Ludovic contrives his own escape and Guy's as well after having presumably rid himself of Major Hound. (Occasional insinuations concerning men killing superior officers who have proved difficult suggest such a probability.) A sapper officer also mysteriously disappears from the escape boat. In recognition of the success of this heroic escape, Ludovic is sent back to England to be decorated and commissioned. Apparently there is an ambiguously ironic code of justice and reward.

Guy, competent and willing, becomes one of the "odd bodies"--a liaison officer at Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters--a job whose function even the commander does not know. In the past their special role of Hazardous Offensive Operations seemed destined to remain unplayed even though "a whole new coastline in Scandinavia had been opened for biffing by the German victories." (p. 179) When one sees the absurd operations at headquarters, one is not surprised at the futility of the war effort.

In the exaggerated manner of burlesque, Waugh pictures the activities of Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters:

The original three flats remained part of their property--an important part, for they housed Ian Kilbannock's busy Press service--as did numerous mansions from Hendon to Clapham in which small bands of experts in untroubled privacy made researches into fortifying drugs, invisible maps, noiseless explosives and other projects near to the heart of the healthy schoolboy. There was a Swahili witch doctor in rooms off the Edgemere Road who had been engaged to cast spells on the Nazi leaders. /He is later identified as a former abortionist whom Virginia has sought for ridding herself of Trimmer's unwelcome child./ (p. 22)

Even Dr. Glendenning-Rees has a dietary team in Upper Norwood from whose experiments batches of emaciated "conscientious objectors" are

periodically removed to the hospital. That war has its casualties proves shocking when revealed in such terms.

The scope of the animalistic satire is greatly enlarged to embrace even the physical structure of the war machine. The Royal Victorian Institute, a seldom-frequented museum, had been converted for these activities of the war effort. The lower level animal kingdom is a fitting environment for the senseless activities of these "odd bodies." Guy's particular compartment is unique in the presence of a plaster reconstruction of a megalosaurus which dominates the room. Under its huge flanks, Guy carries out the Man-power Directive that everyone should be employed in the "war effort." Even on the home front man's animal nature governs his actions.

The "studio" is occupied by three RAF sergeants, whose duty it is to construct miniature beaches, "yards and yards of them." (p. 25) In their ample spare time, however, these ingenious men are building a model of the Royal Victorian Institute, an occupation much more to their taste.

Waugh illustrates in the following dialogue the callous indifference of men on the home front who see in the war the interruption of their normal pursuits and pleasures and fail to realize the true significance of the beaches:

'You'll soon have that finished,' said Guy to the senior sergeant.

'Yes, barring interruptions. You can never tell when they'll come asking for more beaches. There isn't the same satisfaction in beaches.'

The ironic implication of the understatement (underlined above) is that there never can be the same satisfaction, for war is an interruption and men die on the beaches. The incident contains a special irony too, for

the building of the model museum is even more pointless and meaningless than the construction of the beaches which could save lives. The incongruously pleasant scene depicting "these happy, industrious men" serves an integral function in the ironic structure of the novel, for it is this very lack of dedication which makes the sacrifices of the fighting men so futile. In the final chapters of The End of the Battle Guy realizes the futility of the general human enterprise.

As a writer, Waugh has always shown a concern for an integrated plot. It was no accident that Guy's selection for a special assignment was made by a machine--An Electronic Personnel Selector. Most human consideration in his army career had brought him to the futile routine of Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters. Now he felt an exhilaration--a new hope. Simultaneously with his selection for a special military role comes his father's death and his own identification of purpose. In the process of reorientation Guy becomes aware of his destiny, which he no longer expects to be heroic. He becomes convinced that "one day he would get the chance to do some small service which only he could perform, for which he had been created." (p. 81) He prays for guidance in recognizing that opportunity. From now on, he dedicates himself to the only cause worth one's allegiance--that of service to God. The romantic idealism of the trilogy begins to assume increasing importance.

Guy's first opportunity to perform a truly unselfish action occurs when his former wife, Virginia, presents him honestly with the problem of her pregnancy. Ironically, not only does he become the only man in The End of the Battle who can save her, but also the perpetuation of his family name is assured by Trimmer's child. The recollection of his

father's words determines his course of action. "Quantitative judgments don't apply. If only one soul was saved, that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face.'" (p. 196) From now on, one becomes increasingly aware of Guy's "concentration;" it is the end of the line (the title of a long section of the novel) for his doubt and his apathy. The influence of Brideshead Revisited is felt increasingly in Waugh's abandonment of the secular theme.

Although Guy did not expect a change in Virginia as a result of his sacrifice, she interprets her accidental pregnancy as the intervention of Fate and establishes a significant new life for herself by conversion to Catholicism. Waugh sees in her situation the opportunity to concentrate on his religious theme--that everyone has a function in the divine plan. Virginia glibly and facilely comments that novelists make much ado about nothing over people losing their faith (a subject over which Waugh had pondered at length in Brideshead Revisited).

When Virginia is killed by a doodle bomb, seemingly directed toward her in answer to a death wish, soon after the birth of a son, Gervase, Eloise Plessington sees the fall of the bomb as an act of providence, that Virginia was fortunate to have been killed at the one time in her life when she would be sure of heaven--"eventually." Waugh sees in her demise the death of a type of heroine, one that has been present in his own writing from the beginning. Everard Spruce, founder and editor of Survival, a monthly review based on the idea of a survival of values and subsidized by the Ministry of Information, comments to his subordinates in words that might well be Waugh's: "Virginia Troy was the last of 'twenty years' succession of heroines...the ghosts of romance who walked between the wars." (p. 262) Spruce, using Aldous Huxley's

Mrs. Viveash as an illustration comments further:

'Hemingway coarsened the image with his Bret, but the type persisted--in books and in life. Virginia was the last of them--the exquisite, the doomed and the damning, with expiring voices--a whole generation younger. We shall never see anyone like her again in literature or life and I'm very glad to have known her.' (pp. 262, 263)

Waugh in effect is asserting what Hall had intimated, that a changing culture and the growing emotional maturity of a writer definitely affect the aesthetic treatment of his theme. Leo Hines interpreted the change in the following way:

'It may very well be true that with certain kinds of genius you have no hope of bringing along the same audience which once laughed with you, that their repudiation is needed to complete your sense of inadequacy and failure before you can achieve the single-minded concentration that preludes master-works. In other words I maintain, by standards not at all irrelevant to the arts, Guy Crouchback's ineffectual concern for a hopeless band of Jewish refugees attains to a pathos and sublimity which, while of a different kind from the excellence of, say, Decline and Fall, are nonetheless worthy of an artist whose gifts are en pleine gloire. Indeed the nub of it may be that Waugh has come to his maturity, and the passing of his dazzling youth regrettable but a fact.'<sup>5</sup>

The change in Waugh's sardonic vision from the lighter forms of burlesque to the ironic texture of an integrated structure and theme gives added emphasis to this point of view. Guy's involvement with the Jews in the last section of The End of the Battle, called "The Death Wish," was the direct result of a feeling of compassion, a "sense that here again, in a world of hate and waste, he was being offered the chance of doing a single small act to redeem the times."

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<sup>5</sup>Leo Hines, "Waugh and His Critics," The Commonweal, LXXVI, p. 61.

(p. 251) When a group of one hundred and eight displaced persons, living under conditions of starvation and exposure, sought transportation to Italy, Guy tried desperately to obtain supplies for them and a much-needed aircraft to effect their evacuation. Juxtaposed against the constant futility of this humane attempt which the partisans continually thwarted is the visit of the "Yank" general whose investigation of lethargic partisan activity ends in senseless tragedy. The battle prepared for the visiting general was to be an assault on a little block-house twenty miles to the west on a secondary road to the coast. The battle was between the garrison, only a company of Croat nationalists, and two brigades of National Liberation forces, groups numbering one hundred men each, ironically to be known as a striking force for the purpose of this "exercise." The RAF agreed to devote two fighter-bombers to this insignificant target. The fiasco begins with the crash of the spectator plane from which the efficient American General Spitz and Ritchie-Hook (now a lean, grey-faced, stiff old man with a single lustreless eye) were miraculously saved. (That the American general had opened the hatches prompted the satiric comment that something could be said for a technological training.) With Waugh's usual aptness of diction, he describes Guy ironically performing his duties as host in getting the survivors to bed. The partisans who had never been convinced that the Allies were taking the war seriously were appeased by "this unsolicited burnt-offering," (p. 286) an overt testimony of Anglo-American failure. The events of the exercise are charged with ironical implications: the "lost" brigade which appears unexpectedly, fires, and loses the element of surprise; the two planes discharge their bombs but fail to return, and finally amidst a lull in the action--only

spasmodic firing occurs--Ritchie-Hook, thinking he is supported by a small "biffing" force, attacks the block-house and is riddled with bullets. An actual German patrol, investigating the firing, is puzzled over the single-handed attack and turns the matter over to German Intelligence. Ian ironically indicates that the success of the exercise could be attributed to Ritchie-Hook, whose action convinced General Spitz that the partisans mean business and are skilled in guerilla tactics. Ian's classic comment that Trimmer and Ritchie-Hook had a great deal in common is the final travesty on heroism.

The crusade to which Guy had devoted himself at the tomb of Sir Roger finds its consummation in the one frustrated act of mercy--the repatriation of the Jewish refugees. Signora Kanyi, one of them, sums up the significance of the futility of the general human enterprise for which Guy Crouchback (a guy like you and me)<sup>6</sup> serves as the individual exemplum:

'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 that 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.'  
(p. 305)

Guy has to admit that he was one of them. The ironic vision of life according to Waugh is that in willfully seeking war, man destroys

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<sup>6</sup>N. B. The O. E. D. suggests that the extended meaning of Guy, originating from Guy Fawkes, is an unpopular person who is made the object of ridicule by inuendo. Guy's ineffectual realization of his ideal in the face of modern savagery seems to suggest an apt choice of name for such an ineffectual protagonist.

himself. That innocent individuals suffer in the process is illustrated in the feeling of futility Guy experiences when he learns that the Kanyis, the most dedicated of the Jewish refugees in the cause of freedom, are innocent victims of the judgment of a People's Court for unpatriotic activities. It is the ambiguity of life itself that Waugh has sought to render, and in the final mature stage of his writing he has seen life as inescapably ironic. But it is not without hope, for the salvation of mankind rests with the individual who, despite his own inadequacies to cope with life, does not lose his own soul.

Waugh's maturity has brought to his work a new attitude of realism, for he has learned to look upon life in all its complexities:

not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating,<sup>7</sup> though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue.

However, in achieving a synthesis of the comic and the serious he has become so involved with his subject that he fails to withdraw his own personality which appears mature but dull. Granted, his maturity does indicate a major achievement in theme, but it produces only minor art.

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<sup>7</sup>William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," Poems of Wordsworth (London, New York, 1962), pp. 250, 251.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

A study of the progress of satire in the development of Evelyn Waugh as a writer, reveals a pattern of techniques, a pattern which suggests a growing maturity. At the basis of all his writing there has always been a sense of tragic awareness of the chaotic world--the modern wasteland of the twentieth century, but Waugh's attitude in rendering it has undergone significant changes. These changes center around the author-reader relationship and the comic-serious point of view.

In Waugh's early writing he maintains an aesthetic distance through which he is able to gain the attention of the reader without giving the impression of criticizing him. The element of burlesque which characterizes Waugh's first work reveals the skill with which Waugh "isolates and magnifies aspects of reality--the cockeyed, the fantastic, the eccentric--which the ordinary eye glimpses only fuzzily through the haze of custom and cant."<sup>1</sup> He sees the element of the absurd in the various aspects of society, and his comic vision cuts through stupidities, conventions and hypocrisies. The reader's sense of creative participation lies in Waugh's inventive genius in depicting ludicrous scenes that appear in the reader's consciousness as distortions of reality. Seeing through the absurdities delights the reader, and he experiences a feeling of amiability and geniality in the process because these experiences seem

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Rolo, The World of Evelyn Waugh (Boston, Toronto, 1958), p. ix.

remote from him. Burlesque requires of an author an element of detachment which Waugh achieves through his innocent protagonist who undergoes fantastic experiences but is largely untouched by them. Through most of Waugh's early work the tone is audacious and gay; it has the spirit of youth.

With the appearance of A Handful of Dust, however, the tone becomes much more serious and grotesque. The repulsiveness the reader feels by the presence of the grotesque imitation of the unnatural and the sordid is intended to shock the reader into an awareness of different scales of value. The protagonist, no longer the true naif, is rightly destroyed by his experiences because of his irresponsibility and refusal to face reality. Waugh moves closer to the real world in his choice of theme and in his choice of a protagonist who is at least affected by his experiences.

Waugh's growing maturity as a writer makes him increasingly conscious of the inadequacy of burlesque in his treatment of a more serious theme, that of divine providence in an age of irresponsibility and materialism. Romantically idealistic, he turns to the form of the conventional novel in his treatment of the coordination of his beliefs in the aristocracy and Catholicism in Brideshead Revisited. His employment of satire is subordinate to the traditional romance itself, but it is incisive and protruding like the "teeth of a saw." However, the intended integration of the two media lacks the continuity of a sustained plausible development of theme, for Waugh's religiosity, historical in nature, is too unemotional to sustain an emotional ideal.

Almost with a feeling of personal retribution for what might be considered an unsatisfactory rendition of the conventional novel, Waugh indulges his most savage wits in a grotesque satire, The Loved One, in

which he chastises a group of Americans for their secular attitude toward death.<sup>2</sup> Frederick Stopp likens Barlow's departure from California "unravished but enriched," to Waugh's departure from the romantic world of Brideshead Revisited, "the product of a youthful fantasy which the world had taken seriously, but which he then found to be, an unexplained corpse on his hands."<sup>3</sup> In The Loved One Waugh has abandoned his hard objectivity and consequently his air of innocence. The reader recognizes Waugh's involvement--his frame of reference; it is prejudiced.

That Waugh had left behind him "something that had long irked him, his young heart," becomes evident in his War Trilogy. His "chunk of experience" brings him into the realm of the mature world where crusades fail but man himself, like Guy Crouchback, the protagonist, must find his identity through the spirit. The ironic vision through which Waugh witnesses the futile efforts of the protagonist against the operation of chance and destiny adds a new dimension to the trilogy, a new awareness of cosmic forces. The focus of Rolo's criticism of the wartime saga is based on the fact that the "reader knows from the start that Crouchback has wishfully misread the situation and that his eventual disillusionment is therefore totally anti-climactic."<sup>4</sup> However, the force of the ironic method lies in the esoteric knowledge of the reader that Guy's idealism will be thwarted by governmental red tape, inefficiency of superiors, and the materialism of men on the home front as well as on the

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<sup>2</sup>N. B. When Waugh was in Hollywood for the filming of Brideshead Revisited, he visited Forest Lawn Cemetery where he obtained his "chunk of experience" for The Loved One.

<sup>3</sup>Stopp, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup>Rolo, p. xv.

battlefield. The ultimate disaster is tragically ironical because of the foreknowledge of the reader which makes him conscious of man's inadequacy in the face of the nihilistic modern age. The tendency of Waugh to progress from burlesque to the grotesque and thence to irony in which follies and vices speak for themselves demonstrates Waugh's development as a writer from an adolescent observer of life to a mature interpreter of man's place in the cosmos.

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