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SYSTEMS OF ORDER: THE NOVELS OF EVELYN WAUGH

Barry MacDonald

Dissertation submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
OTTAWA, CANADA, 1986

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The artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own.

Evelyn Waugh

Une technique romanesque renvoie toujours à la métaphysique du romancier.

Jean-Paul Sartre

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ABBREVIATIONS

(accompanying page references in the text)

BM	<u>Black Mischief</u>
BR	<u>Brideshead Revisited</u>
DF	<u>Decline and Fall</u>
GP	<u>The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and Other Stories</u>
H	<u>Helena</u>
HD	<u>A Handful of Dust</u>
LO	<u>The Loved One</u>
MA	<u>Men at Arms</u>
OG	<u>Officers and Gentlemen</u>
PF	<u>Put Out More Flags</u>
S	<u>Scoop</u>
SH	<u>Sword of Honour</u>
US	<u>Unconditional Surrender</u>
VB	<u>Vile Bodies</u>

TEXTUAL NOTE

The texts used for the Waugh novels are those of the Uniform Edition published in London by Chapman and Hall in the 1960s and 1970s. The only exception is Helena, which did not appear in this Edition and for which, accordingly, the first Chapman and Hall edition is used.

INTRODUCTION

Evelyn Waugh and his novels have proved a fertile field for those who by occupation or avocation concern themselves with authors and their work. The quality of his writing and the nature of his public image have combined to ensure, twenty years after his death, a lively interest in almost everything he put on paper. The last decade alone has seen the publication of comprehensive editions of his diaries, his letters and his journalism. As well, there have been, in addition to a steady flow of miscellaneous essays and research, a biography, a standard compilation of criticism, and four book-length studies of his work.

The 'elegance and variety of contrivance'¹ which marked Waugh's writing from the start would alone give him a claim to critical attention. However, his importance is not wholly explained by the qualities of style and comic brilliance which won him his initial reputation; implicit in the fiction are values which give it other and more sobering dimensions. In turn, the values which underpin the writing are linked to particular aspects of Waugh's personality. The outrageous opinions, the religious intransigence, the unabashed class-consciousness, the deep-seated aversion to the Modern Age -- all those elements of the character for which he became publicly known -- are expressions of the attitudes which animate his novels.

It is these underlying attitudes and their contribution to style and substance which have supplied much of the grist for the critical mill. The process has been fostered by the complexity of Waugh's character, a

mixture encouraging diversity of interpretation. Jeffrey Heath, for instance, sees the novels as an expression of Waugh's life-long search for a refuge, while Iah Littlewood views them as strategies of escape from an oppressive reality. For David Lodge they are a commentary on a dying civilization; for Donat O'Donnell they articulate the 'alien pieties' at the root of Waugh's religion; and for D. S. Savage they reveal "the predicament of Immaturity . . . a failure of growth."²

Other critics suggest still other approaches. The present study is one of these. Its thesis is that the idea of order is fundamental in Waugh's writing, and, specifically, that it is an organizing principle which accounts for important elements in the form and content of his novels. Order is used here in its broad sense to mean the condition in which everything is in its proper place and performs its proper function. The dictionary definition is not entirely satisfactory, however, depending as it does on the subjectivity implied in 'proper.' What it says, at bottom, is that the condition of order is one which satisfies an innate or acquired sense of the fitness of things, a sense inseparable from a basic uneasiness with disorder and confusion. Order, in short, acts to make life meaningful by dispelling the threat of anarchy, and it is the operation of this principle over the course of Waugh's novels which is being investigated. The process, here examined in the work of a single artist, is a universal one whose manifestations range from the personal neatness that ranges books on a shelf to the cosmic order that finds archetypal expression in the Genesis account of Creation, and which, we are told, is Heaven's first law.³

Evelyn Waugh was one of those in whom the instinct for order was very highly developed, and it is the purpose of this dissertation to show how this personal endowment affected his work as an artist. The core of the study is an analysis of Waugh's novels, showing how the ideas of order and disorder influence their structure, characterization, tone and language. This occupies the central chapters. (The only novel not dealt with is the two-chapter fragment, Work Suspended.) This analysis is preceded by a survey of the comments on order and related subjects which are scattered throughout Waugh's non-fiction, and by a chapter which attempts to define his kind of writing and place it in the tradition of English fiction with which it has the closest associations. Any such effort is necessarily approximate, since Waugh does not lend himself easily to classification in any school or movement, but, nevertheless, there are predecessors and contemporaries whose work helps to illuminate his.

The critical perspective adopted in the final chapter differs from that used for its predecessors. There, the investigation is concentrated on the evidence offered by the novels. Here, by contrast, it moves beyond the work to its author, to suggest the origin of the concern with order and disorder that bulks so large in his fiction. In doing so it focuses on Waugh's only novel which admittedly deals with his inner life, one whose theme and events are closely linked to an important and revealing episode in his life.

NOTES

¹This is the phrase Waugh uses in the opening paragraph of The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold to characterize the work of "the English novelists of the present day". See The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and Other Stories (London: Chapman and Hall, 1973), p. 121.

²Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 1.

Ian Littlewood, The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1983), p. 1.

David Lodge, "The Arrogance of Evelyn Waugh," The Critic, 30 (May-June 1972), p. 68.

Donat O'Donnell, "The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh," Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), pp. 120-21.

D. S. Savage, "The Innocence of Evelyn Waugh," The Novelist as Thinker, ed. B. Rajan (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1947; Folcroft Library Edition, 1970), p. 35.

³Cf. Henry A. Murray et al. (Harvard Psychological Clinic), Explorations in Personality (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 80, 200-20; Gordon W. Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), pp. 357-75.

CHAPTER ONE

IPSE DIXIT: WAUGH'S VIEW OF ORDER

The principle of order in Waugh's novels expresses itself obliquely through its effect on form and content. This is in keeping with his conviction that, while the expression of values is inseparable from fiction, the acknowledgement of their presence should be as subtle as possible. "There is no abstract writing," he declared. "All literature implies moral standards and criticisms -- the less explicit the better."¹ In his non-fiction, however, he was under no such constraint, and as a result his essays, articles and reviews offer a rich collection of his beliefs, opinions and prejudices,² providing a background of ideas about the nature of man and society against which the novels can be assessed.

It was not until middle age that Waugh gained a wide reputation for his opinions and for his vigour in defending them. Nevertheless, though age naturally tended to intensify them, the views with which his name is identified are discernible from the beginning of his writing career. The myth of decline, of the present as being somehow inferior to the past, took root in him early, so that, recalling his childhood, he could write that the Victorian period was "another age which I instinctively, even then, recognized as superior to my own."³ This suggestion of the rootedness of his views is borne out by the consistent call to order in his fiction which the following chapters reveal.

At the age of twenty-five, with Decline and Fall just behind him, he was already lamenting the decline of civilization. Writing of the effect

of the Great War on his own generation, he said: "The only thing that could have saved these unfortunate children was the imposition of rigid discipline, as soon as it became possible [i.e., after the War], of the standards of civilization. . . . the restraint of a traditional culture tempers and directs creative impulses. Freedom produces sterility."⁴ The success of his early novels brought him opportunities to write for the press, where his innate conservatism in social and cultural matters quickly made itself felt. Thus, a 1932 dictum on tolerance is vintage Waugh: "It is better to be narrow-minded than to have no mind, to hold limited and rigid principles than none at all."⁵ His impulse to swim against the tide of popular opinion is conspicuous in "Was He Right to Free the Slaves?," written for the centenary of William Wilberforce: ". . . slave ownership has been one of the postulates of every civilization. British wealth and British sentiment were strong enough to upset a system which, like any other, had abuses but also many redeeming virtues."⁶

His view of religion as the basis for civilization also found a place in his early journalism, permitting him to tell the readers of the Daily Express that "It is no longer possible, as it was in the time of Gibbon, to accept the benefits of civilization and at the same time to deny the supernatural basis on which it rests."⁷

The content of these early journalistic efforts (those cited above are all before 1934) is dated, and the style -- that of the English popular press -- is altogether less detached and impersonal than that of the novels Waugh was writing at the same period. Nevertheless, the values they advocate are essentially those which won him his reputation as an

arch-reactionary after 1945. Though not always so provocatively expressed as there, they provide a sub-text for all his writing, emerging with increasing clarity in his non-fiction as his reputation for controversial opinions grew and the carapace of his public persona hardened.

The Second World War was a watershed in Waugh's development. His experience and observation of the war years left him profoundly disillusioned with politics and power and more fixed than ever in his earlier convictions. He emerged with a changed, grimmer attitude that gave a new orientation to both his life and his writing. The misadventures and frustrations of his military career would alone have been enough to make him bitter about the army and the life of action. His diary for May 1945 (when he was about to embark on the writing of Helena) records that he was glad "to end the war in plain clothes, writing." The entry continues: "I regard the greatest danger I went through that of becoming one of Churchill's young men, of getting a medal and standing for Parliament; if things had gone, as then seemed right, in the first two years, that is what I should be now. I thank God to find myself still a writer, and at work on something as 'uncontemporary' as I am."⁸ Two years earlier, soon after his bitterest military rebuff -- enforced resignation from the Special Services Brigade, the Commandos -- he had written: "I don't want to influence opinions, events, or expose humbug or anything of that kind. I don't want to be of service to anyone or anything. I simply want to do my work as an artist."⁹ The renunciatory tone is in keeping with Waugh's pattern of life in the West Country and his later abortive plan to move to Ireland. At a deeper level it is an expression of what he described as

his life-long attraction to "dark and musty seclusions, like an animal preparing to whelp,"¹⁰ a reflection of his instinctive search for security and freedom from apprehended threat, and for the order that these represent.

Professional disappointment, however, was not the only, or even the principal, reason for the disillusionment which was Waugh's legacy from the War. This was to be found in the national and international events which began with Britain's 1939 guarantee of Poland's territorial integrity and her opposition to 'the Modern Age in arms' represented by the alliance of Germany and Russia, proceeded to the alliance of Britain with Russia against Germany, and ended with the transfer of large portions of Eastern Europe to Russian control. The successive stages of personal disillusionment have their fictional analogues in the account of Guy Crouchback's wartime experiences. Their effect on Waugh can be seen in the efforts he made in 1945 through diplomatic and political channels on behalf of the Catholics of Yugoslavia, whom he believed Britain was abandoning to Marshal Tito's hostile domination.¹¹

Waugh's wartime disappointment contributed in the after-war years to his deepening religious and political conservatism and to his profound pessimism about the state of contemporary society, both of them present in the character of his writing. Brideshead Revisited, Helena and, less explicitly, Sword of Honour, are all marked, as later chapters will show, by a religious emphasis which is not to be found in the pre-1945 novels. "'Quantitative judgements don't apply,'"¹² Guy Crouchback's father reminded him, and Waugh's emphasis during the last two decades of his life

on privacy and his vocation as a writer, as well as his preoccupation with Catholic questions, all suggest the application of the same principle to his own life. He announced his artistic credo in 1946, when he wrote that the "determining character" of a human being is "that of being God's creature with a definite purpose," and explained that his future books would have "two things to make them unpopular: a preoccupation with style and the attempt to present man more fully, which to me, means only one thing, man in his relation to God."¹³

This religious orientation, when Waugh came to express it in non-fiction settings, was typically hostile to change. It showed plainly in his opposition to the new doctrinal interpretations and liturgical innovations in the Catholic Church which flowed from the Second Vatican Council. Thus, in a 1964 letter directed to Catholic 'Progressives,' he wrote that "the function of the Church in every age has been conservative--to transmit undiminished and uncontaminated the creed inherited from its predecessors."¹⁴ Both here and in "The Same Again, Please"¹⁵ (the title encapsulates his prescription -- and hope -- for the Council) he was firmly opposed to the shift of liturgical emphasis from private prayer and devotion to socially-oriented worship, especially to the idea of the Eucharist as a shared, communal experience.

It was his political rather than his religious conservatism, however, which did most to establish Waugh's reputation as a pillar of the Right. Though the popular conception of him as a reactionary curmudgeon was at its peak in his later years, its foundations, paralleling the social and cultural conservatism mentioned above, were laid much earlier. During the

latter half of the Thirties he identified himself with right-wing positions that were highly unpopular among English intellectuals, going on record with such public statements as "We Can Applaud Italy",¹⁶ in which he proposed not only the inevitability but the desirability of Italy's victory in its 1935 war with Abyssinia, and his reply to the 1937 questionnaire in which British writers were invited to choose one of the sides in the Spanish Civil War: "As an Englishman I am not in the predicament of choosing between two evils. I am not a Fascist nor shall I become one unless it were the only alternative to Marxism. It is mischievous to suggest that such a choice is imminent."¹⁷ It was this tolerance for, if not actual sympathy with, Fascism, at a time when the climate of intellectual opinion was running so strongly against it, that placed Waugh unmistakably on the right of the political spectrum. He set himself firmly in opposition to the "young men" who had "ganged up and captured the decade,"¹⁸ the intellectual coterie led by Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and Isherwood, and he criticized Cyril Connolly for succumbing to their influence.¹⁹

Nowhere in Waugh's early writings is his political philosophy so fully articulated as in Robbery Under Law. The book, about Mexico, was one he was later "content to leave in oblivion, for it dealt little with travel and much with political questions,"²⁰ but he never deviated from the creed he set forth in it:

I believe that man is, by nature, an exile and will never be self-sufficient or complete on this earth; that his chances of happiness and virtue, here,

remain more or less constant through the centuries and, generally speaking, are not much affected by the political and economic conditions in which he lives; that the balance of good and ill tends to revert to a norm; that sudden changes of physical condition are usually ill, and are advocated by the wrong people for the wrong reasons; that the intellectual communists of today have personal, irrelevant grounds for their antagonism to society, which they are trying to exploit. I believe in government; that men cannot live together without rules but that these should be kept at the bare minimum of safety; that there is no form of government ordained from God as being better than any other; that the anarchic elements in society are so strong that it is a whole-time task to keep the peace. I believe that inequalities of wealth and position are inevitable and that it is therefore meaningless to discuss the advantages of their elimination; that men naturally arrange themselves in a system of classes; that such a system is necessary for any form of co-operative work, more particularly the work of keeping a nation together.²¹

The book ends on a similar note: "Barbarism is never finally defeated; given propitious circumstances, men and women who seem quite orderly will commit every conceivable atrocity. . . . We are all potential recruits for anarchy. Unremitting effort is required to keep men living together at peace. . . ."22

This political outlook, sombre enough before the war, took on added grimness after it. The philosophy expressed in Robbery Under Law was the summation of a general system of political and social values which, while threatened, was not yet in jeopardy. By 1945 and 1946, however, he saw the situation in more apocalyptic terms: the 'Modern World,' in politics, science and art, had become an all-pervasive menace, destroying everything that gave grace and richness to life. His non-fiction reflects this

outlook. In late 1946, while he was writing Scott-King's Modern Europe, his diary records a series of cris de coeur:

The certainty that England as a great power is done for, that the loss of possessions, the claim of the English proletariat to be a privileged race, sloth and envy, must produce increasing poverty; that this time the cutting down will start at the top until only a proletariat [sic] and a bureaucracy survive. As a bachelor I could contemplate all this in a detached manner, but it is no country in which to bring up children. But how long will Liberty, Diversity, Privacy survive anywhere?

The next day he considers the advantages of his lot and wonders at his apprehensions: "Why am I not at ease? Why is it I smell all the time wherever I turn the reek of the Displaced Persons' Camp?" Two weeks later his dislike of socialism erupts: "The French called the occupying German army 'the grey lice.' That is precisely how I regard the occupying army of English socialist government."²³

These are the private utterances of a man deeply alienated from his social and political environment. Their public echo in Waugh's post-war journalism, though less personal, is equally pessimistic. "We live," he wrote, in a critique of a 1946 blueprint for the future published by Horizon, "under a regime which not only discriminates against, but makes it an avowed purpose to exterminate the nobility, gentry, yeomanry, burgesses and vagabonds, and to produce the modern two-class State of officials and proletariat."²⁴ His grimness achieved its ultimate expression when, writing about "the much-advertised threats of the nuclear

scientists," he observed that he could see "nothing objectionable in the total destruction of the earth, provided it is done, as seems most likely, inadvertently," adding that, "If it is done in malice someone will have behaved culpably."²⁵ He finds disorder in unexpected places, situations where most people would consider it alien. Thus, for him, the growth of the state at the expense of the individual is not an indication of expanding order, but a sign of basic disorder.²⁶ The rock-ribbed conservatism of these utterances colours much of the writing, private and public, of his last twenty years.²⁷ He was, in the words of his editor, "profoundly critical of the twentieth century's most fundamental assumptions: that change implies progress, that widespread political activism is beneficial, that a stratified society is necessarily unjust, and that an institutional Church is incapable of providing serious religious experience."²⁸

When he defended positions and expressed views which ran counter to conventional wisdom Waugh was rarely being perverse or courting publicity; he believed deeply and tenaciously in the principles he advocated. ~~This~~ public stance was the expression of his conviction that it "should be the proper function of an intelligentsia to correct popular sentiments and give the call to order in times of hysteria."²⁹ He considered that he was living in a new Dark Age³⁰ which had lost its philosophical bearings, abandoned a sound view of man's nature and destiny, and adopted false and degraded values.

In class terms, he saw England as radically changed by the shift of the political centre of gravity to the Left during the War and by the election of the Attlee Labour government in 1945. The left-wing concept

of the 1939-1945 conflict as a 'People's War' and of the English upper classes as crypto-fascist and potentially traitorous was in his view profoundly wrong, threatening a social and cultural structure which he saw as the source of all that was most valuable and attractive in British life. He believed in the upper classes à l'outrance. They were, he wrote in a 1946 article

the sole finished product of what is thought to be English culture. They created the English landscape, figuratively and literally; the whole national ingenuity has been organized to supply their peculiar needs . . . they formed our speech, they directed our artists and architects . . . they created and preserved our conceptions of justice and honour and forbearance; all mention of the middle and lower classes might be expunged from our record and leave only trifling gaps.³¹

As an author, Waugh placed special emphasis on the aristocracy's function in relation to language. Reviewing a handbook for writers (he described it as "a call for order") he said that the aristocracy's particular service to literature was that "it maintained the delicate and unstable balance between the spoken and written word. Only a continuous tradition of gentle speech . . . can preserve the written tongue from death, and lifelong habitude to such speech alone schools a man to write his own tongue."³² The same note is sounded in his "Fan-Fare" piece, in Life, where he attributes the survival of the English language to "The combination of a highly civilized society, where it was spoken and given its authority and sanctity [sic], with a thin line of devotees who made

its refinement and adornment their life's work."³³

Waugh's interest in the gently born was the expression not only of principle but of preference. He was happiest, he said, "in the company of the European upper classes,"³⁴ and he defended himself against the charge of snobbery levelled at Brideshead Revisited by stating that he "reserve[d] the right to deal with the kind of people I know best."³⁵ Statements of this kind did much to create his reputation for snobbery. The popular conception of him was given increased currency by the class bias displayed in Brideshead, in both the sympathetic treatment of the Flyte family and the contempt displayed for the petty-bourgeois Hooper. The book, which made Waugh internationally known, appeared at a time when the mistrust of the upper classes (expressed, for instance, in the People's War concept) that had marked the British intelligentsia since the Thirties, was at its height. The attitudes and values which informed Waugh's most popular novel thus ran directly counter to prevailing opinion. He was aware of this, but both here and elsewhere he deliberately set out to defend a social and cultural order in which he believed against what he saw as an essentially barbarous attack. This confrontation recurs with varying explicitness throughout his post-war fiction, as well as in the 'political' journalism discussed above.

As well as being a matter of conviction and personal preference, Waugh's particular form of class consciousness owed something to the demands of his art. As a fictional subject, the aristocracy provided a more fertile field for the exercise of his special gifts than a less formally structured class would have. David Lodge testifies to this.

"Waugh's antilegalitarian attitudes", he writes, "often inaccurately described as snobbishness, undoubtedly derived in part from a conscious or instinctive sense that his own art depended for its effectiveness on the existence of a finely graduated class system and a delicately discriminated code of manners in which any disturbance or displacement was vividly expressive or often richly comic."³⁶ This finely tuned sense of behavioural distinctions, functioning over a broad field of social activity, is linked at bottom to a conception of order. Waugh saw the class system as an intricate web of mutually supportive relationships, of reciprocal rights and obligations, which generated internal harmony and social stability; it was for him a string that society untunes at its peril.

The parti pris of this attitude to religion, politics and the social system also extended to Waugh's views on art, particularly the art of writing. It is most obvious in relation to style, itself essentially an assertion of order. The bias was of long standing, dating back to the contrast between the disordered events of Decline and Fall and the controlled elegance of their presentation. Stylistically, Waugh always remained carefully detached from the anarchy he described; he refused "to pursue . . . the verbal imitation of a disorderly universe,"³⁷ and thus to augment the disorder. On the contrary, he saw it as the artist's task in "the disintegrated society of today . . . to create little independent systems of order of his own."³⁸ The dictum is reflected in his writing on art and related subjects. It animates the tribute to English domestic architecture which is the subject of "A Call to the Orders,"³⁹ an essay which echoes, a decade after, the anti-Silenus bias of his first novel.

Another twenty years later, this time with painting as his subject, he is calling for "a new Ruskin to assert 'some principles of art economy'.... Verisimilitude is not enough, but it is the prerequisite."⁴⁰

In his Life article, in "Literary Style in England and America," and in the interview he gave to The Paris Review,⁴¹ style and the use of language are principal themes. All three pieces were written after 1945 and all are linked to Waugh's new-found sense of vocation as a writer. The same concerns surface in a variety of other fictional and non-fictional contexts, so that in When the Going Was Good he can liken the writer shaping experience to a carpenter working with timber.⁴² In the same vein, the opening pages of The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold provide comments indicating 'the elegance and variety of contrivance' which mark the writing of Mr. Pinfold, and, by extension, of his creator. The craft of Lactantius, sent to Trèves as tutor to Helena's grandson, Crispus, is also that of Waugh: "He delighted in writing, in the joinery and embellishment of his sentences, in the consciousness of high rare virtue when every work has been used in its purest and most precise sense, in the kitten games of syntax and rhetoric."⁴³

A bias toward order and a love of language were not the only factors contributing to the studied ease of Waugh's writing. There was also his conviction that the elements of style "combine to form a preservative which ensures the nearest approximation to permanence in the fugitive art of letters."⁴⁴ As well, he had an instinctive tendency to distance himself from his work, to create from outside himself rather than from within, to favour the Apollonian approach over the Dionysian. In the manuscript of

A Little Learning he recorded: "I can only write unselfconsciously when I am trying to write formally, and lack the spirit to confide in a second self on paper. Not mine the unstudied effusion of private hopes and despairs. . . . I seek in writing to construct an extraneous object . . . to perform a literary task imposing its own firm conditions."⁴⁵ The statement is revealing. It suggests that, aware of it or not, Waugh was reluctant to deal with the disorder inherent in self-disclosure and preferred instead the psychological distance and more controlled conditions accompanying the creation of an externalized work. It has implications also for the mental breakdown he described in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold. The forces that assailed him during his derangement were, the evidence suggests, the product of internal tensions which, aside from this episode, are not reflected in his fiction.

From his early journalism to this late confessional work the appeal which order held for Waugh is unmistakably evident. While its manifestations varied with different occasions and material, in general, as this survey has indicated, the conviction behind the utterance intensified with age. In religion, art, politics, and social organization Waugh's primary commitment was always to the principle of order.

NOTES

¹The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Mark Amory (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 574.

²The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Methuen, 1983). (Referred to hereafter as Essays, Articles and Reviews.)

³Evelyn Waugh, A Little Learning (London: Chapman and Hall, 1964), p. 48.

⁴"The War and the Younger Generation," Spectator, 13 April 1929; rptd. in The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, p. 62.

⁵"Tolerance," John Bull, 2 April 1932; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 136.

⁶Daily Express, 15 July 1933; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 136.

⁷"Converted to Rome," Daily Express, 20 October 1933; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 104.

⁸The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Michael Davie (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 627.

⁹Ibid., p. 548.

¹⁰A Little Learning, p. 44.

¹¹His principal effort was a memorandum on "Church and State in Liberated Croatia," submitted to the Foreign Office in March 1945. He also wrote letters to The Times on the subject. (See Essays, Articles and Reviews, pp. 282-85.) The matter is analyzed at length by Christopher Sykes in Evelyn Waugh: A Biography (London: Collins, 1975), pp. 272-73.

¹²Evelyn Waugh, Sword of Honour (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. 547.

¹³"Fan-Fare," Life (Chicago), 8 April 1946, p. 56.

¹⁴"Changes in the Church: Questions for the Progressives," Catholic Herald (London), 7 August 1964; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 629.

¹⁵Spectator, 23 November 1962, pp. 602-609.

¹⁶Evening Standard, 13 February 1935; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, pp. 162-64. The concluding pages of Waugh in Abyssinia (1936) were even more pro-Italian. Waugh omitted them when he collected his pre-war travel writing in When the Going Was Good.

¹⁷Louis Aragon, ed., Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War (London: Left Review, 1937); rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 187.

¹⁸"Two Unquiet Lives," Tablet, 5 May 1951; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 394.

¹⁹For example, in "Present Discontents," his review of Connolly's Enemies of Promise, Tablet, 3 December 1938; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, pp. 238-41.

²⁰Evelyn Waugh, When the Going Was Good (London: Duckworth, 1946), Preface.

²¹Evelyn Waugh, Robbery Under Law: The Mexican Object-Lesson (London: Chapman and Hall, 1939), pp. 16-17. Cf. Richard Johnstone's comment: "'What emerges from [this] otherwise forgettable book is Waugh's abiding fear of social chaos. . . . The suppression of Catholicism is equivalent in Waugh's mind to 'the destruction of order.' The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 96."

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 278-79. Cf. "'We were not aware that civilization was a thin and precarious crust created by the personality and the will of a very few, and only maintained by rules and conventions skillfully put across and guilefully preserved.' John Maynard Keynes, 'My Early Beliefs,'

in Two Memoirs (New York: Augustus M. Kelly; London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 99.

²³Diaries, pp. 661-62, 662-663.

²⁴"Palinurus in Never-Never Land, or, the Horizon Blue-Print of Chaos," Tablet, 27 July 1946; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 312.

²⁵"I See Nothing But Boredom . . . Everywhere," Daily Mail, 28 December 1959; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 538.

²⁶See his preface to The Private Man by T. A. McInerney (New York, 1962); rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 579.

²⁷See, for instance, the review of George Orwell's Critical Essays, Tablet, 6 April 1946; "What to Do with the Upper Classes: A Modest Proposal," Town and Country, September, 1946; "Mr. Betjeman Despairs," Month, December, 1952; "The Voice of Tito," Month, April, 1953; "Aspirations of a Mugwump," Spectator, 2 October 1959; "An Act of Homage and Reparation to P. G. Wodehouse," Sunday Times, 16 July 1961. All these are reprinted in Essays, Articles and Reviews.

²⁸Donat Gallagher, in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. xxii.

29 "The Soldiers Speak," Night and Day, 29 July 1937; rptd. in Essays, Articles, and Reviews, p. 200.

30 "... the modern world is rapidly being made uninhabitable by the scientists and politicians. We are back in the age of Gregory, Augustine and Boniface." Foreword to Elected Silence by Thomas Merton, (London, 1949); rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 369."

31 "What to Do with the Upper Classes: A Modest Proposal," Town and Country, September 1946; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 313. Cf. "'Take away all that the working class has given to English Literature and that literature would scarcely suffer; take away all that the educated class has given, and English Literature would scarcely exist.' Virginia Woolf, The Leaning Tower, quoted by Carole Snee in "Working Class Literature or Proletarian Writing?," Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties, ed. Jon Clark et al. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), p. 165."

32 "The Writing of English," Tablet, 3 July 1943; rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 276.

33 Life, 8 April 1946, pp. 53-54.

34 Letters, p. 255.

³⁵Life, 8 April 1946, p. 60.

³⁶"The Arrogance of Evelyn Waugh," The Critic, 30 (May-June 1972), 64.

³⁷David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 5. Cf. Anthony Burgess: "... in Mr. Waugh style is a kind of morality," Encounter 23 (December 1964), 66.

³⁸Life, 8 April 1946, p. 60.

³⁹Evelyn Waugh, "A Call to the Orders", supplement to Country Life, 26 February 1939; rptd. in A Little Order, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), pp. 60-64.

⁴⁰"The Death of Painting," The Saturday Book: No 16, ed. John Hadfield (London, 1956); rptd. in A Little Order, p. 74.

⁴¹Life, 8 April 1946; "Literary Style in England and America," Books on Trial, October 1955, pp. 65-66; Julian Jebb, "The Art of Fiction XXX: Evelyn Waugh," The Paris Review, 30 (1963), pp. 73-85.

⁴²When the Going Was Good, p. 197.

⁴³Evelyn Waugh, Helena (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950), p. 120.

⁴⁴Evelyn Waugh, "Literary Style in England and America;" rptd. in Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 478.

⁴⁵Recorded by Jeffrey N. Heath in "A Note on the Waugh Diaries," Evelyn Waugh Newsletter, Vol. 7, iii (Winter 1973), 8.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND: TRADITION AND GENRE

Waugh's tendency to swim against the tide, both as a man and a writer, has left a somewhat exaggerated impression of his independence and isolation. Idiosyncratic though he was, he did not escape the influences of his time and place. The years in which he came to maturity and wrote his novels were a period in which his country could no longer feel the security and self-confidence of her Victorian-Edwardian zenith, years of social, political and economic change which profoundly altered Britain's power and influence. Looking at contemporary fiction against this background, Bernard Bergonzi points out that "many English writers, and some of the most talented among them, have exhibited the classic neurotic symptoms of withdrawal and disengagement, looking within themselves or back to a more secure period in their own lives or the history of their culture, making occasional guesses about a grim and apocalyptic future."¹

While the broad impact of this altered socio-cultural environment on the writers of Waugh's generation is understandable, the literary influences in his background are less easily recognized. One does not instinctively think of him as belonging to a tradition or representing a movement, but, nevertheless, he did not write in isolation. He shares in a literary inheritance, and one of the objects of the following pages is to suggest the development and character of this and to point out those of its practitioners, especially among his near-contemporaries, whose literary stances most resemble his.

To attempt to assign Waugh's novels to a particular narrative genre is difficult insofar as genre connotes a clear, well-defined literary grouping. With their socially stylized outlook, underlying religious conviction, and mingled elements of satire, comedy, and fantasy, Waugh's novels do not lend themselves to easy categorization. Nevertheless, the qualities that mark his fiction can be taken together as constituting a specifically identifiable kind of writing, one which derives its character from literary dandyism. The implications of this kind of writing for Waugh's comic satire, particularly as they relate to the theme of order, are the subject of this chapter.

I

The dandy tradition has no body of doctrine. It is not so much a matter of the passing on of accepted principles or techniques as of a common temperament, a shared attitude to experience reaching across the generations. Influenced, though not entirely determined, by historical factors, it flourishes in eras of cultural transition where values are in flux and social disciplines relaxed: the Restoration, the Regency, the late Victorian period, the years after the First World War. The identifying shared attitude is essentially focused on style, and thus the dandy, corresponding to the image the man in the street has always had of him, can be defined as someone whose primary concern is style, especially personal style. He was pinpointed at his primary level a hundred and fifty years ago by Carlyle as a "Clothes-wearing man, a man whose trade, office, and existence consists in the wearing of clothes."²

Considered as a social phenomenon, dandyism owes its modern significance to Beau Brummell and similar arbiters of fashion at the court of the Prince Regent toward the end of the Napoleonic wars. It was to them that the term 'dandy' was first generally applied. Self-regard was the guiding principle of these fashionable figures, arrogance and condescension their characteristic attitudes. "The Dandy, as Brummell made him," says Ellen Moers, "stands on an isolated pinnacle of self."³ Not only the dandy but all of Regency society operated on the basis of exclusion, of keeping out those who failed to meet its exacting standards. The principle was an integral part of the dandy's general tendency to isolate himself from and to set himself against anyone who did not qualify for membership in the 'exclusives.' A whole complex of shibboleths, codes, and behaviour patterns arose on this foundation of exclusivism, all reflecting the "insistence on order and ritual and discipline"⁴ which characterized the dandy attitude then and later.

It was the French who, in the decades following Brummell, gave dandyism a philosophical dimension, transferring it from the purely social sphere to one of existential seriousness, reflecting intellectual superiority and isolation. The process was initiated by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly in his Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell (1844), which argued that "the dandy's distinction, almost his responsibility, is his abhorrence of uniformity, mediocrity and vulgarity."⁵ The force of the language is noteworthy, suggesting that the dandy is not only marked by a distaste for vulgarity, but has a responsibility actively to oppose it. The attitude thus articulated was given increased emphasis by Baudelaire, who

incorporated into the tradition the idea of uncompromising rebellion against bourgeois materialism, and by J.-K. Huysmans, whose misanthropy and aesthetic isolationism took him and the dandy concept beyond Baudelaire even further towards negation.

The doctrines and example of Baudelaire and Huysmans affected the aesthetic formation of Oscar Wilde and his fin de siècle contemporaries, and it was through this channel that the continental tradition of literary and aesthetic dandyism, as distinct from the indigenous social variety, became established in England. Its influence can be observed in this century in the satire of Max Beerbohm and the fiction of H. H. Munro ('Saki') and Ronald Firbank. Waugh described Saki as standing "in succession between Wilde and Firbank in the extinct line of literary dandies,"⁶ and, given the nature of his own work, there is unconscious irony in his suggestion that the dandy tradition was extinct before he began writing. Notable similarities exist, for instance, between him and Saki: authorial coolness and lack of involvement with the fictional characters, social and political conservatism, suspicion of enthusiasm and idealism, an element of the cruel-macabre. Both are also very funny writers with highly developed comic styles.

There are similar important resemblances between Waugh and Firbank. Once again there is the immaculate narrative detachment, the upper-class focus, and the humour that springs from structure and situation. The qualities Waugh praises in his essay on Firbank are also his own. Firbank's later novels, he writes, "are almost wholly devoid of any attributions of cause to effect; there is the barest minimum of direct description; his

compositions are built up, intricately and with a balanced alternation of the wildest extravagance and the most austere economy, with conversational nuances." He describes the dialogue thus:

The talk goes on, delicate, chic, exquisitely humorous, and seemingly without point or plan. Then, quite gradually, the reader is aware that a casual reference on one page links up with some particular inflection of phrase on another until there emerges a plot; usually a plot so outrageous that he distrusts his own inferences.⁷

Waugh illustrates this by an episode from Firbank's The Flower Beneath the Foot, but he might equally well have cited the sequence leading to the death of the youthful Lord Tangent in Decline and Fall.

Acutely sensitive to social pressures and aesthetic influences, the dandy temperament easily tends to become marginalized, turning away from the mainstream where inimical forces are strongest. For the dandy, the everyday world of getting and spending, of bourgeois values and received opinions, is in varying degrees false, vulgar and corrupt — and uniformly disagreeable; he may even see it as being in the process of disintegration, of decline and fall. All these conditions urge him, since he does not believe the time can be redeemed, to seek a refuge where the hostile world is kept at bay and the values he cherishes are, if not respected, at least tolerated.

Flight is not the only strategy, however, in this marginalized situation; there is also repudiation. Since style is all-important for him, the dandy's response to a civilization in decline is the development of a personal style which is itself a criticism of the society he has renounced. Thus, Brian Wicker can argue that the ordinary conception of the dandy as "irresponsible" is false, and that, on the contrary, "his assertion of the value of a personal style is, in fact, a kind of moral responsibility; he cannot improve the civilization but he can repudiate its corrupt values by asserting a style that is observably superior to them."⁸ Wicker's statement elevates the dandy attitude to the level of moral principle, but it is not necessary to accept this projection in order to see that the dandy style has important social implications. It is the acting out of a protest against society and its values, a reaction with close links to the concept of order. From the perspective of this protest, the most notable trait of dandy writers is the way they keep their distance, avoiding contact, often even the contact of controversy, with the values they reject. They remain disengaged, refusing to take part in a struggle the nature and conduct of which they despise. The corollary of this detachment is an avoidance of emotion, a refusal to deal with matters that touch the feelings. Martin Green considers this fear of emotion characteristic of modern British humour, an attitude tending "to make deep feeling [seem] a form of stupidity [and] to encourage the British mind to a distrust and dislike of seriously emotional and seriously rebellious and seriously unhappy people."⁹ Green's diagnosis finds confirmation in the work of the dandy authors; one does not turn to Firkbank or Saki or

Beerbohm, or to Waugh before Brideshead Revisited, for serious emotion. Even Tony Last's unhappiness, genuine though it is, never becomes immediate and personal for the reader.

The qualities of style identified here are obviously useful weapons in the armoury of the satirist. The process by which folly and stupidity are ridiculed is heavily dependent on the element of prejudice, the refusal to be unbiased, that is inherent in satire, and the process acquires a keener, even if distorted, edge from the critic's emotional remoteness and his alienation from conventional values. As well, the dandy's characteristic elegance of expression itself contributes to the satiric process by its implicit repudiation of the surrounding ugliness.

The recherche quality in the writing is matched by the socially rarefied settings which these authors choose for their stories and by the bizarrely appropriate nomenclature they employ. Waugh has pointed out that Firbank's "raw material, allowing for the inevitable changes in fashion, is almost identical with Wilde's,"¹⁰ and he might well have coupled himself with Firbank in the comparison. The selection of meaningful proper names, in the manner of Restoration drama, is indicative of an element of playfulness in all three writers which nicely combines the socially apt with the ridiculous. The results are both comic and revealing: Wilde's Canon Chasuble and Miss Prism; Firbank's Parvula de Panzoust, Mrs. Shamefoot, Lady Listless, Winsome Brookes; Waugh's Lady Metroland, Lady Anchorage, Mr. Tendril, Miles Malpractice, Trimmer.

The social setting is only one aspect of a prevailing exclusiveness in Waugh's fiction. The background, values, assumptions, shared tastes

and common outlook of a class are all implied in his style. He writes for initiates, people who have received a similar educational and social formation and whose minds are stocked with the same furniture as his own. As Ian Littlewood points out, "The world revealed by his letters in the twenties and thirties is . . . an insider's world. It implies a shared landscape; and this is what the tone and humour of his books reflect. Their dedications are more than a conventional gesture; Waugh wrote for his friends."¹¹ In an essay on Ronald Knox, Waugh sketches the mental landscape to which Littlewood refers, that of the Oxbridge-educated Englishman of the early decades of the century, and points out with becoming understatement that "a great deal of common ground was taken for granted."¹²

All these qualities -- alienation, emotional distance, formal elegance, verbal precision, and social exclusiveness -- are, directly or indirectly, techniques for manipulating the writer's fictional world and of distancing it and him from everyday 'reality.' They are both a compensation at the level of form for emotional restraint at the level of content and a system for keeping the surrounding -- and threatening -- disorder at bay. For the dandy artist this is the heart of the matter: the nature of his style and the repudiation of the surrounding ugliness which it implies are the justification for his existence.

It has been the purpose of this argument to isolate and define a particular tradition and to suggest Waugh's place within it. Clearly, the line of literary dandies did not end with Firbank. Born thirteen years

before Saki's death and twenty-three before Firbank's, Waugh himself is a conspicuous part of the tradition, showing through his work the attitudes which have characterized social and literary dandyism in its various guises since the days of Brummell: sympathy with the aristocratic principle; opposition to vulgarity, the herd, and bourgeois values; exclusivism and its attendant withdrawal and isolation from contaminating influences. The attitudes are implicit in the tendency of Waugh's protagonists to be out of step and unhappy with the world, their instinct to seek places of refuge and semi-isolation: Paul Pennyfeather at Scone College; Tony Last, first at Hetton and then in the Guianese jungle; William Boot at Boot Magna; Sebastian Flyte in his Tunisian monastery; Dennis Barlow retreating from Hollywood to England; Guy Crouchback, beginning at the Castello Crouchback and ending at Broome; Scott-King's refusal to "fit a boy for the modern world." All of these have their roots in the quest for order and security, in a reaction against the threat posed by disorder and change.

More emphatically than any other critic, Martin Green has stressed the centrality of Waugh's dandyism. It is an important theme in his Children of the Sun, a book which expands the dandy concept to include almost the whole of avant-garde artistic activity in England during the years following the First World War. Green sees Waugh as "pre-eminent" because of "the historical testimony he bore in various of his books to the dandies' achievement, but above all because he was the man of the greatest intelligence and force to get involved in the dandy enterprise. It was in his life and work that the dandy idea achieved its greatest moral and

imaginative substance."¹³

II

Comedy has its roots in incongruity, in the refusal to fit of things that expectation says should do so. The artist seizes on the contrast between appearance and reality, between what ought to be and what is, the unexpected discrepancy between cause and effect, the out-of-place detail, the figure that clashes with its surroundings--and if he reacts with equanimity these result in comedy. When, however, his reaction goes beyond the mere recognition of comic contrast to involve his attitudes or convictions, the response acquires a harsher tone and issues in satire. This is the situation implied in Northrop Frye's statement that "satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience."¹⁴ Satire is thus not so much the product of a particular objective condition or combination of circumstances as of a particular attitude to these. It is "not a genre . . . but a literary procedure, not a kind of writing, but a way of writing."¹⁵

Frye's postulates apply in varying measure to nearly all Waugh's fiction. Since the dandy is by definition the possessor of values which constitute a critique of conventional values and attitudes, the implicit moral standard is part of Waugh's stock in trade as a serious dandy artist. The factor of fantasy is more idiosyncratic, product in large part of Waugh's individual comic gift. However, it also owes something to

the dandy's typical preoccupation with social and cultural contrasts and his sensitivity to human folly and pretentiousness. Writing of Swift's satirical pre-eminence, Alvin Kernan notes his acute awareness of "the vulgarity of life as it was ordinarily lived" and his ridicule of "schemes, plans, mechanical systems, modest proposals and arguments which express eighteenth-century optimism about man's ability scientifically to perfect himself and his world."¹⁶ A similar awareness of vulgarity and a similar ridicule of contemporary optimism mark Waugh's fiction.

The dandy temperament which colours Waugh's writing found its most typical expression in the satiric novel, the fictional form that established his reputation. The category is as old as the novel itself, traceable in a variety of metamorphoses from Fielding in the mid-eighteenth century, through Thomas Love Peacock in the nineteenth, to Norman Douglas in the early years of the twentieth, and from him to later fictional products reflecting ever-greater psychological complexity. As the century has passed, altered social and moral values and a physical milieu of unprecedented complexity have created a contemporary environment to which absurdist fiction and black humour appear an entirely appropriate response.

With Peacock, and on up to Douglas, the satiric novel is essentially a vehicle for ideas, a platform on which conflicting theories can be debated. The early novels of Aldous Huxley, bristling with discussion and intellectual fireworks, are very much a part of the genre. In the work of Firbank and Waugh, however, comic-satiric fiction assumes a different character. Ideas as such no longer dominate; indeed, they barely intrude

at all. Instead, the emphasis is on surfaces -- on farcical or fantastic behaviour and social absurdities, on a casual indifference to conventional values, on an arbitrary treatment of cause and effect and a bland disregard of equity. In an "externalist" novel¹⁷ like Firbank's Valmouth or Waugh's Decline and Fall, the comic spirit reigns, however perversely, and, on the surface at least, nothing is 'important.'

While the dandy tradition provides a background which tells us much about Waugh's writing, it does not explain his comedy, and the comedy cannot be ignored. As Malcolm Bradbury points out, "in fiction Waugh's vision is above all a comic vision."¹⁸ Edmund Wilson was even more emphatic when he spoke of "the wild effect of reckless improvisation" in Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies; of "the comic convention of which [Waugh] is becoming a master--the convention which makes it possible for him to combine the outrageous with the possible without offending our sense of truth"; of his having "made of audacity a literary technique."¹⁹ Such comments underline the fact that Waugh's comic sense is something spontaneous, a personal endowment which functions outside the boundaries of any literary category in which he can be placed or any tradition with which he may be associated. While it furnishes the element of fantasy his satire requires, it is not defined or delimited by satire.

In Waugh, the comic instinct is allied not only to fantasy but to anarchy, and when this anarchic impulse is coupled with the implicit moral standard that is also part of his endowment, they generate a moral

ambivalence which, though it dilutes the satire's critical force, correspondingly increases its comic value. In Decline and Fall, Vile Bodies, Scoop and Put Out More Flags, says Martin Green, "the heroes are men Waugh does not respect or approve of, men with whom he identifies that part of himself he officially repudiates."²⁰ Although this opposition of comedy and propriety is a source of ambiguity, it contributes a stimulating element of moral tension to Waugh's satire. Its effect, since comedy is inherently enjoyable, is to make virtue seem rather less admirable and vice rather less reprehensible. Conduct is partially displaced from the domain of morality to that of laughter.

Nevertheless, the critical perspective is ultimately the dominant element in the satire, and it is the presence of such a perspective that distinguishes Waugh from writers whose gifts are purely comic. If one compares him with, for example, P. G. Wodehouse, it is obvious that Waugh is much 'tougher,' concerned with the moral significance of behaviour and governed by a definite conception of civilization and culture. Wodehouse, by contrast, is indifferent to these concerns; in the words of Stephen Medcalf, he "has neither the irony nor the undercurrent of Angst which makes Evelyn Waugh a candidate for high seriousness."²¹ Despite his abounding sense of the comic, Waugh increasingly grappled with the mystery of things. Wodehouse, though he wrote brilliantly for more than seventy years, was oblivious to it. He remained, as Waugh observed, incorrigibly innocent: "For Mr. Wodehouse there has been no fall of Man; no 'aboriginal calamity'. His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden."²²

The element of the macabre is another quality that sets Waugh's comedy apart from that of less complex practitioners. Basil Seal's cannibalism and the events of The Loved One occur in a quite different universe from that of Bertie Wooster or Mr. Mulliner. Such grimness has obvious affinities with recent black comedy and absurdist fiction, writing that reflects an outlook in which man and his world are seen as increasingly meaningless, and in which bitter mirth is the only alternative to despair. As a Catholic, Waugh might not have defined the human condition in terms of such a dichotomy, but, nevertheless, the effect of his constitutional pessimism was to make his work "consonant with an entire tradition of apocalyptic writing . . . which has become one of the pre-eminent forms for dealing with the dehumanization of a disintegrating world."²³ As this suggests, Waugh's black strain is not uniquely his, even among the dandy writers of the first half of the century. A comparable impulse is discernible in Aldous Huxley, and, before him, in the work of Douglas, Beerbohm and Saki.

Like the other elements of his fiction, Waugh's comedy reflects the basically aristocratic stance of the dandy. The reflection is dependent not only on the social level of his characters and situations, but on the links he establishes with his audience, the way in which he and the reader share his humour. The distinction is outlined in a comparison by Martin Green of Waugh and Mark Twain as comic writers. Green's theme is the radical shift in comic sensibility which occurred in both England and America after the First World War. The movement was from a relatively simple and widely shared conception of humour, from the touch of nature

which unites all who feel it, "toward a kind of dandyism, of sophistication and alienation from average experience and social faith. It aimed to destroy naïveté in humor." The nature of the altered sensibility is suggested in the contrasting relations of Waugh and Twain with their audiences:

. . . though Waugh was, of course, an entertainer, a professional joke-maker as much as Twain was, Waugh's sensibility was not that of a vaudeville comedian. Most of Twain's jokes are made to be shared by a large audience [in] immediate contact with the entertainer and each other. . . . [Waugh's] jokes are shared by many readers and so act finally as uniters of his audience, but . . . they separate off individual readers from a mass audience. The individual is asked to . . . join the joke-maker in repudiation of the commonalty.²⁴

This kind of repudiation, by which Waugh and his reader are separated from the objects of his satire, is another instance of the need for distinctions which accompanies the dandy perspective. Dandyism exists by drawing lines: between what is and what is not 'done,' between those who belong and those who do not, between the artistically genuine and the artistically spurious, between civilization (us) and barbarism (them). Such a habitual process of demarcation -- making rules, establishing categories, separating the goats from the sheep, as Waugh's novels consistently do -- is a fundamental expression of the urge for order.

Speaking of the novels, Ian Littlewood remarks that "no stretch of ingenuity can translate these agile movements into the stuff of moral philosophy."²⁵ Perhaps not, but, despite the agile movements, product of

Waugh's long struggle against an oppressive reality, his underlying attitude is serious. This basic seriousness is combined with a striking comic talent, and both are filtered through a temperament which is in essence that of the dandy. The resultant satire is perhaps best seen not as a planned and sustained critical war against folly and stupidity, but as a series of brilliant guerilla actions in the same conflict.

NOTES

¹Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel (1970; rptd. London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 57.

²Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (1834; London: Chapman and Hall, 1901), p. 217.

³Ellen Moers, The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 17. The summary which follows is indebted to this work.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 264. Moers calls Barbey's book "the pivotal work upon which the history of the dandy tradition turns" (p. 256).

⁶Introduction to The Unbearable Bassington, London, 1947; rptd. in A Little Order, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 89.

⁷"Ronald Firbank," Life and Letters, March 1929; rptd. in The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 57-58, 58.

⁸"Waugh and the Narrator as Dandy," The Story-Shaped World: Fiction and Metaphysics, Some Variations on a Theme (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), p. 154.

⁹"British Comedy and the British Sense of Humour: Shaw, Waugh and Amis," Texas Quarterly, 4 (Autumn 1961), 220.

¹⁰"Ronald Firbank," Life and Letters (March 1929), 192. It is the quality of seriousness that differentiates Waugh's attitude from that of Wilde and Firbank. While, on the surface, the dandyism of all three is an expression of the order principle, that of these predecessors is a function of form only, while that of Waugh is a function of both form and content.

¹¹The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 7.

¹²"Monsignor Ronald Knox," Horizon, May 1948; rptd. in The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, pp. 350-351.

¹³Children of the Sun: A Narrative of "Decadence" in England After 1918 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), p. 174.

¹⁴Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 224.

¹⁵Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Some Reflections on Satire," Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 362.

¹⁶The Plot of Satire (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 56.

¹⁷The term is that of Robert Murray Davis. See his "The Shrinking Garden and New Exits: The Comic-Satiric Novel in the Twentieth Century," Kansas Quarterly, 1, iii (Summer, 1969), 6.

¹⁸"America and the Comic Vision," Evelyn Waugh and His World ed. David Pryce-Jones (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 172.

¹⁹"Never Apologize, Never Explain: The Art of Evelyn Waugh," Classics and Commercials (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1950), pp. 141, 142, 143.

²⁰"Meaning and Delight in Evelyn Waugh," Transatlantic Patterns: Cultural Comparisons of England with America (New York: Basic Book, Inc., 1977), p. 73.

²¹"The Innocence of P. G. Wodehouse," The Modern English Novel, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (London: Open Books Publishing, Ltd., 1976), p. 191.

²²"An Act of Homage and Reparation to P. G. Wodehouse," Sunday Times, 16 July 1961, p. 23.

²³Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh and His World, p. 173. See also D. J. Dooley, "Waugh and Black Humour," Evelyn/ Waugh Newsletter, 2, 11 (Autumn, 1968), 1-3.

²⁴Martin Green, "Mark Twain and Evelyn Waugh," Transatlantic Patterns, pp. 48-49, 52.

²⁵The Writings of Evelyn Waugh, p. 216.

CHAPTER THREE

COMIC AUDACITY: DECLINE AND FALL, VILE BODIES,BLACK MISCHIEF, SCOOP, PUT OUT MORE FLAGS

I

The opening scene of Waugh's first novel -- the annual dinner of the Bollinger Club, with its revellers issuing forth into the night, 'flown with insolence and wine' -- strikes a note of disorder which echoes through the five books that are the subject of this chapter. The investigation of this note and its reverberations will involve looking behind the people and events of the fiction to discover the pattern formed there by the notions of order and disorder.

The pattern is complicated by the fact that Waugh's attitude was ambivalent. While the place of order in his life and work grew steadily larger with the passage of time, and while he consistently deprecated the forces in society and the individual that threaten what he saw as man's tenuous hold on civilization, he never lost a Dionysian relish for outrageous behaviour. It is a feature of his outlook which his critics have remarked,¹ one reinforced by its affinity with his unfailing sense of the comic. Waugh's comedy and disorder nourish each other, and it is this symbiosis which permits the Bollinger dinner to expand into a spree of which destruction is the dominant note. These novels are thus not only a repudiation of disorder but at the same time a celebration of it.

Though the native anarchy of comedy tends to mask any implicit suggestion of order, the latter is nevertheless discernible beneath the

sparkling surface and the careful narrative detachment. As Ian Littlewood points out, "in most of [Waugh's] early fiction there is the skeleton of a serious novel which can be uncovered by the exercise of a little ingenuity. . . . The undertow of moral seriousness provides a crucial tension within the books but it does not dominate them. We are right to be more struck by the comedy."² It would be a mistake, therefore, to look for an overt moral and satirical purpose; these stories are first and foremost the product of a vigorous and highly critical imagination which instinctively grasps and exploits the comic possibilities of a fictional situation. At the same time they are stories which reveal misgivings about the loss of inherited values and the dissipation of a legacy of traditional dignity.

Together, the comic novels offer a sweeping view of the world Waugh knew in the Twenties and Thirties. Institutions, ideas, values and manners all come within his scope; all are shown as bearing the marks of decline and decadence and are impartially subjected to his comic ridicule. Awareness of the latent disorder in the human psyche and of civilization's vulnerability to the encroachments of barbarism was a fixed point in Waugh's view of the world, and it marks each of these books.³ Thus, though the emphasis on folly and disorder varies from novel to novel, the perspective from which they are viewed does not. The activities of the Ministry of Information in Put Out More Flags are treated more realistically than the administration of Llanabba Castle School in Decline and Fall, where the note of fantasy is dominant, but the same awareness of their essential ridiculousness governs both. A common atmosphere of mental

confusion, of mild but amiable lunacy, pervades both Doubting Hall and Boot Magna, though Colonel Blount and the Boot menage constitute quite different households.

The novels dealt with here are grouped under the rubric of 'comedy' to distinguish them from the later 'serious' novels in which religion emerges as a significant influence. However designated, they belong together, not only in tone but in basic theme, a theme which can be described as the dominance of misrule in human affairs and the inequity of human fortune that is its consequence. The first and longest section of the chapter examines this theme through the picture Waugh presents of a disordered English society in the years between the two World Wars. The disorder is surveyed first in the institutions of society, its structural foundations, then in the world of ideas and intellectual values, and finally in the realm of morality, private and public. The focus then shifts to the ways -- called here "echoes of tradition" -- in which the underlying principle of order makes itself felt despite the ubiquitousness of misrule. This is followed by a concluding section analyzing the fictional techniques through which order and disorder are mediated to the reader.

II

Nowhere is the disarray that characterizes Waugh's fictional universe more evident than in his depiction of the institutions that have historically functioned as major supports of the social system. The school, the

church, the law, the press, are all shown as farcically disordered in a world which is philosophically adrift. The first topic of the first novel is the capricious educational system that determines the alterations in Paul Pennyfeather's fortunes which are the subject of Decline and Fall. The confusion which reigned at Scone College also surrounds him at Llanabba Castle School, where expediency, improvisation, pretence and guile are guiding principles. Style rather than substance is Dr. Fagan's guide. As he explains to Paul, "'We schoolmasters must temper discretion with deceit.'"⁴ The signs of confusion are everywhere -- in Fagan's baroque pretentiousness, in the social shortcomings of his daughters,⁵ in the school's haphazard curriculum, and in its dubious staff: Paul, who has been sent down from Oxford; Prendergast, the ineffectual failed parson; the ne'er-do-well Grimes, confident that "'there's a blessed equity in the English social system that ensures a public-school man against starvation'" (DF, 37); and Philbrick, the protean school butler, wanted for "'False pretences and impersonation. . . . There's five charges against him in different parts of the country'" (DF, 133).

Surveying Prendergast's career, Alvin Kernan calls it a "little parable" which "serves . . . to demonstrate the disorderly effects in church, school and prison of loss of belief."⁶ Certainly, the established church shares in the endemic disorder of Decline and Fall. Where, as an ordained clergyman, he had sought security, Prendergast encountered the 'Doubts' that led him to resign his living and take up schoolmastering. He is later restored to the church, though not to faith, by the discovery, in "a series of articles by a popular bishop . . . that there is a species of

person called 'a modern churchman' who draws the full salary of a beneficed clergyman and need not commit himself to any religious belief" (DF, 167). However, he is as futile in this new calling as in his former ones, a futility which contributes to his tragi-comic end.

The arrest and conviction of Paul for white slavery is a brazen miscarriage of justice demonstrating the frailty of yet another pillar of society. Like his expulsion from Scone, the flimsy process of misdemeanor, trial and punishment is such as to make the law a joke, though it is all presented so blandly as to seem quite justifiable in the terms upon which the novel engages us. The inherent injustice is heightened by the casualness with which the episode is recounted. Nowhere is there any indication that the arbitrariness of which Paul is a victim represents a departure from any standard of justice or, indeed -- and this is the point -- that there is any standard. The destruction of Adam's manuscript by the philistine customs officers in Vile Bodies and the ready cooperation of the police with Lottie Crump to hush up the death of Flossie in the same novel reflect a similar capriciousness. Justice here is a will-o-the-wisp, metaphorically represented by the thirty-five thousand pounds owed to Adam by the "drunk Major". Despite Adam's pursuit the money always eludes him until, when he finally obtains it, it is worth only enough to buy "a couple of drinks and a newspaper."⁷

Politicians and officials appear in these novels as at best foolish and at worst corrupt. Sir Sampson Courteney, playing in the bath with a rubber toy, is steadfast in his avoidance of responsibility. Mr. Outrage, at first Leader of the Opposition and later Prime Minister, is lecherous

and childishly self-pitying. The Home Secretary, about to be married to Margot Beste-Chetwynde, connives at the legal deceit of Paul's 'death' and 'resurrection'. The same note of ridicule sounds in the treatment of the wartime Ministry of Information in Put Out More Flags. Bureaucratic confusion and rivalry are the setting for Bentley's farcical troubles with his departmental superiors over office decoration and for his dealings with the authors whose 'war work' he is supposed to coordinate. When Ambrose Silk, too, is caught up into the Ministry his duties in the religious department are represented as equally irrelevant to the war effort.

Waugh's eye for people and situations that foster social confusion made the world of journalism a natural target for him. In the comic novels the metropolitan press is personified in the newspaper barons, Lord Monomark and Lord Copper. The latter and his paper are central in Scoop, where, surrounded by terrified subordinates, he wields imperial power without restraint. When the action of Scoop shifts from London and Copper House to the Hotel Liberty in Jacksonburg, headquarters for the correspondents covering the civil war in Ishmaelia, disorder, confusion, mendacity and deceit are represented as the marks of journalistic practice. William Boot, like Paul Pennyfeather in his work for Margot's Latin-American enterprise, has many things to learn about the activity he is engaged in. The first, as a colleague tells him, is that "'news is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read.'"⁸ He also learns of "the classic scoops and hoaxes; of the confessions wrung from hysterical suspects; of the innuendo and intricate misrepresentations . . . that composed contemporary history . . ." (S, 79).

The consistent triumph of ineptitude and folly over order and good sense in these early novels is a victory which has its roots in misplaced priorities and muddled thinking. Behind the malaise afflicting contemporary institutions Waugh saw an antecedent disorder in the realm of ideas. Behind the confusion of Scone College and Llanabba Castle lies the kind of confused thinking that determines Sir Wilfrid Lucas-Dockery's administration of Blackstone Gaol. Lucas-Dockery is the counterpart in penology of Professor Silenus in the domain of art; both suffer from an atrophy of sensibility, a gross overdevelopment of the rational faculty at the expense of qualities needed to make them fully human. He represents an educational attitude more concerned with the theory of behaviour than its practice. ("I came to the conclusion many years ago that almost all crime is due to the repressed desire for aesthetic expression"--DF, 198). This perspective results in the decision that leads to Prendergast's death and in his refusal to grant Paul Pennyfeather's request for an extension of solitary confinement, a response which owes everything to preconception and nothing to the realities of Paul's situation.

Like Lucas-Dockery in Decline and Fall, Dame Porch and Miss Tin owe their place in Black Mischief to the satiric possibilities offered by their skewed priorities. A concern which in a well-ordered scheme of things would have a significant but minor place is with them an obsession. Representing the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, they arrive in Azania, a primitive country in dynastic turmoil, "to investigate [tribal] methods of hunting".⁹ Their muddled values give them a wildly twisted view of life, blinding them to cruelties far worse than those

affecting the animal kingdom, and leading to the ludicrous entries in Dame Porch's diary: "'Conditions of mules and dogs appalling, also children. . . . Fed doggies in market-place. Children tried to take food from doggies. Greedy little wretches. . . . Road to station blocked brown motor lorry. Natives living in it. Also two goats. Seemed well but cannot be healthy for them so near natives'" (BM, 160).

The rebuilding of King's Thursday, a central image of social disorder in Decline and Fall, is also a symbol of the prevailing intellectual confusion. The sensibility which initiates the change is Margot Beste-Chetwynde's ("I can't think of anything more bourgeois and awful than timbered Tudor architecture"--DF, 140), but the ideas expressed in it are those of its misanthropic architect: "'The problem of architecture,'" says Professor Silenus, "'is the problem of all art--the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form. . . . All ill comes from man. . . . Man is never beautiful; he is never happy except when he becomes the channel for the distribution of mechanical forces'" (DF, 142). This perverse diagnosis is given more eloquent expression in the parody of Hamlet's speech which follows it: "'What an immature, self-destructive, antiquated mischief is man! How obscure and gross his prancing and chattering on his little stage of evolution!'" (DF, 144). Such ideas not only fit neatly into the comic-ironic framework of the novel but, as a caricature of avant-garde architectural theory in the Twenties,¹⁰ they reach beyond it to the aesthetic doctrines of the period, and thus to the fundamental malaise Waugh is satirizing.

The anti-human bias that is Waugh's target is also reflected in the

materials Silenus chooses for the renovated mansion, a "creation of ferro-concrete and aluminium" (DF, 142). They are all mineral, metallic and synthetic, unrelated to human experience, craft or handiwork, and result in such decorative effects as a green-glass floor, a colonnade of black glass pillars, roofs and domes of glass and ferro-concrete and aluminium, india rubber fungi, and a tank of octopuses. The same mentality can be seen at work in the appointments of William Boot's London hotel-room in Scoop: "A psychologist, hired from Cambridge, had planned the decorations -- magenta and gamboge; colours which -- it had been demonstrated by experiments on poultry and mice -- conduce to a mood of dignified gaiety" (S, 47-48).

The movement of decline and fall also reaches into the social system. The class which by breeding and inheritance might be expected to provide leadership and strengthen the bonds of tradition is shown as strongly affected by the disorder and corruption which have invaded society's institutions. Noblesse no longer obliges, as the careers of the Marquess of Vanburgh and the Earl of Balcairn in Vile Bodies testify. These newspaper columnists live by recording tidbits of gossip, gleaned from informers and from each other. The shallowness of their lives and the meanness of their occupation are made clear when we first encounter them (VB, 51), and the contrast between what they are and what their fathers were is revealed in the rich catalogue of inherited titles -- redolent of past nobility, dignity, chivalry and valour -- by which they are introduced.

Balcairn and Vanburgh are not alone. Agatha Runcible, daughter of a peer, leads the Bright Young People through the pages of Vile Bodies in a series of giddy escapades which culminates in the freakish accident that causes her death. Notwithstanding her gallantry and charm, she lives recklessly and dies violently. Her recurrent nightmare in the nursing home after her accident is a central metaphor for the people and events of the novel:¹¹

'I thought we were all driving round and round in a motor race and none of us could stop, and there was an enormous audience composed entirely of gossip writers and gate crashers . . . all shouting at us at once to go faster, and car after car kept crashing until I was left all alone driving and driving . . . ' (VB, 186)

The lifestyle of Alistair and Sonia Trumpington, though less dramatic than that of Miss Runcible, displays the same epic indifference to order. They entertain in bed surrounded by a backgammon board, telephones, goblets of 'black velvet,' dogs ("'Oh God, he's made a mess again'"), and a variety of guests, not all of them invited. "Wherever they went they carried with them their own inalienable, inimitable disorder."¹²

It is chiefly the characters who establish this moral climate. It first becomes apparent in Decline and Fall, in the person of Margot Beste-Chetwynde, when, "like the first breath of spring in the Champs-Élysées". (DF, 89), she arrives for the Llanabba School sports day. She is beautiful, elegant, and very rich. One of the sources of her wealth is the chain of brothels she operates in South America, employing girls recruited

in England. The black lover who accompanies her at the school sports is one in a succession of lovers and husbands that includes the deceased Beste-Chetwynde (whom she is rumoured to have poisoned), Paul Pennyfeather, Lord Metroland, and Alistair Truington.

On the surface, Margot's life is completely ordered; everything in her surroundings functions with effortless smoothness. Nevertheless, she spreads disorder everywhere -- in the girls whom she sends to South America; in Paul, whom she picks up, uses and drops; in her precociously sophisticated son who, as his final conversation with Paul makes clear, is deeply unhappy.¹³ Despite her wealth, social position and impregnable self-assurance, she remains a symbol -- the most striking in Waugh's fiction -- of the abandonment of the Wall by its natural defenders.

The half-pathetic, wholly ridiculous behaviour of Adam Fenwick-Symes and Nina Blount seems a far cry from that of Margot Beste-Chetwynde, but it, too, is morally flawed, by inconstancy and deception. Impulse and expediency rule their lives, leading to grotesque events like Adam's 'sale' of Nina to Ginger Littlejohn for the money he needs to pay his overdue hotel bill at Lottie Crump's. Adam's subsequent impersonation of Ginger, now Nina's husband, during the Christmas visit to her father's home is, in effect, a surrender of identity and, as such, an abandonment of basic order. It is a willed extension of the false identity imposed on him at his first visit to Doubting Hall when Colonel Blount mistook him for a vacuum-cleaner salesman.

Sexual irregularity also contributes to the atmosphere of disorder surrounding the characters. It is indicated largely by indirection and

with masterly economy. All we need to know about the situation of Miles Malpractice and his relations with his parents is conveyed in a brief dialogue between his mother, Lady Throbbing, and her sister, Mrs. Blackwater:

'Why, look, there's Miles.'
 'Miles?'
 'Your son, darling. My nephew, you know.'
 'Miles. Do you know, Kitty, I believe it is. He never comes to see me now, the naughty boy.'
 'My dear, he looks terribly tapette.'
 'Darling, I know. It's a great grief to me. Only I try not to think about it too much--he had so little chance with poor Throbbing what he was.'
 'The sins of the fathers, Fanny . . .' (VB, 28)

Their conversation about Miles incidentally discloses the fact that his sister has been employed in one of Margot Metroland's South American brothels. The moral irregularity implied in this sisterly exchange is similarly obvious in the character of Mrs. Panrast, Balcairn's mother, sketched in the conversation between him and Vanburgh at Archie Schwert's party (VB, 51-52).

Basil Seal, the most consistently disruptive of Waugh's characters, is first encountered in Black Mischief, though the disorder which dominates the book is not primarily of his making. The situation is different, however, in Put Out More Flags. There, in an English setting, he is the principal agent of the confusion and casual injustice that are the focus of the novel's comedy.

Waugh's ambivalence toward comic anarchy disposed him to be less unsympathetic to Basil than an objective weighing of the latter's conduct

might indicate; the high assay of humour in the chronicle of Basil's misdeemeanors strongly suggests that he savoured Basil's mischief even as he recorded it.¹⁴ Effrontery and audacity are Basil's salient qualities, and in Put Out More Flags they are centered on his exploitation of the wartime billeting system and his activities in the security branch of the War Office. He sees the war "as the ne'er-do-well's opportunity" (PF, 152) and acts accordingly. Finding his sister saddled with the Connolly children, "as unprepossessing a family as could be found in the kingdom" (PF, 87), he capitalizes on their frightfulness by billeting them in turn in those neighboring homes most likely to be devastated by their presence and subsequently accepting a cash bribe to move them elsewhere.

He has a wider field for his unscrupulousness when he later becomes involved in counter-espionage work. There, he leaves a trail of disorder behind him as he plots to cast his Oxford contemporary and long-time acquaintance, the politically harmless Ambrose Silk, in the role of a collaborator with the enemy. It is typical of the fortune that accompanies Basil's effrontery that, for this monumental betrayal, he receives the thanks of the unsuspecting Ambrose for helping him to escape and for taking care of his vacated flat by moving into it.

The intimations of order are less broad in Put Out More Flags than in the other comic novels. In them, the events occur against societal backgrounds which form part of the novel's order-disorder pattern. These backgrounds--'Metroland' in Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies, Azania in Black Mischief, Ishmaelia in Scoop--suggest, by the very fact of their confusion and disorder, an implicit standard by which the events can be

measured. The background is thus organic in these books, providing a basic disproportion between the actual and the ideal which invites and receives ironic treatment. In Put Out More Flags, by contrast, the background confusion of wartime is not integral; it has not been chosen, as it has in Sword of Honour, for its contribution to the theme. Basil's trouble-making would have been just as effective in a peacetime setting. The disorder with which the novel deals is not social but individual. Despite the parts played in it by Ambrose Silk and by Angela and Cedric Lyne, the book is essentially a picaresque novel about the comic disorder surrounding the career of a ruthless opportunist.¹⁵

III

Depending as it does on the recognition of an unexpected contrast between the ideal and the actual, comedy belongs essentially to the realm of disorder. Moreover, because it functions at a level which the reader accepts--for the moment of recognition at least--as non-serious, its effect is to obscure any underlying implication of seriousness. This is the situation with the comic novels. Nevertheless, though humour predominates, the principle of order whose background presence is necessitated by the nature of comedy can still be detected. It is most obvious in occasional passages where traditional dignity and values resonate and in authorial interventions where the narrator's ironic detachment has momentarily relaxed and permitted the reader to discover directly rather than by implication the attitude that underlies the laughter.

The extended treatment of King's Thursday in Decline and Fall is a conspicuous echo of tradition. "The finest piece of domestic Tudor in England" (DF, 138), the house has remained unscathed and unchanged for four hundred years until it is acquired by Margot Beste-Chetwynde, one of Matthew Arnold's 'Barbarians' updated to the 1920s. Hers is a modern sensibility; "something clean and square" is what she demands when she decides King's Thursday should be rebuilt, and the result, as Waugh makes clear, is an ultra-modern monstrosity. This juxtaposition of what it formerly was with what it has become makes King's Thursday one of the most notable symbols in Waugh's fiction of the contrast between tradition and innovation and, behind them, of order and disorder.

The reception at Anchorage House, "last survivor of the noble town houses of London" (VB, 125), in Vile Bodies, also evokes inherited values. Once again a piece of traditional architecture provides the setting:

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. (VB, 126-127)

This gathering of the passing order takes place on the same night as another famous Waugh party, the one which the Bright Young People hold on the deck of a dirigible moored in a "degraded suburb" (VB, 122). This is the occasion on which Adam and Nina try to articulate their vague wish for something more permanent than the "rather bogus" party-going life they know, a wish which prompts a parenthetical intervention by the narrator that belongs beside the Anchorage House tribute:

(. . . masked parties, savage parties, Victorian 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 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 . . .) (VB, 123)

These two parties, with their emphatic images of order and disorder, are the focal point of Vile Bodies and a central metaphor for the contrast of values to be found in its background and, less prominently, in those of Decline and Fall and Put Out More Flags. The approving adjectives which describe the guests at Anchorage House and the implied disgust in the parenthetical 'parties' passage represent a radical departure from the narrator's customary detachment. The Anchorage House conversation between the Prime Minister, Father Rothschild, and Lord Metroland in which they discuss the younger generation, setting its apparent "wantonness" against

its "'almost fatal hunger for permanence'" (VB, 131-32), is at an even further remove from neutrality. Rothschild's speech is the nearest the comic novels come to articulating an explicit 'message,' and it is a message about the need for order.

While there is nothing as overt as this in the King's Thursday description, the option for order is unmistakably suggested in the careful choice of details to convey the character of the house before and after its reconstruction. As well, the contrast between its richly human past and its new sterility derives added effectiveness from the element of romance which accompanies the recall of its former dignity. The same effect is present in the description of Balcairn's suicide, where the squalidness of his end is underlined by the catalogue of the heroic and adventurous deaths of his ancestors, "at Acre and Agincourt and Killiecrankie, in Egypt and America . . . among the treetops of a submarine forest . . . under tropical suns . . . while many of them lay in marble tombs of extravagant design" (VB, 107).

IV

Romance is not the only resource Waugh draws on to suggest another world and scheme of values than the one which occupies the foreground of his early novels. Though their prevailing comic tone and impersonal narration do not call for richly figurative writing, the stories nevertheless generate, at the level of both content and form, images whose indirection and understatedness are admirably suited to Waugh's stylistic union of the

blatant and the bizarre.

The movement of the plot of Decline and Fall is an image of this kind. When the story opens Paul Pennyfeather is an inoffensive student at Oxford, reading for the church. He is, as he tells Peter Pastmaster, one of the world's static people (DF, 251). When it closes, after the grotesque events that are the story, he is in the same place doing the same thing. The circular nature of the sequence -- normality, fantasy, return to normality -- suggests the dreamlike quality of the book's contents, a disordered nightmare from which Paul returns not so much to a state of wakefulness as to his initial dormancy. This nightmare quality is linked to the capriciousness of Paul's fortunes, ironically emphasized in the two toasts to "'Fortune, a much maligned lady,'" one at the zenith of his career, moments before his arrest, and the other at its nadir, his 'death' in Fagan's nursing home. Another nightmare, the actual one of Agatha Runcible ("we were all driving round and round in a motor race and none of us could stop" -- VB, 186), has already been mentioned. Like the frenetic 'round' of parties that fills the lives of the Bright Young People, the circular imagery becomes a master metaphor for the hectic, directionless existence that is the subject of Vile Bodies. Even the 'drunk Major,' constantly appearing and disappearing with Adam Symes's winnings, contributes to this fundamental imagery.

The background of tribal barbarism on one side and the effort of Seth and Basil to modernize Azania on the other are a structural representation of the central disorder-order tension in Black Mischief. Waugh suggested as much when he wrote: "The plan of my book throughout was to keep the

darker aspects of barbarism continually and unobtrusively present, a black and mischievous background against which the civilized and semi-civilized characters performed their parts."¹⁶ A more obvious metaphor in the same novel is the recurrent appearance of the broken-down motor car which blocks the road to the Matodi railroad station. When first mentioned, it has been there for six months, while, at the end of the book, the natives still occupy it and the road is to be re-routed around them. The whole farcical muddle neatly captures the primal disorder which impedes any attempt to impose 'civilization' by fiat.

The garbled 'cablese' used by the Beast in its communications with William Boot is a particularly apt reflection of the confusion which dominates the newspaper world of Scoop. The book is "a novel about journalists," people whose occupation is centered on the use of words, and the words are disordered at the source. Verbal disorder, indeed, is the keynote of the Beast's role in Scoop, from the initial confusion between John and William Boot, when the paper's war correspondent is being chosen, to Uncle Theodore's involvement as guest of honour at the concluding testimonial dinner.

The argument of this chapter has stressed the importance of what lies between the lines of the comic novels, of the role played in them by things that are conspicuously absent. The reader's perception of this fundamental orientation is derived from evidence which, though indirect, is nevertheless persuasive. The principal mechanisms by which this

complex of values functioning beneath the surface is mediated are narrative attitude and diction. It is the combination of these that establishes the tone of each book.

Waugh's narrative stance throughout these books is one of almost complete non-involvement, of "studied neutrality towards actions and attitudes that, by ordinary decent standards, cry out to be judged."¹⁷ Themes are not stated; they must be inferred from the narrator's manipulation of events and behaviour, and particularly from the arbitrariness and casual injustice which characterize these. It is a blandly uninvolved, nil admirari stance which, more than anything else, is responsible for the 'audacious' quality of the comic novels, especially the first two. Such a narrative posture, coupled with the anarchic, Alice-in-Wonderland action, points unmistakably to the absence of order. The technique is clearly most effective when the situation is most outrageous: the Bollinger 'beano,' the deaths of Lord Tangent and Agatha Runcible, Prudence Courteney's fate, the Connolly children, Basil's betrayal of Ambrose.

The cool surface is not completely intact. The echoes of tradition mentioned earlier constitute breaks in the narrative detachment to permit the author to comment on the action. The passage in Decline and Fall contrasting "the shadow that has flitted about this narrative under the name of Paul Pennyfeather" with his real self, "the solid figure of an intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted young man" (DF, 145), is such an intervention. The sympathetic sketch in Put Out More Flags of the "benevolent, companionable people" on "Mrs. Sothill's Garden-Party-Only list" (PF, 121) is another. The loss of detachment is particularly noticeable

in the sudden access of wartime patriotism that mars the final pages of Put Out More Flags, where Alistair Trumpington, Peter Pastmaster and Basil Seal all boyishly join the same Commando unit, and where Basil steps completely out of character to tell Angela: "'There's really only one serious occupation for a chap now, that's killing Germans. I have an idea I shall rather enjoy it.'" (PF, 232-33).

The narrator's role both grows in prominence and changes in character over the course of the five novels. In Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies, the two books where the action is least constrained by considerations of truth to life, the narrator is relatively inconspicuous, and the stories are monopolized by Paul Pennyfeather's nightmare career and the surrealist escapades of the Bright Young People. Of all Waugh's stories, these are the farthest in form and spirit from the mainstream of the English novel. They are also the ones in which the spirit of disorder is most prominent. Audacity in content, authorial detachment, an effortless manipulation of dialogue and narration, and an unfailing lightness of touch--qualities that had marked the work of Ronald Firbank a decade or two earlier--are the hallmarks of their style. The emphasis changes, however, in the other three stories. Though the assured exploitation of fictional resources remains, fantasy and outrageousness are less conspicuous. There is the same deft handling of dialogue, as in the chatter at the British Legation in Debra Dowra when the mail from home is sorted and discussed, but it no longer advances the action in the way that it so obviously did in Vile Bodies. This lesser role for dialogue is accompanied by a corresponding increase in the importance of the narration; we are told much more

about the feelings and reactions of William Boot and Ambrose Silk than we were about those of Paul or Adam or Seth.

An adaptation of the cinematic technique of cutting rapidly from one scene to another is typical of Waugh's early narrative manner. The device is used effectively at the beginning of the third chapter of Black Mischief, when the reaction of Londoners to newspaper accounts of the battle of Ukaka is sketched in a series of dialogue comments, each only a few words or few lines long. It is particularly conspicuous in Vile Bodies, where the jerky, episodic presentation perfectly suggests the disorderly world Waugh is evoking. Thus, the sixteen pages of the opening chapter provide sixteen scenes of the Channel-crossing, and in the sixth chapter eleven separate incidents are used to create a composite picture of Lady Metroland's party for Mrs. Ape. The last few lines of Chapter Nine, describing Adam's loss of his job as Mr. Chatterbox of the Excess because Nina, writing the column during his absence, has inadvertently violated one of Lord Monomark's taboos, illustrate the practice:

'Bad tabulation there', said Lord Monomark next morning, when he saw the paragraph.

So Miles Malpractice became Mr. Chatterbox.

'Now we can't be married', said Nina (VB, 151)

To these elements of Waugh's narrative style -- audacity, detachment, manipulation of action and dialogue -- must be added his use of irony. The essential ambivalence of irony, its dependence for effect on two opposed

statements, one explicit and on the surface, the other implicit and beneath, makes it the natural technique to convey the latent element of criticism in the comedy. Like narrative attitude, the character of Waugh's irony or, more accurately, the balance between his satire and irony alters over the sequence of novels. Satire is more conspicuous in the first three, where fantasy predominates and where, accordingly, Waugh's 'militant attitude to experience' is conveyed by the contrast between the bizarre fictional events and the actuality that is their analogue. In Scoop and Put Out More Flags, however, with the shift towards more realistic settings and a more conventional narrative technique, it tends to be mediated more by a discernible opposition between what Waugh is saying and what he really means--in other words, by irony. This contrast underlines the point that Waugh's narrative detachment functions best as an ironic device when the people and events of the story are being treated as matter-of-fact and 'real,' and that, the more closely he approaches fantasy, the more ironic ambivalence gives place to the narrative directness of satire.

The diction of Waugh's narration is a major factor in fixing the tone of these novels. Moreover, it is, as we have noted, per se a manifestation of order, representing a heritage of verbal associations and a hierarchy of cultural values that he habitually invokes. As such, it offers a consistent contrast to the confused, value-free world it describes and embodies a standard by which that world is measured. It is, as

Martin Green says, a prose "sonorous, Latinate . . . elaborately balanced," and "the sensibility expressed in that prose (its love of elegance, formality, and all the traditional grandeurs) finds its acutest humorous expression in him."¹⁸ This 'traditional' quality is most significant in the set pieces of the early novels: the account of Paul Pennyfeather's anticipation of King's Thursday "'in the dreaming ancestral beauty of the English country'" (DF, 148); the sketch of Azanian history at the beginning of Black Mischief; and the outline of the political background of Ishmaelia in Scoop.

The dialogue is a natural partner for the rapid scene changes and 'cinematic' intercutting mentioned earlier. It springs organically from Waugh's habit of placing people in situations where they can interact. The interior lives of his characters, their individual angst and introspection, are not of primary concern; it is social stimuli that animate them and propel the action. "I have no technical psychological interest," he told Julian Jebb. "It is drama, speech and events that interest me."¹⁹

At its most characteristic, the dialogue is the jargon of a coterie, the denizens of fashionable upper-class London in the Twenties and Thirties. Cool and clipped, this language is the Basic English of Adam and Nina in Vile Bodies. Its ultimate expression is the two staccato telephone conversations between them which, except for nine words of narration, make up the whole of Chapter Eleven. Casualness and understatement are the essential features of this esoteric communication. Thus, Nina says to Adam: "'I am glad about our getting married,'" and his reply could be their motto: "'So am I. But don't let's get intense about it'" (VB,

44-45). The all-important casualness is reflected in the frequency of polite double negatives ("I don't at all see why I shouldn't do that, do you? . . . or do you?"--55); of the indefinite-question formula ("Anyway, we aren't engaged anymore, are we--or are we?"--55); and of almost inextricable syntactical tangles of affirmation and negation ("Let's go to the tent and have another drink--don't you think, or don't you?"--168). These locutions emphasize both the vagueness and fluidity of the question--its lack of clarity and order--and the speaker's refusal to be 'intense' about it. Their effect, suggesting both a lack of commitment to any rhetorical position and indifference to whatever answer may be forthcoming, is to attenuate the speaker's attitude and cause the whole speech process to approach evanescence. The attitude thus reflected is a dandyish one, mediating carelessness and disorder through highly stylized talk. Coterie speech, designed to reject pretension ('bogus') and to avoid any expression of serious emotion ('shy-making'), is the characteristic communication of the brave new world of 'Metroland.'

The conversations between Lady Throbbing and Mrs. Blackwater scattered through Vile Bodies are models of Waugh's ability to achieve maximum effect with the strictest economy of means. Understatement and innuendo speak volumes about the fashionable world these elderly sisters have known all their lives, and the thread of suppressed hostility which runs through their talk is, despite Waugh's disavowal of an interest in psychology, acutely perceptive.

Echoes of the speech patterns and vocabulary of Vile Bodies can still be heard in Black Mischief (at the British Legation in Debra Dowa and at

the London flat of the Trumpingtons) and in those of the Bright Young People who have survived into Put Out More Flags, but they are no longer dominant. However, there is also, as has been noted, a larger role for narration, reflecting a more conventional novelistic format. Here again, in the use of language, one can observe the pattern of development that was observed in narrative attitude and in the balance of satire and irony: a movement over the progression of the five novels from audacity, fantasy, and disorder towards greater regularity, realism and order.

In his 1958 study of Waugh, F. J. Stopp commented on a point that any consideration of Waugh's style must recognize. He said: "The freshness with which it all comes over to the reader after a generation has elapsed is a tribute to the author's power of registering, heightening and speeding up the contemporary scene so that there is none of the slight yellowing of the pages which marks the period piece."²⁰ Another generation has passed since Stopp wrote, but the freshness remains almost undiminished. The reason for this refusal to 'date' throws light on Waugh's endowment as a novelist. David Lodge suggests it is partly because of "wit and economy" in the handling of details and partly because the details are "made to serve a larger literary meaning."²¹ This is true as far as it goes, but it fails to get to the heart of why, after the passage of sixty years, Waugh's early novels still retain their 'contemporary' quality. The answer would seem to be that the quality is a function of his preternaturally acute, almost flawless, observation of details which reflect the

latest manifestation, the furthest probe, of socio-cultural change. The architectural and decorative arrangements involved in the reconstruction of King's Thursday have already been discussed; but almost every detail of Margot Beste-Chetwynde's physical and social environment and of the whole London milieu sketched in the comic novels manages to suggest this same avant-garde quality. In their conception, in their reflection of the rootless contemporary culture of which such phenomena are the product, in their felicitous choice of names for the new things, Waugh's circa-1930 descriptions can be transferred to a 1980s context with only minimal anachronism. They are another manifestation of the ordering mind at work, of the need to make distinctions which is so much a part of the dandy perspective.

Taken together, the comic novels constitute a panorama of misrule in the world Waugh knew in the decade and a half before the Second World War. The consistent surface emphasis on disorder is offset by the rare departures from narrative neutrality to invoke traditional values and, even more, by the subliminal option for order revealed through the fictional techniques considered in the preceding pages. It is this implicit advocacy of values which are conspicuous by their absence that entitles these five novels, despite their comic emphasis and admixture of fantasy, to be considered as part of the overall commitment to order which characterizes Waugh's fiction.

NOTES

¹See, for example, pp. 38-39, *supra*. Cf. also Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), pp. 63-65.

²The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 5-6.

³See Chap. I, *supra*, notes 21 and 22.

⁴Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928; reset 1962), p. 33. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁵Fagan says his wife belonged to "the lower orders" (DF, 97). We are not told what became of her. The single-parent, and to that extent disordered, family is typical of Waugh.

⁶"Running in Circles: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh," The Plot of Satire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 157.

⁷Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies (London: Chapman and Hall, 1930; reset 1965), p. 219. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁸Evelyn Waugh, Scoop (London: Chapman and Hall, 1938; reset 1964), p. 79. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁹Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief (London: Chapman and Hall, 1932; reset 1962), p. 132. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

¹⁰The theory is readily identifiable. See, for instance, William J. R. Curtis, Modern Architecture since 1910 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), esp. Chap. 5 ("Responses to Mechanization: the Deutscher Werkbund and Futurism") and Chap. 8 ("Walter Gropius, German Expressionism, and the Bauhaus"). Citing an Italian Futurist 'Manifesto' of 1914, Curtis says: "Not surprisingly, this theoretical architecture was conceived as a direct expression of contemporary forces, and a dynamic celebration of the uprooted, anti-natural tendencies of the modern city" (p. 72). A passage from the Manifesto will indicate how close it is in spirit to the musings of Professor Silenus: "We must invent and rebuild ex novo our Modern City like an immense and tumultuous shipyard, active, mobile and everywhere dynamic, and the modern building like a gigantic machine. . . . The house of cement, iron and glass, without curved or painted ornament . . . extraordinarily brutish in its mechanical simplicity . . ." (p. 73).

¹¹"The sequence becomes the novel in miniature and a symbolic condensation of nearly everything unfavorable that Waugh wishes to say about his generation.'" Jerome Meckler, "Evelyn Waugh: Satire and Symbol," Georgia Review, 27, ii (1973), 170.

¹²Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags (London: Chapman and Hall, 1942; rptd. 1959), p. 41. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

¹³The precociousness which marks Peter Pastmaster here (DF, 249-52) seems to have been forgotten when he appears twelve years later in Put Out More Flags, where (for instance, in his relations with Molly Meadows) he is as innocent as a Boy Scout.

¹⁴Eric Newby says that Basil Seal is "'what Waugh might have been if his parents had been better off.'" "Lush Places," in Evelyn Waugh and His World, ed. Alan Pryce-Jones (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973) p. 66."

¹⁵Basil's presence lends some of the same quality to Black Mischief. An element of the picaresque can also be observed in the other comic novels: in Paul Pennyfeather's adventures and in the impecunious existence of Adam Symes.

¹⁶Letters, p. 77.

¹⁷Brian Wicker, "Waugh and the Narrator as Dandy," The Story-Shaped World (London: Athlone Press, 1975), pp. 155-56.

¹⁸"British Comedy in this Century," Transatlantic Patterns (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), p. 68.

¹⁹Julian Jebb, "The Art of Fiction XXX: Evelyn Waugh," Paris Review, No. 30 (1963), 79.

²⁰Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 74.

²¹Evelyn Waugh (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN SEARCH OF THE CITY: A HANDFUL OF DUST,BRIDESHEAD REVISITED, HELENA

I.

In his preface to the 1960 edition of Brideshead Revisited, Waugh, noting that the book had lost him such esteem as he once enjoyed among his contemporaries, declared that its theme was "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters." This was something new for him; the Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder are a far cry from the effrontery of Margot Beste-Chetwynde and Basil Seal. It represents the appearance in his fiction of a philosophy which had not been present in the comic novels; which in fact had hardly been hinted at there, though a foundation for it existed in their attitude to order and disorder. The philosophy--that man is "God's creature with a defined purpose"¹--does not animate Brideshead Revisited only; it is equally at the centre of Helena and of the three volumes that make up Sword of Honour.

The new thematic emphasis referred to in the Brideshead preface, and affirmed earlier in Waugh's "Fan-fare" article for Life, was also commented on by the critics. Malcolm Bradbury describes the change thus: "In the early novels [Waugh] offers an unredeemable and anarchic universe with no secure centres of value. . . . As he develops, [his] methods gradually change. His prejudices, sympathies, social and religious values tend to be more actively engaged. . . ." ² Martin Green sees it as a shift

from comedy in which Waugh "delights in the people and events he is presenting," to serious novels "in which he asks you to take an interest in his people and events for quite other reasons. . . . From this point of view . . . A Handful of Dust, Brideshead Revisited, and the post-war military novels may all be grouped together."³

As Green suggests, A Handful of Dust was the first novel to reveal the seriousness which was stirring in Waugh even as the comic fiction continued to appear. The theme which gives it this new dimension is not a positively religious one, such as the operation of divine grace, but, rather, that of a philosophy of life which is tried and found wanting. Waugh described it as a book about "a Gothic man in the hands of savages,"⁴ a highly civilized Gothic man, who, in the last analysis, has only his civility to fall back on. A Handful of Dust is a novel about the failures of humanism. Bernard Bergonzi notes the coexistence in it of farce with "an intense pathos that would be tragic if the characters had a sufficient degree of humanity to support tragedy", and adds: "In presenting their inability to do so, Waugh is, I think, making a searching though wholly implicit moral comment on the empty world of the Lasts and the Beavers."⁵

One reason why A Handful of Dust is able to support this new attitude is that, despite the Gothic quality of Tony Last's fate, the book is basically realistic rather than fantastic. For the first time, Waugh admitted, he was "trying to deal with normal people instead of eccentrics."⁶ Real things happen to real people, and the results involve the reader. The altered emphasis is also reflected in the nature of the

book's comedy. Comic disorder still plays an important role but is no longer dominant; it is more muted, leaning to irony rather than to farce. The grotesqueries of the three earlier novels would be out of keeping with this new seriousness. A Handful of Dust's central incident, the death of John Andrew, has no emotional parallel in these novels, and such an event, with all that leads up to and issues from it, demands an aesthetically subdued treatment of the comic eccentricities of "Polly and Daisy and Angela and all the gang of gossips"⁷ who are the focus of the book's comedy.

The story sets the order of Tony Last's life against the disorder of Brenda's, his loyalty against her infidelity, his devotion to tradition against her fondness for modish innovation. Hetton Abbey has been the home of Tony's family for generations, but his devotion to it is more than merely familial: "There was not a glazed brick or encaustic tile that was not dear to Tony's heart" (HD, 17). For him, the house embodies a life-long ideal of order and civility, and when this is shattered by his son's death and his wife's unfaithfulness his spirit turns for the substitute it requires to the lost City of Dr. Messinger's speculation. The essentially romantic character of Tony's dream of order is suggested at the outset when Waugh titles his second chapter "English Gothic". This mediaeval image is reinforced in a variety of ways as the story progresses; by the bedrooms of Hetton, "each with a frieze of Gothic text" (HD, 18) and a name from Arthurian legend; by the phrase ("A whole Gothic world had come to grief"--HD, 173) describing Tony's state when he finally realizes the completeness of Brenda's indifference; by the City he conjures up in his

mind from Messinger's description ("It was Gothic in ~~character~~, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and terraces, a transfigured Hetton"--HD, 184); by the Gothic palace he sees in his fever as he stumbles upon Todd's clearing.

Tony's feeling for Hetton extends to the people who work there. He speaks to Brenda of his duty toward his employees and the estate, seeing them as part of the country's social fabric. In the same way, his religion is an extension of his sense of his role as a hereditary landowner. It involves no spiritual sensitivity or transcendental awareness, offering instead merely a reassuring sense of the rightness of his presence in the parish church each Sunday morning, where he occupies the family pew installed by his great-grandfather and where the organist regularly awaits his arrival before starting the opening hymn. The familiar ritual is a comfort to Tony, but the comfort is social, not spiritual.

Contrasting with this pattern of established social routine is the growing disorder of Brenda Last's life. However distantly, she is related to the Bright Young People of Vile Bodies and, bored by Hetton, can slip without compunction into a sordid affair with John Beaver. She has no concern about the consequences of her infidelity and no illusions about the character of her lover: "'He's second-rate and a snob and I should think as cold as a fish, but I happen to have a fancy for him, that's all . . .'" (HD, 59). Beaver's unpleasantness matches that of his odious mother, one of the metropolitan savages by whom Tony is besieged. She wants to refinish the morning room at Hetton "'with white chromium plating and . . . natural sheepskin carpet'" (HD, 91), a proposal recalling the

décor of the renovated King's Thursday in Decline and Fall (degraded architecture and design are always a sign of disorder for Waugh). The City of Tony's dream and the urban wasteland to which Mrs. Beaver's shabby transactions and vulgar designs contribute are diametrically opposed, and in the world Waugh holds up for inspection she is the victor. Tony admits defeat when in his final delirium he declares: "'There is no City. Mrs. Beaver has covered it with chromium plating and converted it into flats'" (HD, 238).

John Andrew's death is the climactic event of the story, precipitating the collapse of Tony's unstable universe as Brenda decides to leave him and marry Beaver. His make-believe world is overrun by the forces of destruction:

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 circumstance in which he found himself, no new, mad thing brought to his notice, could add a jot to the all-encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears. (HD, 158)

The chaos is not yet complete, however. There remains the ugliness of the proposed divorce settlement and the realization of Brenda's part in it, and it is these revelations which finally overcome Tony's "habit of loving and trusting Brenda" and his confidence that "'[her] word is quite good enough'" (HD, 144, 148). The order in which he has trusted, the verities

in which he has placed his faith, have failed him: "there was now no armour glittering through the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the green sward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled . . ." (HD, 173-74).

Such material is clearly not the stuff of comedy, but it is nevertheless combined with elements of content and narrative tone that make A Handful of Dust a notably comic novel. The distinction between the book's serious and lighter elements is primarily a function of the author's attitude to the characters. Tony and Brenda, on whom the tension between order and disorder is centred and around whom the story turns, are treated seriously throughout, and, even when the narration is ironic, as it is about Tony's blind faith in Brenda, the tone remains sympathetic. John Andrew -- the only child, incidentally, with a major role in a Waugh novel -- is also presented with complete gravity, whereas the role of Winnie, in the Brighton divorce episode, is unrelievedly comic. It is the minor characters who provide the humour.

The warmth that can be detected beneath the irony about Tony is no accident. Notwithstanding the amusement with which his naiveté is habitually treated, the narrative is obviously sympathetic to the values Tony represents. However, the development of the story leaves no question about his vulnerability. Like Paul Pennyfeather with Margot Beste-Chetwynde, he is a lamb among wolves in the world of Brenda's friends. The Gothic man falls victim to the surrounding confusion even as the narrative tone clearly suggests that he deserves a better fate. While there is no comparable tenderness toward Brenda, the primary agent of the disorder, she is, nevertheless, not presented as completely despicable.

Her own selfishness and wilfulness bring her to the point where she is abandoned by Beaver and neglected by her friends but, even then, she evokes the narrator's lingering sympathy; the attitude can be seen in such details as her treatment of Beaver and the suggestion of gallantry which marks her attempt to get money from Tony's solicitor. She is an illustration of Waugh's ambiguous attitude to charming troublemakers, the one which prevents Paul Pennyfeather in prison from blaming Margot who has put him there, and which can earn for the scapegrace Basil Seal the admiring tribute: "'My word, he is a corker'" (BM, 75). Brenda is still another of those "graced with just the qualities of style that have fired Waugh's imagination since the first vision of Margot Beste-Chetwynde stepping from her Hispano-Suiza."⁸

While the comedy of A Handful of Dust is largely of a piece with that of Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies, deriving from the outré behaviour of a special segment of London society, it also emerges in the treatment of minor characters from a variety of backgrounds: Reggie St Cloud, Ben Hackett, Mr Tendril, the Beavers. The latter are comic in their meanness, and even Dr Messinger is slightly absurd. However, it is Brenda's London acquaintances who are the focus of the novel's humour. They are the brittle and sophisticated savages who surround Tony, consistently funny as they are revealed in ironic narrative and perfectly nuanced dialogue. The characteristic note is struck early, in the first appearance of Polly Cockpurse, when, shouting across a crowded restaurant, she invites Brenda and Marjorie to "'a very small secret party . . . just old friends,'" and in Marjorie's biting comment: "'It would be wonderful to see what Polly's

real old friends were like. . . . She hasn't known anyone more than five years'" (HD, 47). The gossip among Brenda, Polly, Veronica, Daisy and Mrs. Beaver about Brenda's affair with Beaver and their discussion of what to do with the Hetton morning room ("'Everything's horrible. It's so dark.'"--HD, 91) reveals them at their worst. The self-centredness of these fashionable women and their obliviousness to Tony's rights and feelings are so outrageous in terms of human relations and so flawlessly presented that they temporarily transcend offensiveness to enter the world of comedy.

The behaviour that gives rise to this humour also contributes to the picture Waugh is painting of a contemporary wasteland; there is ugliness beneath the surface glitter. The wilderness Tony inhabits at home is no less menacing and its inhabitants no less dangerous than those he encounters later in South America, and the disorder which gathers around him at Hetton matches the progressive deterioration of Messinger's expedition after it leaves Georgetown. His physical isolation in the jungle, surrounded by savages for whom his life has no importance, is the mirror-image of his spiritual isolation in England among other savages equally indifferent. The hallucinations that accompany his fever are both clinically real and the symbolic climax of the derangement that began with Brenda's admission to Beaver that she detested Hetton.

The tone of A Handful of Dust alters sharply after Tony's departure from England. The audacious comedy, the coterie dialogue, the narrative lightness, which up to this point have given the book its strong kinship to the other comic novels, are replaced by a subdued text in which the

narration, grim rather than ironic, largely takes over the role filled earlier by dialogue. This altered style reflects a major change in the novel's structure. In London and at Hetton, the story develops in a setting that is almost entirely social as Tony and Brenda interact with each other and with a circle of friends and acquaintances. Conversation is the primary technique used to define these social relationships, and the breakdown of the Lasts' marriage takes place to a steady accompaniment of talk. This is the instrument on which, as we have noted, Waugh typically relies to advance the movement of the plot in his comedies. Tony's isolation in the final chapters of A Handful of Dust is, thus, a radical departure from the 'Metroland' milieu. Nowhere else, except in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, is a Waugh protagonist so much alone. Save for his exchanges at the end with Todd, which hardly qualify as conversation, and his shipboard talk with Thérèse de Vittré, he is given little to say. During the expedition, some of Messinger's speech is recorded but none of Tony's. In fact, "Tony and Dr Messinger seldom spoke to one another" (HD, 208). This experience, by which Tony is effectively silenced and deprived of human contact, is a primitive parallel of the isolation that was his lot among Brenda and her circle. The menacing jungle and the absence of any meaningful bond with his fellow creatures become a metaphor for the emptiness of the romantic dream that has been Tony's faith.

These chapters are rich in irony, but it is a structural irony, which, unlike that of the earlier chapters, owes little to narrative attitude. Here, it is Tony's ultimate situation itself which makes the ambivalent statement. On the surface, the situation is one of perfect

order, an obvious contrast with the confusion which he has left behind and which, as the intercutting between jungle and London shows, still marks Brenda's life. However, his fate as Todd's captive makes the surface order a mockery, so that the conclusion of the book becomes a total ironic statement as well as a notable instance of Waugh's black humour.

Such humour is not of a kind to lighten the darkness of the plot. Its blackness is rooted not only in the contrast between order and disorder, but in the grotesque nature of Tony's captivity, in the contrast, at once shocking and ludicrous, between his daily life and its meaning. The reading of Dickens is the outward sign of an interior horror. On one hand, there is the reality of a lifetime alone with the monomaniacal Todd in the little jungle clearing ("three miles or so across, bounded on all sides by forest" -- HD, 235), a prospect made still more bitter by the knowledge that, thanks to Todd's guile, the world believes him dead. On the other, there is Dickens. "'Do you believe in God?'" Todd asks, and Tony does not know how to answer; he has believed in Hetton and in the City, and both are beyond his reach. "'Dickens did,'" Todd assures him. "'It is apparent in all his books'" (HD, 240). And this is what Tony is forced to read about -- about liberty and friendship and kindness and faith in human nature.

There is a grim poetic justice here, for the values Tony must now mouth at the behest of his captor are those in which he had trusted earlier and which were not enough to sustain him when the debacle occurred. Todd's bland, irrational, indifferent cruelty is beyond the scope of Tony's value system, just as is the cruelty of the accident that

takes John Andrew's life. Both are existential calamities, random disorders unrelated to anything in Tony's character or actions, which sweep away the props he has relied on and can only be made tolerable within an order that transcends the purely humanist. Tony's philosophy has not armed him against such shocks. His admirable modesty, loyalty, kindness, and basic decency rest on nothing more substantial than a romantic devotion to tradition, a wishful belief that the ideal will prevail over the real. His devotion to Hetton is succeeded by his obsession with the lost City of Menninger's narrative, and both fail him. At home and abroad, the City he believes in proves not to be a lasting one.

The working out of this confrontation between the order exemplified in the humanist tradition and the disorder of radical evil and suffering is the basis for Waugh's statement that A Handful of Dust "contained all [he] had to say about humanism."⁹ It is also the achievement which gives A Handful of Dust its special place among the comic novels and which looks forward to Brideshead Revisited, Helena, and Unconditional Surrender.

II

The essence distilled by A Handful of Dust--that we have no lasting city here--is announced explicitly in the epigraph Waugh attached to the manuscript version of Brideshead Revisited: non hinc habemus manentem civitatem.¹⁰ The quotation (from Hebrews, xiii.14) suggests at the outset the transcendental dimension which the book is intended to have, the idea that the values it ultimately invokes are more than secular. But the

novel is not only about spiritual values; it is also about the remembrance of things past. "My theme is memory,"¹¹ says Charles Ryder, and the story he tells, written in a time of "privation and threatening disaster . . . is infused with a kind of gluttony . . . for the splendours of the recent past" (author's preface).

Brideshead Revisited is really two stories, a fact reflected in Waugh's original division of it into two Books (rather than the three of the 1960 edition). In the first, with its revealing title,¹² the recollection of past splendours is paramount, and the narrative is suffused with memories of youth and sunshine. It is only in the dénouement, "A Twitch Upon the Thread," that the religious theme announced in the 1960 preface -- "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters" -- becomes the focus of the novel, a focus more explicit and inclusive than the evocation of the earthly-city theme in A Handful of Dust. The mood of the opening book is richly nostalgic, and the story is built around the brief flowering of its principal character, Sebastian Flyte. It is a record of decline and fall set against a background which seems to offer a counterbalancing stability, but which, as the story develops, is seen to make its own contribution to the accumulating disorder.

The nostalgic atmosphere is established at once, when the opening of the first chapter evokes "a cloudless day in June . . . the air heavy with all the scents of summer . . . a day of peculiar splendour." The scene is Oxford in Eights Week, "submerged now and obliterated, irrecoverable as Lyonesse" (BR, 29). The focus from the outset is on Sebastian, whose

charm and beauty captivate Charles Ryder and so bring him within the circle of the Flytes. The initial recollection of the idyllic weather and the Oxford setting is coupled to the day-long expedition of Ryder and Sebastian to Brideshead Castle, significantly referred to by the latter not as "my home," but as "'where my family live'" (BR, 44).

The influence of Brideshead is important in the novel. Like Waugh's other great houses -- King's Thursday before its renovation, Anchorage House, Guy Crouchback's Broome, even Hetton -- it is an architectural symbol of order, of an influence spanning generations, more enduring and significant than its builders or its occupants. As such, it becomes, from Charles Ryder's first sight of it on this summer day to his last mention of it in the epilogue, an abiding presence against whose stature the lives of the characters are seen in diminished perspective.

The idea of Brideshead as a symbol of social order, of continuing dignity and tradition, is the conventional explanation for the role of the house in the novel: whatever the failings of its successive occupants over the generations, it continues to represent a positive, civilizing achievement. However, some critics have offered highly figurative interpretations. Thus, in the view of Frank Kermode, "The great houses of England become [for Waugh] by an easy transition types of the Catholic City."¹³ Another reading not only sees Brideshead as an image of the Church, but its beauty as a metaphor for the truth which the Church reveals: "The Brideshead estate in the novel is representative of the Roman Catholic Church in the modern world, and Charles Ryder's entrance into it is symbolized by his sexual entrance into the 'brideshead' of

Julia, who is obviously part of it."¹⁴ Jeffrey Heath, by contrast, sees the mansion as a negative symbol. "Brideshead House," he writes, "is an emblem . . . not of orthodoxy, but of schism. . . . While appearing to praise the house, Waugh condemns it. . . ." Heath points to two architectural features of the building as emphasizing its "delusive beauty". One is the dome, and, though Waugh speaks of it in "ostensibly approving tones, his language is heavy with veiled criticism." The other is the fountain which "Waugh describes with a similar veiled hostility."¹⁵

As these quotations show, it is possible to equate Ryder's intercourse with Julia with his entry into the Catholic Church and to argue that Waugh's attitude to Brideshead is fundamentally hostile. However, such interpretations appear unnecessarily ingenious, and, moreover, they conflict with Waugh's declared attitude to great houses elsewhere in his work. Heath's argument seems particularly strained. It is hard, for instance, to see "veiled hostility" in Sebastian's suggestion to Ryder as they approach the house for the first time: "You must see the garden front and the fountain" (BR, 43). Similarly, the fact that the dome is false hardly renders it sinister, especially since it is the dwelling of Nanny Hawkins, who is immediately described in terms unequivocally suggestive of virtue and order: "Long hours of work in her youth, authority in middle life, repose and security in her age, had set their stamp on her lined and serene face" (BR, 44). And the fountain is treated even more positively in an extended narrative passage which describes the front terrace as "the final consummation of the house's plan" and the fountain as "dominating the whole splendid space" (BR, 92, 93).

The novel's most telling passage on the significance of architectural order -- and thus of Brideshead -- is Ryder's summation of the interest which led him to a career in architectural painting:

I have always loved building, holding it to be not only the highest achievement of man but one in which, at the moment of consummation, things were most clearly taken out of his hands and perfected, without his intention, by other means, and I regarded men as much less than the buildings they had made and inhabited, as mere lodgers and short-term sub-lessees of small importance in the long fruitful life of their homes.

More even than the work of the great architects, I loved buildings that grew silently with the centuries, catching and keeping the best of each generation, while time curbed the artist's pride and the Philistine's vulgarity, and repaired the clumsiness of the dull workman.¹⁶

On the surface, Ryder's involvement with Sebastian's circle at Oxford appears to be a capitulation to disorder. It seems so to his cousin Jasper when he inveighs against Ryder's fashionable friends. Jasper is an establishment figure, the voice of prudent university careerism, but, in the context of the novel, the order to which he calls Ryder is seen as sterile and deadening, quite unlike the life-enhancing disorder in the spontaneous beauty and charm of Sebastian and his world. To Ryder, "that summer term with Sebastian, it seemed as though I was being given a brief spell of what I had never known, a happy childhood." And Jasper's conventional wisdom is no match "for the other, more ancient lore which I acquired that term [and which] will be with me in one shape or another to

my last hour," or "for the conviction that to know and love one human being is the root of all wisdom" (BR, 54-55). Anthony Blanche is another who warns Ryder against Sebastian and his works, but his approach is characteristically different. He is concerned not with college career or reputation but with the perniciousness of Sebastian's charm: "It is not an experience I would recommend for an Artist at the tenderest stage of his growth, to be strangled with 'charm'" (BR, 56). His argument is repeated even more emphatically years later, after he has seen the exhibition of Ryder's Latin-American paintings: "Charm is the great English blight. . . . It spots and kills anything it touches. It kills love; it kills art; I greatly fear, my dear Charles, it has killed you" (BR, 301).

These remonstrances come at the end of Ryder's first summer term, just before the Long Vacation that represents Sebastian's apogee. The idyllic quality of the vacation is captured in Sebastian's wish at the end of the month he and Ryder spend together at Brideshead: "If it could only be like this always -- always summer, always alone, the fruit always ripe, and Aloysius in a good temper. . . ." (BR, 91). The flight from maturity implicit in the teddy-bear reference and in the desire to avoid adult intrusion is typical of the fantasy world Sebastian inhabits, a world which even as he speaks is coming to an end, to be followed by the disorder that marks his second Oxford year.

This changed emphasis is indicated in the autumnal tone of the narrative as Ryder and Sebastian return after the Long Vacation. Images of youth and sunshine are replaced by those of maturity and decay -- falling leaves, drifting mist, lamps and approaching darkness, bells evoking

memories of the year before. But Sebastian's melancholy is more than seasonal; he feels confined and threatened. The exuberance of the previous year "had filled a deep, interior need of his, the escape from reality, and as he found himself increasingly hemmed in, where he once felt himself free, he became at times listless and morose . . ." (BR, 121). The family relationships which are at the root of his unhappiness dominate this phase of the story. A profound resentment is evident in Sebastian's opening-chapter statement to Ryder that he does not want the latter "mixed up with my family. They're so madly charming. All my life they've been taking things away from me." Later the same day, as they return to Oxford, Ryder notices that "The further we drove from Brideshead, the more he seemed to cast off his uneasiness, the almost furtive restlessness and irritability that had possessed him" (BR, 46, 49). The strained relationship is also indicated in Sebastian's reference to the occupants of Brideshead as "ravening beasts", and in his remark outside Marchmain House when he and Ryder arrive in London from Venice: "'I won't ask you in, the place is probably full of my family'" (BR, 91, 117).

Sebastian's problems with his family ultimately come down to his relations with one member, his mother. Waugh disclaimed any technical interest in psychology, and certainly Sebastian's love-hate response to Lady Marchmain leaves unanswered questions, but, whatever its psychoanalytic deficiencies, the picture of her as the primary source of his unhappiness is compelling. Sebastian says as much when Ryder tells him, in the hospital at Fez, that his mother is mortally ill: "'Poor mummy. She really was a femme fatale, wasn't she? She killed at a touch,'" (BR,

238). And, as he speaks, one can hear echoing in the background the answer he had given years earlier when Ryder asked why he did not demand a proper allowance at Oxford: "'Oh, mummy likes everything to be a present. She's so sweet'" (BR, 72).

These pressures find their outlet in the drinking that accompanies the growing disorder of Sebastian's life. Ryder recognizes that Sebastian is threatened, though the nature of the threat is not made entirely clear: "His constant, despairing prayer was to be left alone," undisturbed by intruders, but since he "counted among the intruders his own conscience and all claims of human affection, his days in Arcadia were numbered. . . . I had seen him grow wary at the thought of his family or his religion" (BR, 142, 143). This account of Sebastian's disintegration is supplemented by the observations of Lord Marchmain's mistress and by Anthony Blanche. In Venice, Cara tells Ryder that Sebastian hates his mother. He is "in love with his own childhood," she adds. "That will make him very unhappy. His teddy bear, his nanny . . . and he is nineteen years old. . . ." It is also Cara who predicts that Sebastian "will be a drunkard if someone does not come to stop him" (BR, 116, 117). During the course of his remonstrance about the Flytes, Anthony Blanche is typically critical of both Lady Marchmain and Sebastian: She "keeps a small gang of enslaved and emaciated prisoners for her exclusive enjoyment. She sucks their blood. . . . They never escape once she's got her teeth into them. It is witchcraft." His sketch of Sebastian -- seen through eyes less fond than Ryder's -- is equally devastating: "'So you see we mustn't blame Sebastian if at times he seems a little insipid. . . . With that very

murky background, what could he do except set up as being simple and charming, particularly as he isn't very well endowed in the 'Top Storey'" (BR, 66).

The place of religion in this brew of family tensions is important but not easy to fix. Waugh obviously meant it to be significant -- his 1960 preface says so -- but for Sebastian at this time the influence of religion is inseparable from the deeply resented influence of his mother. The relaxed discussion of the subject between him and Ryder during their time together at Brideshead serves a background function, establishing the pattern of Sebastian as instinctive believer and Ryder as conventional agnostic, but religion has a different tone in the family setting. During Ryder's first Christmas with the Flytes, "Religion predominated in the house; not only in its practices--the daily mass and rosary, morning and evening in the chapel--but in all its intercourse." Lady Marchmain's piety is somewhat overpowering; she has "little talks" with Ryder, occasions when "she delicately steered the subject into a holy quarter." Sebastian's reaction is predictable: "'She's always doing it. I wish to hell she wouldn't'" (BR, 141). Such bitterness is a far cry from his earlier reaction to the suggestion that, as a Christian, he is made to accept "an awful lot of nonsense": "'Is it nonsense? I wish it were. It sometimes sounds terribly sensible to me.'" (BR, 99). This summertime faith is clouded now by apprehension, by the growing knowledge that he is being forced to surrender his fantasy of unrestricted freedom. Cara's explanation for Lord Marchmain's hostility toward his wife is illuminating here: "'Alex is hating all the illusions of boyhood--innocence, God,

hope. Poor Lady Marchmain has to bear all that. . . . I protect him from his own innocence'" (BR, 116). Sebastian, with the same illusions and the same hostility, finds protection in drink.

The decline which follows is predictable, successive stages in a downward spiral: expulsion from Oxford, the disastrous Grand Tour with Samgrass, prolonged sprees, the escape from Rex Mottram en route to the sanatorium, the association with Anthony Blanche in Marseilles and with Kurt in Morocco. It is a chronicle of the deterioration which, after the opening Arcadian interlude, dominates the first book.

Sebastian's slide into alcoholism coincides with Julia's troubled engagement to Rex Mottram, leading to her break with the Church. The effort to reconcile Rex's lack of religious sensibility with the demands of Julia's Catholicism brings the incongruity of the two into sharp focus. His course of religious instruction and his failure to "correspond to any degree of paganism known to the missionaries'" (BR, 215) is a comic vignette of contemporary unbelief.

By the time of Lady Marchmain's death, disorder has largely occupied the world of the Flytes. Bridey and Cordelia have never doubted or rebelled, but the others are far from home. Lord Marchmain is still an exile in Italy with Cara; Sebastian is a derelict in North Africa, all connection severed with his material and spiritual roots; Julia is married to Rex and alienated from the faith of her upbringing. Their dispersal, together with that of Charles Ryder, sets the stage for an interval of years and for the twitch upon the thread which will lead to the restoration of order in their lives.

In the second part of the novel, the story of Julia and Ryder replaces that of Sebastian and the topic of grace that of Arcadian nostalgia. Memory is still Ryder's theme, but now of a more recent past, of the events which, a decade later, follow his renewed intimacy with the Flytes. This new association has none of the youth and sunshine that introduced the earlier Book; the tone is subdued and meditative, in keeping with the altered outlook which experience has brought to Julia and Ryder. The love which seems at first to promise so much happiness proves in the end to be beyond their reach, and it is through their recognition that, in the circumstances of their lives, it cannot offer them a lasting order that Waugh suggests the workings of divine grace.

When "A Twitch Upon the Thread" begins, Ryder is a man spiritually adrift, with no spring of joy left in him. The account he gives of the first decade of his professional career shows him as dispirited and prematurely middle-aged: "For nearly ten dead years . . . I was thus borne along a road outwardly full of change and incident, but never during that time, except sometimes in my painting -- and that at longer and longer intervals -- did I come alive as I had been during the time of my friendship with Sebastian" (BR, 251). The two years he spends painting in Latin America are a failure: ". . . despite this isolation and this long sojourn in a strange world, I remained unchanged, still a small part of myself pretending to be whole" (BR, 254). Julia, too, is spiritually crippled. Still in her twenties when she and Ryder meet again, she, like him, seems older than she is. Her marriage has been a failure. She speaks of her "dead years" and of her "struggle" whether to have a child.

When she finally does bear one, it is stillborn. There is the "secret, vicious, disastrous escapade that had taken her to New York" (BR, 283, 284).

Ryder's love for her, born during their Atlantic crossing, seems to him a continuation and fulfilment of his earlier love for Sebastian. He sees their union as promising order and permanence; she is, he tells her, the reality of which Sebastian was the forerunner. The two years they spend together at Brideshead are viewed by him in retrospect as free of both regret and apprehension. Only once in that time is the possibility of a threat to their happiness raised: Celia Ryder's Art and Fashion and Rex Mottram's Politics and Money have been shown in all their ugliness and, recalling this, Ryder bursts out: "'Why is it that love makes me hate the world? It's supposed to have quite the opposite effect. I feel as though all mankind, and God, too, were in a conspiracy against us'" (BR, 304). The narrative says less about Julia's feelings, but as the affair progresses it becomes evident that she is less sanguine than he about the future; whereas he foresees "a lifetime" together, she thinks of the impending war, and feels "'the past and the future pressing so hard on either side that there's no room for the present at all'" (BR, 307-308). And when, later, Ryder speaks again of Sebastian as her forerunner, her reply that perhaps she is "'only a forerunner, too,'" moves him to a meditation that presages the course of their love:

perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols; vagabond-language scrawled on gate-posts and paving-stones along the weary road that others have tramped before us; perhaps you and I are types and this sadness which sometimes falls between us springs from disappointment in our search, each straining through and beyond the other, snatching a glimpse now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us. (BR, 333)

Religion is also part of the web they feel being spun around them. Despite her break with the Church, Julia still acknowledges its influence: "'Death, Judgement, Heaven, Hell, Nanny Hawkins, and the catechism. It becomes part of oneself, if they give it one early enough.'" Perhaps, she muses, the fact that she and Ryder have been brought together is "part of a plan" (BR, 286). Her uneasy feeling that forces are at work ordering her life and Ryder's in ways she does not understand for purposes she cannot predict rarely comes to the surface, but as their time at Brideshead nears its end external events combine to make it increasingly prominent. The first of these is Bridey's declaration, following the announcement of his engagement to Beryl Muspratt, that, since Julia is "living in sin," Beryl would not consent to be her guest at Brideshead. This 'bomb-shell' precipitates Julia's hysterical outburst about sin and its place in her life (BR, 316). The emotional storm stirs her to her depths, pouring out in a bitter flood in which her childhood and the nursery and her early religious teaching all come together.

The thread is twitched again when Cordelia returns to England with news of Sebastian. She has been with him in Tunis, and tells of his return to the Church, a move which has established a centre of order in his troubled life. He suffers much, she tells Ryder, adding that perhaps this kind of suffering is Sebastian's path to holiness: "'One can have no idea what the suffering may be, to be maimed as he is -- no dignity, no power of will. No one is ever holy without suffering. It's taken that form with him . . .'" (BR, 340). This matter-of-fact perspective on the theology of suffering is another indication to Ryder that forces beyond his ken are at work in the lives of the Flytes, forces which begin to awaken in him also the foreboding that Julia already feels. Later on the day of these disclosures, as he watches Julia, Ryder realizes that "she had regained what I thought she had lost for ever, the magical sadness which had drawn me to her, the thwarted look that had seemed to say, "'Surely I was made for some other purpose than this'" (BR, 341).

The obstacle in their path which first became evident at Bridey's mention of "living in sin," becomes insurmountable when, having brought the priest to her father's side, Julia witnesses his deathbed act of faith and repentance. She still loves Ryder, but the experience of her father's death has convinced her that the new life she had been planning is no longer possible. To return to God, as she now feels compelled to do, she must as far as possible return to the point at which she left him, and that means foregoing the marriage that would have continued her movement away from him. She cannot do the unforgiveable thing; she cannot "set up a rival good to God's" (BR, 373).

Lord Marchmain's conversion is the climactic event of Brideshead Revisited, the point at which its natural and supernatural patterns most clearly intersect. In terms of Waugh's avowed purpose for the book this recovery of faith represents the restoration of a damaged edifice. Together with its effect on Julia and Ryder, it marks the point at which the life of the Flytes is most clearly touched by the Divine, and becomes the novel's principal assertion of spiritual order. It was an assertion which did not go uncontested by the critics; for the reviewers, Brideshead represented a radical shift of emphasis in Waugh which most of them regarded with disfavour. He had accompanied the first edition with a dustjacket 'warning' that the object of the book was 'nothing less than an attempt to trace the workings of Divine purpose in a pagan world.' Such an object, so overtly pursued, was bound to disturb observers who, on the basis of both Waugh's record and their own predilection, expected a continuation of the brilliant comedy they had previously admired. The latent seriousness of A Handful of Dust, twelve years earlier, had not prepared most of them for this.¹⁷

The underlying presence and ultimate triumph of spiritual order remains, nevertheless, the essential thematic element of the story. Moreover, the central deathbed scene was more than a mere pious fiction, an exercise in religiosity. Waugh founded it on fact. Brideshead Revisited, he told Ronald Knox, 'was, of course, all about the deathbed. I was present at almost exactly that scene . . . when a friend of mine whom we thought in his final coma and stubbornly impenitent . . . did exactly that, making the sign of the cross. It was profoundly affecting and I

wrote the book about that scene."18

Waugh's sympathetic attitude to his aristocratic characters, coupled with his hostility to the lower middle classes, was another feature of Brideshead which many critics found distasteful. Donat O'Donnell, focusing on the question of sin, concluded that the book "breathes from beginning to end a loving patience with mortal sin among the aristocracy and an unChristian petulance towards the minor foibles of the middle class." He asks: "Is Lord Marchmain's soul more valuable than Hooper's?" and supplies his answer: "Brideshead Revisited almost seems to imply that the wretched Hooper has no soul at all, certainly nothing to compare with the genuine old landed article."19

O'Donnell's criticism raises a point that deserves examination. Waugh, he says, is inconsistent in judging the moral failings of his characters, and, what is worse, the inconsistency is dictated by class prejudice. Such a criticism assumes that Waugh measures characters in a moral balance, but the content of the novels does not support this assumption. It has already been argued in this thesis that the social attitude Waugh brings not only to Brideshead Revisited but to the whole body of his fiction is a dandy attitude, that his primary imaginative response is not to the morality of his characters but to their style. Unlike his fellow-Catholic, Graham Greene, he has little interest in private, personal sin, whatever the social class of the sinner. His sensibility is always more attuned to social -- that is, stylistic -- failings than to moral ones. This is the reason Hooper is treated less sympathetically than Lord Marchmain. It is not that the latter's soul is more valuable than

Hooper's; Waugh knew otherwise. However, it is not souls that are at issue here; but, rather, the fact that Waugh is more stimulated by life (and death) among the Flytes than among the Hoopers.

Ryder's recollections come to an end at the point where Julia tells him after her father's death what he has already guessed, that she cannot marry him. Linked organically to the plot that has developed throughout the final book, the short scene is a dramatically justified expression of the dominant spiritual-order theme. The same is not true, however, of the Epilogue which follows; its key elements -- the fact of Ryder's conversion and the significance of the lamp in the chapel -- are artistically less satisfactory. The reference to the conversion suffers by reason of its brevity; it is dealt with so casually as to seem almost thrown away. We are told only that when he visited the chapel Ryder "said a prayer, an ancient, newly-learned form of words" (BR, 380). This and a statement from Book One ("I have come to accept claims which then, in 1923, I never troubled to examine, and to accept the supernatural as real"--BR, 98) are the only direct information the book provides about this profound change in Ryder's life. In terms of the novel's theme his conversion is presumably part of the spiritual legacy of Lord Marchmain's death and, so, an event whose importance matches Julia's renunciation of their love, but the understatedness of its treatment confines it almost entirely to the realm of speculation.

The rhetoric of the last-page meditation about the lamp in the chapel is similarly marked by obscurity. To say, as Ryder does, that there would

be no lamp there—if the house had not been built is at one level a statement of the obvious, though at another it can perhaps be taken to mean that the builders builded better than they knew. And the link between the lamp and "the tragedians" can only be traced if we have noted that Julia is now Brideshead's owner and that it is, presumably at her behest that the chapel, closed after her mother's death by "Bridey and the Bishop" (BR, 244), has been reopened. This, too, we must assume, is to be viewed as another beneficent consequence of Lord Marchmain's death.

Nevertheless, despite these questions we know that Ryder has arrived at the understanding of an order which survives even though Brideshead has been desolated. His recognition of the transcendental reality signified by the lamp burning in the chapel testifies to the wisdom Tony Last never acquired, the knowledge that no Brideshead, no Hetton, no earthly City, can ultimately endure. The change in Ryder's outlook that has taken place between his parting from Julia and his wartime return to Brideshead enables him to put nostalgia in perspective. The prayer he utters in the reactivated chapel is an admission that, despite natural loss and regret, the lament for the vanished Brideshead, "Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo",²⁰ is not the last word, that the fruit of "the fierce little human tragedy" (BR, 380-81) was not altogether bitter, that the flame relit before the tabernacle is a sign of confidence and hope. It is Ryder's unconscious reflection of this awareness that prompts the casual greeting from the second-in-command which is the novel's felicitous conclusion: "'You're looking unusually cheerful today.'"

Brideshead Revisited is, after Helena, the most explicitly religious

of Waugh's novels. It is also the most marked by stylistic elaboration. In it, the detached, impersonal narration of the comic novels is replaced by the highly subjective recital of Charles Ryder, through whose consciousness all the events of the story are filtered. Waugh attributed this new richness to the fact that Brideshead was written amid the privations of wartime; introducing the 1960 edition, he spoke of the book's "rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful. I have modified the grosser passages but have not obliterated them because they are an essential part of the book."

The stylistic lushness is, as might be expected, more obvious in the first part of the novel than in the second. The early idyllic descriptions of Oxford and Brideshead, the meditation on youthful languor, the panegyric on wine, and the paragraphs about memory which open the concluding Book are part of the Arcadian enchantment Waugh set out to re-create, but they do suggest, as F. J. Stopp says, "the rhythms from the anthologies."²¹ By and large, "A Twitch Upon the Thread" avoids this ornateness. As it progresses and the emphasis shifts from Ryder and his concerns to Julia and hers, the style becomes increasingly direct and spontaneous. Julia's outburst about sin, Cordelia's account of Sebastian's life in Tunis, and the description of the final scene at Lord Marchmain's bedside are all pieces of writing in which the tone of the language is supported by the emotional intensity of the situation, by a dramatic urgency that is lacking in the rhetoric of Book One.

Brideshead's imagery, too, is of a richness not seen heretofore, except fleetingly in the lost City of Tony Last's imagination. Underlying

Ryder's romantic surrender to the world of the Flytes is the image of the "low door in the wall . . . which opened on an enclosed and enchanted garden" (BR, 39-40); the two adjectives can be applied to all of the book's early Arcadian mood. The events which mark the concluding Book are similarly reflected in a variety of important symbols of which the thread in the hand of God which can draw the errant soul back to him from "the ends of the world" is the principal one; a metaphor for the operation of divine grace that is the novel's ordering principle. This dominant symbol is accompanied by others suggesting the influences at work on the characters: the prolonged Atlantic storm as a sign of the disordered relationship of Ryder and Julia; the pigeons of St. Mark's representing the "winged host" of memory, "pledges of the vital hours of a lifetime" (BR, 214); the avalanche as a recurring symbol of the force to which the love of Ryder and Julia is opposed. It is worth noting that the two images associated with the union of the lovers, a storm at sea and an avalanche, are both violent ~~natural phenomena~~, linked metaphorically to the elemental nature of human passion. Moreover, they suggest through their vastness that the love affair is not merely an isolated incident at the human level, but that it is inescapably part of a drama with supra-human dimensions.

Brideshead Revisited is an account both of "the workings of Divine purpose in a pagan world" and of the passage of Charles Ryder from adolescent romanticism to spiritual maturity. Looked at in the sequence of Waugh's fiction, it can be seen as an important stage in the development of his own artistic consciousness, from the early comic pictures of a

contemporary waste-land, through the portrait of humanism in A Handful of Dust, to the humility and charity which emerge from Unconditional Surrender. Over the range of the novels, disorder, though never far from the human condition, is progressively less dominant, while the opposing concept, in both individual and society, becomes increasingly explicit and increasingly linked to specifically religious values. Brideshead Revisited is part of this pattern; so is Helena.

III

More than any other Waugh novel, Helena reflects the quality of incisiveness that contributed so largely to both the character of his non-fiction writing and the distinctiveness of his public persona. It was a quality which was linked to his fondness for clear-cut intellectual positions and his dislike for what he considered muddled thinking or sophistry of any kind, and which, accordingly, made him a habitual controversialist. The preoccupation of Helena, living in a world such as Waugh found his own to be, with a concrete historical reality that everyone else was ignoring, made her and her quest a congenial subject. Moreover, her saintliness was of a kind that reflected this situation, and he instinctively responded to it. "I liked Helena's sanctity," he told John Betjeman, "because it is in contrast to all that moderns think of as sanctity. She wasn't thrown to the lions, she wasn't a contemplative, she wasn't poor and hungry, she didn't look like an El Greco. She just discovered what it was that God had chosen for her to do and did it."²²

The positive contribution of Christianity to Western civilization was dominant in Waugh's view of history, and all his novels save Helena can be seen as to a greater or lesser extent pictures of a society whose ills are traceable to the abandonment of its historic Christian roots. The fact that the period in which Helena lives was the one in which the foundations of that historical association were laid accordingly gave her epoch a special interest for him. It was also familiar intellectual territory, a time in which, as in his own age, he saw Christianity obliged to do battle with hostile philosophies and fashionable superstitions. More centrally than any of the novels, Helena focuses on this struggle between what Waugh saw as contemporary intellectual pretension and the abiding truths of the Christian religion. It is the incorporation of this web of ideas into its texture that, together with the True Cross motif, makes Helena such an unequivocally religious novel. "More simply and more uncompromisingly than in any other of Evelyn's fictions," says Christopher Sykes, "this one has a message. There is no question, as there was in Brideshead Revisited, of 'theological implications'; this book contains a theological statement. Its message is this: that whereas other great religions refer their origins to strange cosmic confrontations, unidentifiable in space and time . . . the Christian religion, uniquely before the age of Islam, depended on definite historical facts. . . ."23

In terms of the overall movement of Waugh's fiction towards an individual and social order based on transcendental values; Helena can be considered as the third panel of a triptych. The initial one, A Handful of Dust, offers the picture of an order which, despite its surface charm,

remains illusory because its foundations are as impermanent as the merely human ideal which inspires it. Brideshead Revisited, too, in its representation of the 'half-pagan' Flytes and their material splendour, is a portrait of transience, but it is also about the small flame of an order which will remain when their castle and all it represents have yielded to time and circumstance. Helena is like Brideshead in that it offers at the end a symbol of order in a disordered world. However, it moves beyond this to propose, amid the claims of intellectual sophists, a reality that is both historical and transcendental and that points to a lasting City.

When one looks at Helena in succession to Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Symes and William Boot, or even Tony Last and Charles Ryder, the contrast is striking. Compared to these protagonists, all in their ways innocents abroad, this seventy-year-old widow is an almost heroic figure. What makes her so is her consistent clarity of mind and firmness of purpose, her tenacious grip on reality. The clearheadedness which characterizes all her behaviour is discernible from the start, in the reaction to her tutor's remark that fear of ghosts keeps people from looking for the site of Troy: "I shouldn't be afraid. . . . Why don't people dig? When I am educated I shall go and find the real Troy - Helen's!"²⁴ And in the course of her life she does in fact become an explorer, a more realistic and successful one than Tony Last.

This unsentimental directness is the characteristic note of Helena, fictional hagiography though it is. The hagiography is concentrated in the subject which occupies the foreground of the book: Helena's search for and discovery of the cross on which Christ was crucified. Linked with

this is the idea of the cross as an historical fact, a concrete reality in a world of sophistry and intellectual confusion. Beyond this subject and illuminated by it are two less specific themes. One is the idea of vocation, a concept which had an important place in Waugh's scheme of things. "What we can learn from Helena," he wrote, "is something about the workings of God; that he wants a different thing from each of us, laborious or easy, conspicuous or quite private, but something which only we can do and for which we were each created."²⁵ Accompanying this is another subordinate theme: the baneful effect, both individual and social, of Power without Grace, of freedom that recognizes no guide but personal gratification, no reference beyond the self. "I often feel that I am the only real human being in the whole of creation," Constantine tells Helena. "'Do you understand at all, mother?'" "Oh yes, perfectly." "What is it, then?" And she replies: "'Power without Grace.'" (H, 198). In the universe of Helena, power without Grace is the world without the Cross, a world of disorder. It is an important part of the argument of the novel that power so exercised leads to a distorted perception of reality, and, thus, that the subordination of power to Grace is a prerequisite for genuine social, intellectual and aesthetic order.

More than half the book -- seven chapters -- is, in effect, a long waiting period for Helena, a time of preparation for the decisive phase of her life which begins with her move to Rome and the court of Constantine. At each stage of her life she discharges fully and composedly the obligations that accompany it. At Colchester in her youth she is a vigorous schoolgirl, devoted to horses and hunting. After the marriage to

Constantius she accompanies him unquestioningly across Europe. She lives at Nish, in Dalmatia, at Trèves, in Rome; she is divorced and widowed; she becomes Empress Dowager. And always, wherever she is, her reactions and her questions reflect the same desire to get to the bottom of things, brushing aside specious arguments and self-serving rationalizations.

On their way from Strasbourg to Ratisbon, her husband points to the Roman wall which marches beside the road, and praises it as a defender of the City within and a protection against the barbarism without. The praise fails to impress Helena: "'Must there always be a wall?,' she asks. . . . 'Instead of the barbarians breaking in, might the City one day break out?'" However, the mind of Constantius is bounded by the limited conception the wall represents: "'There seems to be a natural division in the human race just where the present wall runs; beyond it they're incurable barbarians. It takes all our time to hold the present line.' 'I didn't mean that,' she answers. 'I meant couldn't the wall be at the limits of the world and all men, civilized and barbarian, have a share in The City?'" (H, 47-49). Later, at Ratisbon, Helena is skeptical about the religious activities of the fashionable ladies of the town. Hearing them talk of "secret meetings, passwords, initiations, trances, and extraordinary sensations," she suspects they are talking nonsense, and says so to the Governor's wife: "'It's all bosh, isn't it?' 'It's disgusting.' 'Yes, but it's bosh, too, isn't it?'" (H, 54). Later, she is equally doubtful, if less disrespectful, about the Mithraic cult of which her husband becomes a devotee in Dalmatia.

Many years after, at Trèves, a middle-aged woman and Empress Dowager,

she is still trying to get direct answers to simple questions. Attending a lecture by her former tutor, Marcias, now a popular savant, she is baffled by a farrago of Gnostic doctrine. Invited to question the speaker, she says: "What I should like to know is: When and where did all this happen? And how do you know?" (H, 128), and is answered with obfuscation. Their brief exchange after the lecture is revealing. He asks Helena if she has found what, as a young girl, she wanted, and she replies:

'I have accepted what I found. Is that the same?'
 'For most people. I think you wanted more.'
 'Once. Now I am past my youth.'
 'But your question just now. When? Where? How
 do you know?' - was a child's question
 (H, 129-30).

That evening, telling Lactantius about the lecture, she utters the same forthright opinion she had voiced at Ratisbon: "'It's all bosh, isn't it?'" And the Christian Lactantius agrees: "'All complete bosh, your Majesty'" (H, 130). Always in these exchanges the emphasis is on the contrast between the order which accompanies definition and clarity and the disorder of intellectual confusion and self-deception.

Contrasted with Helena's relatively secluded and private life in Dalmatia and at Trèves after being divorced is the world of ambition, politics, war and power which is the stage upon which first her husband and then her son act out their careers. In the years following the battle of the Milvian Bridge that world and hers converge. They come together when she quits Trèves and goes to Rome for Constantine's jubilee celebrations.

At the imperial court she, now herself a Christian, is able to observe at first hand the complex of fear, suspicion, treachery, and cruelty which heretofore she has known only by report. At its centre is her son, with his acute fear of rivals and a neurotic interest in theology that expresses itself in a mélange of Christianity and Emperor-worship. The long eighth chapter, with its elements of mental derangement, murder and witchcraft, is a catalogue of disorder, a composite picture of the corrupt imperial world which Christianity is replacing.

Constantine's elaborate, self-justifying lecture to his mother at the opening of Chapter 9, with its mixture of paranoia and garbled Christian doctrine, represents one pole of the theological world in which Helena finds herself. It is a hodge-podge of superficial philosophy, Christian teaching, alien doctrines, and superstition. As personified in Constantine, it is a world of 'Power without Grace'. The other pole is epitomized in Helena's impatience with sterile debate and logic-chopping; in her habitual impulse to look for the reality behind words, and, now, in her sudden unassailable conviction that the Cross is waiting to be found -- "just at this moment when it's most needed. Just at this moment when everyone is forgetting it and chattering about the hypostatic union, there's a solid chunk of wood waiting for them to have their silly heads knocked against!" (H, 209).

Helena's decision, in her old age, to go to Jerusalem and search is the expression of that conviction. As at Rome, her behaviour is marked by

a refusal to confuse the accidental with the essential or to be impressed by humbug, however pious. The chapters which describe her search for and "invention" of the cross form a single extended account of the contradictory advice and misleading information she receives and of the resoluteness with which she clears away the overgrowth of superstition obscuring the reality of an event that has occurred nearly three hundred years before.

There is one interlude in this narrative: the account of Helena's visit to Bethlehem on Epiphany, the feast day commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Three Kings. In her recollection of the Magi and of their long journey to the infant Christ, "she forgot even her quest. . . . 'This is my day', she thought, 'and these are my kind'" (H, 238). The thought is followed by the most moving passage in the novel, more moving than anything Waugh had written before, her prayer to the Magi:

'You are my especial patrons . . . and patrons of all late-comers, of all who have a tedious journey to make to the truth, of all who are confused with knowledge and speculation, of all who through politeness make themselves partners in guilt, of all who stand in danger by reason of their talents. . . . For His sake who did not reject your curious gifts, pray always for all the learned, the oblique, the delicate. Let them not be quite forgotten at the Throne of God when the simple come into their kingdom.' (H, 240).²⁶

When all the natural avenues of investigation in the effort to find the cross have been explored without success, Helena has recourse to the

supernatural. The Good Friday dream that reveals where the cross is to be found, the dream "that she knew was of God" (H, 244), is clearly miraculous, a supernatural intervention which enables her to accomplish the task she has been unable to complete alone. Explaining his choice of this solution, Waugh wrote in his preface: "We do not know that the wood Helena found is the True Cross . . . but if we do accept its authenticity we must, I think, allow an element of the miraculous in its discovery and identification." To the eyes of faith the dream is a sign of divine order.

Among Waugh's books, Helena was his favourite. Christopher Sykes says that "Evelyn, to the end of his life, believed Helena to be his best book," but adds that "few readers . . . agree with this judgement."²⁷ The disparity of attitudes is attributable to the fact that Waugh appears to have valued the book for reasons that were essentially non-literary. There was, first, his idea of vocation and his conviction that Helena had perfectly conformed herself to "the particular, humble purpose for which she had been created" (H, 156). From this point of view, as Jeffrey Heath points out, Helena's response to her vocation was "the quintessential act of good faith, good taste, and self-discovery." Moreover, her belated fulfillment of her vocation.²⁸ agreed with Waugh's as a wholly-dedicated writer after his years as a soldier. Finally, there was his recognition, noted earlier, of the historical parallel between Helena's era and his own. The generality of readers and critics, however, not sharing these order-centred concerns and applying more conventional criteria, have not given Helena the place of honour among his works which Waugh accorded it.

Despite obvious differences, the three novels which have been brought together in this chapter are all animated by a single archetypal idea, that of the quest. -- Its two elements -- the search itself, with its emphasis on the process, and the goal, with its associations of arrival and discovery -- are reflected in the title assigned to the chapter. The City is a metaphor for the end of every search, the place of completion and rest. Tony Last looks for order in his life at Hetton with Brenda and his son and, when it eludes him there, searches for a lost City. This, too, is illusory, and his fate is a grim reminder that the City is only found by those who look in the right place. The quest on which Helena embarks is both more literal than Tony Last's and, thanks to its element of the miraculous, more successful. But, then, in Waugh's terms, Helena had already found the City before she set out to find the Cross. Her search has no figurative aspect; its goal is a three-dimensional man-made object, "a solid chunk of wood."

The quest which engages Charles Ryder has none of this concrete matter-of-factness. His association with the Flytes is an affair of uncertainties, most of all about the meaning of these lives with which his own is mingled. The story is nearly over before the 'twitches upon the thread' that settle the lives of Sebastian, Julia and their father reveal to him the nature of the City toward which they have all been moving, though it is not until later, still, after he has parted from them, that he, too, finds his way to it.

The quest motif that unites A Handful of Dust, Brideshead Revisited and Helena thematically is not their only common bond. More explicitly

than the rest of Waugh's novels, these three express his mature philosophy about the nature of man and, thus, the conception of order underlying his writing. "In my future books," he wrote in 1946, after Brideshead's international success, "there will be two things to make them unpopular: a preoccupation with style and the attempt to represent man more fully, which, to me, means only one thing, man in his relation to God."²⁹ This is a specifically religious attitude, and it is manifestly the attitude that inspires Brideshead Revisited and Helena. A Handful of Dust differs in that it was written before the experience of the war years which brought Waugh to artistic maturity and in that, as a result, the attitude which governs the other two is embryonic here. Nevertheless, its fictional portrayal of a philosophic wasteland points the way to the later 'religious' novels and entitles it to a place beside them in the canon.

NOTES

¹Evelyn Waugh, "Fan-fare," Life (8 April 1946), 56.

²Evelyn Waugh (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), pp. 5-6.

³"Meaning and Delight in Evelyn Waugh," Transatlantic Patterns: Cultural Comparisons of England with America (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), pp. 72-73.

⁴Letters, p. 88.

⁵"Evelyn Waugh's Gentlemen," Critical Quarterly, 5 (1963), 24-25.

⁶Letters, p. 84.

⁷Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust (1934; London: Chapman and Hall; reset 1964), p. 66. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁸Ian Littlewood, The Writings of Evelyn Waugh, p. 31. Cf. the description of Brenda Last stepping from the train, "looking as fresh and fragile as if she had that moment left a circle of masseuses, chiropodists, manicurists and coiffeuses" (HD, 45):

⁹Life (April 8, 1946), 60.

¹⁰This information about the MS version is provided in Jeffrey Heath's The Picturesque Prison, p. 305, note 5.

¹¹Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (London: Chapman and Hall, 1945; reset 1960), p. 251. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

¹²The title, "Et In Arcadia Ego," is a memento mori. It is inscribed on a skull which decorates Ryder's rooms at Oxford.

¹³"Mr. Waugh's Cities," Encounter, 15 (November 1960), 66.

¹⁴Rodney Delasanta and Mario L. D'Avanzo, "Truth and Beauty in Brideshead Revisited," Modern Fiction Studies, 11 (1965), 142.

¹⁵The Picturesque Prison, pp. 166-168.

¹⁶Brideshead Revisited (London: Chapman and Hall, 1945), p. 198. The first of these paragraphs is deleted from the 1960 edition.

¹⁷See, for example, Edmund Wilson, "Splendors and Miseries of Evelyn Waugh," Classics and Commercials (New York, 1950), pp. 298, 299; D. S.

Savage, "The Innocence of Evelyn Waugh," in The Novelist as Thinker (London, 1947), pp. 43-45; Frank Kermode, "Mr. Waugh's Cities," Encounter, 15 (November, 1960), 70; Bernard Bergonzi, "Evelyn Waugh's Gentlemen," Critical Quarterly, 5 (1963), 23.

¹⁸Letters, p. 206.

¹⁹"The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh," Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 124, 126.

²⁰"How lonely sits the city that was full of people," the opening words of the Old Testament Lamentations of Jeremiah, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

²¹Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 152.

²²Letters, pp. 339-340.

²³Evelyn Waugh: A Biography (London: Collins, 1975), p. 319.

²⁴Evelyn Waugh, Helena (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950), p. 5. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

²⁵Evelyn Waugh, The Holy Places (London: Queen Anne Press, 1952), p. 13.

²⁶It seems reasonable to believe that Waugh had his own situation as a 'late-comer' to Catholicism in mind here and, therefore, that a depth of personal feeling was behind the prayer.

²⁷Sykes, Evelyn Waugh, p. 318.

²⁸The Picturesque Prison, pp. 204, 205.

²⁹Life (8 April 1946) 56.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCENTRATED SATIRE:

SCOTT-KING'S MODERN EUROPE, THE LOVED ONE,LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I

It is a far cry from Waugh's idea of vocation and of the significance of his own life and work to the three satirical novellas he wrote in the decade after the War. These are stories which differ in almost every respect save brevity from Helena, though it belongs to the same period. More than any of Waugh's work, these novellas are dominated by the spirit of satire which has been observed in the comic novels.

In discussing the interrelatedness of satire and the comic vision, reference was made to satire's need, in the formulation of Northrop Frye, for an element of fantasy or the grotesque in the fictional content and an element of moral judgement.¹ Nowhere else in Waugh's novels is the fantasy so grotesque and macabre as in The Loved One and Love Among the Ruins, and, while less harsh than either of these, the satire of Scott-King's Modern Europe is still more concentrated than elsewhere in his work. The novellas are all, in effect, about the same subject, the contemporary disorder (projected, in Love Among the Ruins, a little into the future) fostered by spiritual and cultural impoverishment, itself, in turn, the product of a philosophy determined by purely secular values. All three use the weapon of ridicule against the situations which inspired them: the ineptitude of totalitarianism, the Californian way of death,

and the reductio ad absurdum of socialism. All three imply a behavioral and cultural standard, a system of values rooted in the importance and dignity of the individual, which is absent from the societies they depict.

Basically, these are not stories about people. Waugh's interest is not in the personality or character of Scott-King or Dennis Barlow or Miles Plastic, but in the social, political and cultural environments in which they function. These are shown as consistently degraded; the products of a rootless culture and a standing affront to civilized taste. The satirical force of the novellas is thus exerted directly. They do not function allegorically, as story at one level and meaning at another, nor as cautionary tales illustrating the wages of sin. Rather, they are direct satires, artistically exaggerated projections of recognizable realities, 'horror stories' which hold up to scorn the barbarism of the Modern Age.

I

Scott-King's Modern Europe was the product of Waugh's 1946 visit to Spain with Douglas Woodruff to attend a quatercentenary congress organized to honour the jurist Francisco de Vittoria. His observation of the Spanish situation provided the material for his primary satire, directed at the obtuseness, intolerance and bureaucratic incompetence of a totalitarian political system. However, the visit also furnished him with a secondary target -- the world of international conferences, a phenomenon whose proliferation after the Second World War is closely linked to the

growth of air travel. To Waugh, who considered that the period in which the going was good ended in 1939, "the amenities of modern travel,"² as Scott-King experiences them, are a rich source of irony.

The story is not a critique of the Franco regime in the sense that The Loved One is a critique of California funeral practices. Neutralia, for instance, is not particularly Spanish; indeed, says Waugh's biographer, "All critics and all readers, excepting the initiated, took Neutralia for a picture not of Spain but of Yugoslavia,"³ where Waugh had had an earlier and more prolonged exposure to the workings of dictatorship. The novella can be taken, therefore, as prompted by the Spanish visit, but also, as its title suggests, as expressing a more broadly based response to the totalitarian mentality. The response, however, is typically idiosyncratic; Waugh's satire is directed not at the errors of fascist theory or the abuses of human rights which are the staple of a book like Orwell's 1984, but, instead, at the farcical consequences of political factionalism and the deterioration of human values and civilized behaviour when political considerations dominate a society. His opposition is stimulated not so much by the philosophy of totalitarianism as by the ugly behaviour that totalitarianism produces. It is a reaction which is entirely consonant with the dandy's emphasis on conduct and his characteristic opposition to uniformity, abhorrence of vulgarity, and distaste for enthusiasm. It is consistent, too, with the responses, discussed in the last chapter, that underlie Waugh's contrasting attitudes to Hooper and Lord Marchmain. In this novella, as in Brideshead, the primary response of Waugh's imagination is to style.

These two zones of disorder, a totalitarian system of government and a dubious international cultural gathering, both ripe for ridicule, are set against the background of enduring order constituted by the standards which govern Scott-King's life and work at Granchester School. It is no accident that he is a classics master; his vocation must be seen as Waugh's deliberate choice of a classically-based value system and an associated tradition of civilized conduct to set against the expediency and cultural sterility which govern the conduct of the Bellorius Conference. Scott-King is not a rounded character, claiming attention in his own right; his value here is symbolic, as the representative of an older and more humane way of life than the one he finds in Neutralia. He is admittedly "dim," the author of an unpublished study of an obscure seventeenth-century Latin poet for whom he had conceived "a fellow-feeling, a blood-brotherhood, in dimness" (GP, 22). Nevertheless, because he is a genuinely civilized man, at home in the world of learning, he represents an important principle. "He was an adult, an intellectual, a classical scholar, almost a poet"; the description, repeated several times (GP, 26, 52, 53, 68), is only partly ironic. His travels in the realms of gold have given his life an order and dignity against which the confused events and the self-serving characters of the Neutralian interlude can be properly measured.

The disorder of the interlude is quickly discernible. All the irritations produced by the chilling, impersonal efficiency of international air travel are present as Scott-King prepares for his flight:

He had been weighed and measured like a load of merchandise; he had been searched like a criminal; he had been cross-examined about his past and his future, the state of his health and finances, as though he were applying for permanent employment of a confidential nature. Scott-King had not been nurtured in luxury and privilege, but this was not how he used to travel. (GP, 29)

The account is exaggerated, but it reflects the sensitive traveller's reaction to a dehumanizing process. Bureaucracy shows Scott-King another of its faces when, seeking to return to England, he turns for help to the British Embassy. The official who deals with air priorities ("I have four electrical engineers, two British Council lecturers and a trades unionist all wanting passages") finds that Scott-King does not fall within his purview: "'The Neutralians brought you here. It's their business to get you back'" (GP, 67). So, Scott-King returns to his hotel, a Distressed British Subject, rebuffed where he had counted on goodwill and assistance.

For Waugh, whose comic impulse always relished potentially anarchic situations, an international congress of savants administered by a totalitarian government offered possibilities which he grasped energetically. The inducements to humbug, self-indulgence and personal aggrandizement by host and guest alike inherent in the situation make it a natural target for satire. That disorder is at the heart of the event is admitted when Dr. Antonic acknowledges that its origin is purely political:

"It is the wish of the Ministry. You see, I am their cultural adviser. They required a celebration this summer. I searched the records for an anniversary. I was in despair until by chance I hit on the name of Bellorius. They had not heard of him, of course, but then they would have been equally in the dark if he had been Dante or Goethe."

The choice of delegates has been equally haphazard. When Scott-King demurs at being called a professor, Antonic explains:

"... for the occasion all are professors. You are more professor than some who are here. I was obliged to cast my net rather wide to have all countries represented. Mr. Jungmann, for example, is simply a gynaecologist from the Hague, and Miss Bombaum is I do not know what. The Argentine and the Peruvian are mere students who happened to be in the country at this time". (GP, 56)

Political considerations shape the program of the congress, as well as its origins. When inter-departmental feuding delays arrival of the Bellorius statue, Doctor Fe assembles the delegates so that they may instead be taken to lay wreaths at the National Memorial. It is only after they have been photographed in this activity that they realize they have been used for political purposes. The National Memorial, it turns out, is "a fetish of civil strife [commemorating] the massacre, execution, liquidation . . . ten years back . . . of some fifty members of the now dominant Neutralian party by those then dominant" (GP, 60).

The comedy surrounding this confusion and manipulation enters into all the events of the story. It is augmented by a narrative style which

fixes the novella's prevailing tone of dry, ironic, slightly dandified detachment. Any Neutralian situation, the tone suggests, has possibilities which may at any moment cause it to slip over into comic anarchy. Typically, when the delegates arrive at the airport, the Nordic Miss Sveningen, destined for a Physical Training Congress, inadvertently becomes part of the Bellorius delegation. Her incongruous presence is only one incident in the first day's succession of comic confusion. The rituals which follow--the pretentious Ministerial welcome, the reception at the university, the civic vin d'honneur--are all shown as numbing formalities in which both the Neutralian sponsors and the hungry delegates display only minimal interest.

The indifference of the hosts and the limited interest of the guests concerning the subject of the conference combine with the language barrier to ensure that the arrangements associated with it will be ridiculous. As well, however, the force of the satire is greatly enhanced by the abundance of comic detail. Thus, the oppressively political atmosphere is reflected in the "places of interest" pointed out by the driver on the way from the airport: "'Here . . . the anarchists shot General Cardenas. Here syndico-radicals shot the auxiliary bishop. Here the bimetallists committed unspeakable atrocities on the wife of Senator Mendoza'" (GP, 34). Engineer Garcia's talk with Scott-King about England is a comic paradigm of speech without communication, as is the conversation of the poet who, after guzzling his food and swigging his wine, attempts to engage Scott-King in a dialogue about English Literature.

As the days pass, the Bellorius congress gradually disintegrates.

Singly and in groups the delegates disappear. Some of them are removed by the police. They have been "informed" against. . . . Nowadays it is not what you do that counts but who informs against you" (GP, 63). In the end, only Scott-King is left to pay tribute to Bellorius when the statue is unveiled.

Parallelling the surface comedy are the background tensions which threaten the conference at every turn. Dr. Antonic has already told Scott-King that the gathering is the product of political necessity. He is International Secretary of the Bellorius Association but this does not make him secure. A Croat, whose people were liberated and put under the Serbs, and are now "liberated" again and put under the Russians, he feels suspect, an outsider in Neutralia. Though he has been ten years in the country, he has not been allowed to become a citizen, and his children, "all born in Neutralia, [are] all without citizenship" (GP, 46-47, 46).

Despite his seeming importance, Dr. Fe is also prey to the occupational insecurity that troubles Antonic. Though he "collects government posts as in the old days churchmen collected benefices" (GP, 56), he, too, is vulnerable, his position threatened by departmental rivals and the opposition of other Ministries. He tells Scott-King of the reply he received from the Minister of Popular Enlightenment when he tried to prevent the Bellorius conference being used for political purposes: "They are eating and drinking at our expense. They should show their respect for the Régime. The Physical Training delegates have all saluted the Marshal in the Sports Stadium. The philatelists have been issued with the party badge and many of them wear it. The professors, too, must help the

New Neutralia!" (GP, 61). All the difficulties associated with the congress are part of a plot to oust him, Fe declares. And his own sudden disappearance becomes a final comment on the precariousness of power in such a milieu: when, a few days later, Scott-King seeks his help, he is no longer to be found; he "seems to have left the Ministry" (GP, 67).

Dr. Fe's departure from office is scarcely more abrupt than the escape which Scott-King is finally able to effect. His bizarre deliverance, reminiscent of the disappearance and reincarnation of Paul Pennyfeather, is the culmination of the disorder which has attended each step of Scott-King's Neutralian experience. It is only fitting, therefore, that it should bring him at the end to a Camp for Illicit Immigrants, since, as "an adult, an intellectual, a classical scholar, almost a poet," he has been from the outset an alien in the New Neutralia. His statement to the headmaster, when he finally returns to Granchester, that "'it would be very wicked indeed to do anything to fit a boy for the modern world'" (GP, 79) is not only a declaration of his continuing allegiance to classical studies, but a dual affirmation of order. Negatively, it is a repudiation of mass values, values which place a premium on uniformity and mediocrity and sacrifice individuality to the demands of 'efficiency'; Scott-King has returned from Neutralia more than ever convinced of the threat to the "complete man" posed by the modern world. Positively, the statement represents his commitment to a political and social order which is at the opposite pole from the system of totalitarian ugliness to which he has just been exposed.

II

When, a year after Scott-King, Waugh came to write The Loved One he dealt again with the impact of a new, coarser culture on a protagonist from "an earlier civilization with sharper needs."⁴ It is the confrontation between the civilization that has formed Dennis Barlow and the one he finds in California, and specifically at Whispering Glades, which, together with the cultural exile Waugh saw as endemic in American life, provides the plot of the novella. This is made clear in his correspondence with Cyril Connolly before The Loved One was published in Horizon.⁵ The story is, in part, the account of a European's encounter with America, and, as Malcolm Bradbury points out, America "recreated for [Waugh], stimulated in him, those ambivalent responses of outrage and fascination which generated his best art."⁶ On his return from California in 1947, Waugh wrote that he had "found a deep mine of literary gold in the cemetery of Forest Lawn and the work of the morticians there and intend[ed] to get to work immediately on a novelette staged there."⁷ The gold was the spiritual and cultural excess satirized in The Loved One.

Nowhere else, except in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, did a personal experience arouse in Waugh such an acknowledged fictional response. The inherent vulgarity of the Forest Lawn environment moved him to a burst of comic fantasy, but, because the impression it made on him was so striking and his reaction so uniformly satirical, there is little room left for assertion of an alternative moral and cultural standard. The "militant attitude to experience" is evident throughout, but the basis for it remains well in the background. While Dennis Barlow is clearly the product

of an older civilization than the one he confronts in Los Angeles; he is less representative of it than Scott-King. His effectiveness as a cultural symbol is inevitably undercut by his misuse of the 'golden treasury' to deceive Aimée and, even more, by his ambivalent relationship to her. The Oxford Book of English Verse, not Dennis, is really the story's primary cultural metaphor, serving the same function here that Scott-King's devotion to classical learning did earlier. It symbolizes everything opposed to the aesthetic vulgarity and intellectual poverty of Whispering Glades. With its satiric thrust and its strong element of fantasy, therefore, The Loved One is more akin to Waugh's early fiction than to the increasingly serious work of his post-war period. Though it lacks their youthful audacity, it is still closer in spirit to Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies than to any of the later novels.

The subtitle, "An Anglo-American Tragedy," suggests the mock-serious perspective which governs the story, since the cultural incongruity at the heart of the plot is ultimately treated not as tragic but as grotesque. From the viewpoint of a civilization based on Christian and classical values, the attitude to death -- and, by extension, to life -- which distinguishes Whispering Glades and the society of which it is a product is seen as spiritually and culturally ridiculous and, accordingly, to invite a satiric response. The satire which results is suggested in the opening-page echo of empire-building and the white man's burden as Hinsley and Barlow consume their sundown whisky and soda, "counterparts of numberless fellow-countrymen exiled in the barbarous regions of the world" (LO, 9). It emerges full-blown in the account of Dennis' night shift at

The Happier Hunting Ground, highlighted by Mrs. Heinkel's grief at the loss of her Sealyham and by her husband's reaction to the idea of a funeral service for the pet: "'We're neither of us what you might call very churchgoing people, but I think on an occasion like this Mrs Heinkel would want all the comfort you can offer'" (LO, 22). The combination of maudlin emotion and perverted religious values, reinforced by the commercial principle implicit in Dennis' presence, makes the incident an animal-kingdom paradigm for the later excesses of Whispering Glades.

While the satire of The Loved One is concentrated on Whispering Glades, it also reaches outward to the wider culture of which California is a locus classicus. This is a standardized world, Waugh suggests, in which individual differences are submerged and the virtues of mass production -- identity of appearance and uniformity of behaviour -- are extended to people as well as things. The Mortuary Hostess who receives Dennis is one of its artifacts, "one of that new race of exquisite, amiable, efficient young ladies whom he had met everywhere in the United States" (LO, 37). He meditates on the homogeneity of her kind:

American mothers, Dennis reflected, presumably knew their daughters apart, as the Chinese were said subtly to distinguish one from another of their seemingly uniform race, but to the European eye the Mortuary Hostess was one with all her sisters of the air-liners and the reception-desks. . . . She was the standard product. A man could leave such a girl in a delicatessen shop in New York, fly three thousand miles and find her again in the cigar stall at San Francisco, just as he would find his favourite comic strip in the local paper . . . (LO, 46)

It is also the world which spawns "the ever present pulse of music from the native huts" and the nutburger with its "total absence of taste" (LO, 7, 107).

This satirical approach fixes the tone of the story. Everything connected with Whispering Glades is seen as disordered, and it is this prevailing social and cultural confusion which is held up to ridicule. However, the inherent grimness of the subject means that the humour in Waugh's treatment is necessarily black. Moreover, the abuse of order represented by the creed of Whispering Glades is so outrageous that almost any comic account of it must gravitate toward fantasy. The minor characters, contributors in varying degrees to the comic pattern, are all touched by this element of the grotesque. Only Almée and Dennis, protagonists in the central confrontation, are treated with anything like seriousness, but, in the end, they, too, become part of an encompassing fantasy.

Waugh's fascination with Forest Lawn/Whispering Glades, which he makes his hero share,⁸ springs from the recognition of a radical disorder: the complete divorce of these funerary practices from any eschatological theology. In the approach of Whispering Glades to its task there is no reflection of the wisdom acquired over the ages from the attempt to confront and explain human destiny. In place of religion and philosophy it offers only the vapourings of Wilbur Kenworthy, the Dreamer:

Behold I dreamed a dream and I saw a New Earth
 sacred to HAPPINESS. There amid all that Nature and
 Art could offer to elevate the Soul of Man I saw the
 Happy Resting Place of Countless Loved Ones. . . .
 And behold I awoke and in the Light and Promise of
 my DREAM I made WHISPERING GLADES (LO, 35)

It is upon such rhetoric that the whole elaborate enterprise which
 intrigues Dennis has been erected. And it is the association of the
 flawed foundation with the sophisticated structure, the reality of death
 with the cosmetic commercial façade, that makes Forest Lawn/Whispering
 Glades an ideal target for Waugh's satire.

Fresh from the Happier Hunting Ground, Dennis approaches Whispering
 Glades like "a missionary priest making his first pilgrimage to the
 Vatican" (LO, 34-35), and his appetite grows by what it feeds on: the
 bombast of Dr. Kenworthy, inscribed in marble at the entrance; the pre-
 vailing literary gaucherie ("the prominent Greek poet Homer" - LO, 39);
 the clerk in the flower shop "spraying scent over the stall of lilac" (LO,
 37), a perfect metaphor for the denial of reality which is the central
 disorder of the place. The euphemisms of the Mortuary Hostess nicely sug-
 gest the encompassing fantasy. The establishment offers, she tells
 Dennis, "inhumement, intombment, inurnment or immurement, but many people
 just lately prefer insarcophagusment" (LO, 38), and she discusses in
 equally sterile language arrangements for casket, costume and burial zone.

The climate of make-believe achieves its most pointed expression when
 the combined skills of Joyboy and Aimée are applied to the corpse of
 Francis Hinsley. Up to this point the essential vulgarity of Whispering

Glades has been asserted indirectly, through a telling choice of detail and an ironic narrative tone. This neutrality is abandoned, however, when Dennis is confronted with the product of Joyboy's and Aimée's handiwork. The detachment which has hitherto issued in satire is here set aside and replaced by a passage of corrosive description in which the narrator's outrage is unmistakably evident. Dennis looks at Hinsley in his coffin,

and the face which inclined its blind eyes towards him -- the face was entirely horrible; as ageless as a tortoise and as inhuman; 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 that an uncle might don at a Christmas party (LO, 62)

This is what Dennis -- and Waugh -- see, but it is, of course, not what Aimée sees. All her rudimentary aesthetic impulse, her thoughts about "Death and Art" (LO, 78), find an outlet in devotion to her work. She feels her occupation is "poetic" (71), but wonders if "anything can be great art which is so impermanent" (72). The meaning and importance of what she does are epitomized for her in the person of Joyboy. It was his coming which "'sort of made me realize what an institution Whispering Glades really is. Mr. Joyboy's kinda holy'" (76). This emphasis on the artistry of Aimée and Joyboy, and the repeated conjunction of it with the general philistinism, is an important element in the picture of a society which does not really understand either art or death.

Aimée's spiritual and cultural confusion mirrors the larger abuses Waugh is satirizing. The society which produced the gracelessness and

meanness of Joyboy and his repellent "Mom" has also produced Aimée's cultural poverty. She "spoke the tongue of Los Angeles; the sparse furniture of her mind . . . has been acquired at the local High School and University; she presented herself to the world dressed and scented in obedience to the advertisements" (LO, 106); but she cannot articulate the needs of her spirit. She is stirred by the lyrics from the anthologies which Dennis sends her, but her education has not qualified her to know that he is not their author.

Religion, too, has touched her only glancingly. Her father's association with Aimée Macpherson's Four Square Gospel Temple ("he had lost his money in religion" - LO, 73) and her mother's with New Thought (she "wouldn't have it that there was such a thing as death" - LO, 75) have not been experiences of a kind to leave their daughter with a religious outlook. As a result, when, in her turn, Aimée needs help she seeks it not from the minister of a traditional creed, but from a more up-to-date practitioner, the Guru Brahmin, "a spiritual director, an oracle, in these parts who daily filled a famous column in one of the local newspapers. . . . To this exotic source resorted all who were in doubt or distress" (LO, 81). The surrogate religions of this debased culture, Waugh suggests, are born by cupidity out of superstition; they not only leave the hungry unfed but enrich the opportunistic. Thus, when Dennis approaches the Reverend Errol Bartholomew, whom he had first encountered at the Happier Hunting Ground officiating at the funeral of a deceased Alsatian ("Dog that is born of bitch hath but a short time to live and is full of misery" - LO, 97), he is seeking not guidance but status which will impress Aimée: "What he

needs is Class'" (LO, 98). Bartholomew is quick to reassure him: "'Any-one who has received the Call has no need for human intervention'" (LO, 98) and can set himself up forthwith as a non-sectarian clergyman.

In addition to making Aimée a culture symbol, Waugh also associates her with another of the ideas which inspired the novella, that of Americans as spiritual exiles. "They are all exiles uprooted, transplanted and doomed to sterility," he told Cyril Connolly. "The ancestral gods they have abjured get them in the end."⁹ It is this sweeping condemnation that lies behind the description of Aimée's final hours. Trapped by the cat-and-mouse logic of Dennis and abandoned by the Guru Brahmin, she falls progressively under the spell of her racial heritage. She is united, "all unconscious, to the high places of her race," and withdraws herself "into a lofty and hieratic habitation" (LO, 106). She is no longer anxious:

Somehow, somewhere in the blank black hours she had found counsel; she had communed perhaps with the spirits of her ancestors, the impious and haunted race who had deserted the altars of the old Gods, had taken ship and wandered, driven by what pursuing furies through what mean streets and among what barbarous tongues! Her father had frequented the Four Square Gospel Temple; her mother drank. Attic voices prompted Aimée to a higher destiny . . . (LO, 116-117)

Though modified by the saving "perhaps", there is more than a suggestion in all this that Aimée is possessed. Whether she is or not, this particular atavistic experience must be seen as symbolic, as a metaphor for widespread cultural alienation, the separation of a people from their racial

roots.¹⁰ It can be seen, too, as the ironic culmination of Aimée's devotion to Whispering Glades, the aesthetically satisfying end to her obsession with Art and Death.

Looked at against the background of their time and place, the roles in which Waugh has cast Aimée and Dennis appear in marked contrast. She is the heroine as victim, he the hero as exploiter. The forces which destroy her -- spiritual and mental confusion, emotional vulnerability, alienation from her roots, a morbid preoccupation with her gruesome employment -- are all influences to which Dennis is immune. Indeed, the whole complex of ideas and values represented by Aimée's workplace is something which he uses for his own purposes. He is, before all, a writer, and his attitude to Whispering Glades and its occupants is primarily that of the artist who has found a mine of inspiration. By the time of his second visit, "His interest was no longer purely technical, nor purely satiric: Whispering Glades held him in thrall. In that zone of insecurity in the mind where none but the artist dare trespass, the tribes were mustering. Dennis, the frontier-man, could read the signs" (LO, 65). The Muse is speaking to him; and, as his acquaintance with Whispering Glades grows, she becomes more insistent, trying to tell him something important. He recognizes that "Sooner or later the Muse would have to be placated. She came first" (LO, 85). By the time of Aimée's death, this urging is all that Dennis hears. On the eve of his departure from Los Angeles he knows that he is

a favourite of Fortune. . . . He was leaving . . . not only unravished but enriched. He was adding his bit to the wreckage, something that had long irked him, his young heart; and was carrying back instead the artist's load, a great, shapeless chunk of experience; bearing it home to his ancient and comfortable shore; to work on it hard and long . . . (LO, 128)

The idea is attributed to Dennis but the voice is that of Waugh, one of "the European raiders who come for the spoils and if they are lucky make for home with them."¹¹

The affair between Dennis and Aimée is, at bottom, only explainable in terms of this artistic imperative. When they first meet he finds her uniquely attractive: "Sole Eve in a bustling hygienic Eden, this girl was a decadent . . . her eyes greenish and remote, with a rich glint of lunacy" (LO, 47). However, as the Muse's utterances come more and more to dominate his thinking, his attitude becomes increasingly capricious and disdainful ("The day when I shall claim you is at hand" - LO, 108). At the end, secure in the possession of his artist's load, he has composedly "settled down to await his loved one's final combustion" (LO, 128).

Nevertheless, when all this has been admitted and fantasy's dominant place in the cultural encounter recognized, Waugh's treatment of his protagonist still leaves unanswered questions, loose strands of realism which mar the pattern of fantasy. Dennis' insistence on marrying Aimée, when nearly all the signs point in another direction, is one of these. His planned career as a clergyman is equally out of character; fantasy though it is, the choice tends to associate Dennis with rather than set him apart

from the cultural degradation which is the object of his contempt and of the story's satire. More inconsistent still is the realistic emotional response attributed to him after Joyboy has brought the news of Aimée's suicide: "Then he went out alone into the pet's cemetery with his own thoughts which were not a thing to be shared with Mr Joyboy" (LO, 122). It is hard to see irony or fantasy here. The effect of the sentence is strongly realistic, suggesting that Dennis feels some genuine sense of loss, a reaction quite inconsistent with the brusque callousness of his negotiations with Joyboy and even further from the indifference with which he carries out Aimée's cremation.

At the end, the themes of cultural confrontation and alienation around which The Loved One is structured and the satirical perspective from which they are treated have been thrust aside, their place pre-empted by Waugh's fascination with Whispering Glades as a source of literary inspiration. Presumably Dennis will write a book, and presumably it will be like the one which Forest Lawn inspired in Waugh. The pattern resembles that at the conclusion of The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, where Pinfold, equipped with his harvest of experience, sits down to write the book we have just read. Nevertheless, despite this late shift of focus, The Loved One has made its point; the ironic 'tragedy' of cultural separateness has been acted out and Whispering Glades has been shown in all its absurdity.

These developments have occurred against a background blacker than that in any of the other novels, blacker, because closer to reality, than even that of Love Among the Ruins. Waugh's taste for the macabre had

earlier produced the deaths of Prendergast and Prudence Courteney but these were isolated incidents, unmatched by anything else in the books where they occur. In The Loved One, the macabre is a staple, testifying by its radical grimness to the seriousness of Waugh's satiric purpose.

The macabre element is not the only aspect of The Loved One that recalls the early novels. As in them, the comedy is strongly coloured by fantasy. Looked at from the same cultural perspective, Whispering Glades is scarcely more outrageous than Llanabba Castle School or the Latin-American Entertainment Company. However, these similarities to the comic novels are less important than the differences between his 1927 and 1947 attitudes. Now seriousness keeps breaking in. It has already been suggested that The Loved One, as a product of Waugh's post-war outlook, lacks something of the audacity, the comic inevitability of his first fiction. It is in this grimmer, more purposeful, character of its comedy that The Loved One is furthest in spirit from his youthful works.

A further point about the satire of The Loved One should be noted. While the satirist, if he is to be effective, cannot always be too dainty in his choice of weapons, and while exaggeration and over-simplification are part of his armoury, there are times in Waugh's portrait of America when satiric exaggeration and personal prejudice appear to converge, so that fact and fantasy are difficult to distinguish. The point becomes clear if one compares Waugh's passage on the homogeneity of American women (a legitimate object of satire) with, say, Swift's A Modest Proposal.

Waugh's description makes a satirical statement, but with little or no dependence on metaphor or exaggeration. Removed from its satirical context and despite the polish of the writing, it can be read as a straightforward statement of fact. The Proposal, however, is quite different; Swift's extended ironic fantasy is only useful to him insofar as it illustrates something else, the lesson he wants to teach. The American-woman passage is directly valid for Waugh; it is almost self-sufficient, itself the object of satire. There is, of course, the possibility that a culture such as Waugh is describing embodies its own exaggerations and, accordingly, satirizes itself by their presence. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, in The Loved One, the satirized object and its fantasy analogue sometimes approach convergence.

III

All three of the novellas hold up to ridicule the direction in which Waugh saw Western society moving after World War Two. However, despite this unified perspective, they differ widely in subject. Whereas Scott-King's Modern Europe is primarily political, a caricature of European totalitarianism, and The Loved One is a corrosive description of cultural degradation in California, Love Among the Ruins offers a preview of a future Britain. It is Waugh's sole venture into dystopian fiction, his only attempt to suggest what the future might look like. He called the story "A Romance of the Near Future," a subtitle which recalls the note attached to Vile Bodies, placing its action "in the near future when

existing social tendencies have become more marked."¹² Despite this warning, however, Vile Bodies remains firmly rooted in the present, whereas Love Among the Ruins sketches the political, social, cultural and philosophical outlines of a fantastic new society.

As a description of the future, Love Among the Ruins is a sketch rather than a finished picture, impressionistic rather than realistic. Only the most essential detail is provided, and no one in the story achieves even the limited reality of Scott-King or Dennis Barlow. Miles and Clara, the only people with any claim to be considered as characters -- the others are almost non-existent -- are barely three-dimensional. To admit the difficulty of classifying even these key figures as characters in the accepted fictional sense is to indicate at the same time the category to which they belong. They are creatures of fantasy, products of a grotesque society.

It is, of course, the grotesqueness of the setting rather than the nature of the characters that interests Waugh. Here, as in the other satirical novellas, the emphasis is on the failings of the social milieu. As in Neutrialia and at Whispering Glades, the normative values of traditional Western civilization are shown as neglected, abandoned and ultimately forgotten. Waugh's socio-cultural attitude, says Malcolm Bradbury, writing of The Loved One, "drew on an endless . . . comparison between the lost city of order and the wilderness forever encroaching further into it."¹³ In Love Among the Ruins, the encroachment is complete. An unbridgeable gulf separates past from present, such that a Nativity play, almost the book's sole reference to the supplanted culture, can be presented on

television on December 25 as "an old obscure folk play . . . now revived and revised as a matter of historical interest."¹⁴ The 'ruins' of the title are not physical -- though Mountjoy, where the story opens, joins the other great houses of Waugh's fiction as a metaphor for vanished beauty and elegance -- but spiritual, the abandoned values of an earlier and higher civilization. As a consequence of this deprivation, the people of the new society are culturally destitute, unable to draw on any resources beyond those which their stunted environment offers. This impoverishment is epitomized in Miles's reaction when he is shown the model of the new Mountjoy prison. It is an object completely devoid of human interest or aesthetic appeal, "a familiar standard packing case, set on end." Miles gazes at it and finds nothing wanting: "It fitted. It fell into place precisely in the void of his mind, satisfying all the needs for which his education had prepared him. The conditioned personality recognized its proper preordained environment" (GP, 116).

The extent of its divorce from the mid-twentieth century 'present' makes Love Among the Ruins a more radical satire than either of its companion novellas. Scott-King and The Loved One, because they occupy recognizable contemporary settings, can, without lessening the force of their satire, refer overtly to the philosophy which underlies it. Scott-King's classics background and Dennis Barlow's "earlier civilization with sharper needs" are obvious references of this kind. However, the fact that the New Society of Love Among the Ruins is a dystopia precludes this; for the imagined future setting the emphasis is entirely derisive. At the same time, the implicit evocation of an antecedent standard is paradoxically

strengthened by the alien nature of the setting. The Euthanasia Centre is, thus, not only an inherently greater affront than Whispering Glades to civilized values, but, because of the greater departure from reality offered by its milieu, a more concentrated focus for satire.

The disparity between the real and the ideal at the heart of satire is always a sign of irregularity, of anomaly. Love Among the Ruins, dealing, as it does, with a radical deviation from traditional standards, is thus, above all, an account of disorder. It describes a society where the roots of genuine order have been lost and, accordingly, where the human instinct to subdue chaos finds bizarre alternatives. The New Society produces monstrosities and calls them order, just as its creature, Miles Plastic, makes a desert in his imagination and calls it peace (GP, 111).

The career of Miles, around which the story is structured, serves as a demonstration of the monstrosity-as-order principle. His initial status as an orphan, instead of leaving him disadvantaged, as one might expect, gives him a preferred claim on the attention and resources of the state. As an envious colleague remarks, "Orphans get all the plums. I had a Full Family Life, State help me" (GP, 95). The Air Force establishment to which Miles is assigned upon completion of his education represents a similar confusion of priorities. It has nothing to do with the defence of the realm: "There were no aeroplanes at the station to which he was posted. It was an institution to train instructors to train instructors

to train instructors in Personal Recreation" (GP, 87). In the same way, the legal process which ensues when he has set fire to his place of work and "incinerated" a number of airmen is reminiscent in its remoteness from reality of the trial of the Knave of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland. The extravagances of correctional theory had proved an inviting target for Waugh as early as the Lucas-Dockery experiments in Decline and Fall, and the same mentality is derided in the rehabilitation theories applied to Miles. The contrast between old and new is neatly captured in the complaint of Mr. Sweat, the old lag, about the unfairness of the penal system:

'I'll tell you what it is, chum. . . . There's no understanding of crime these days like what there was. I remember when I was a nipper, the first time I came up before the beak, he spoke up straight: "My lad," he says, "you are embarking upon a course of life that can only lead to disaster and degradation in this world and ever-lasting damnation in the next." Now that's talking. It's plain sense and it shows a personal interest. But last time I was up, when they sent me here, they called me an "anti-social phenomenon"; said I was "maladjusted". That's no way to speak of a man what was doing time before they was in long trousers, now is it?' (GP, 85)

Myles is a pyromaniac, victim, like Mr. Loveday, of an uncontrollable destructive compulsion: "He had known ecstasy when the Air Force Training Station had whirled to the stars in a typhoon of flame" (GP, 96). And he remembers it with pleasure: "'On such a night as this,'" he tells Clara, echoing Lorenzo to Jessica, "'I burned an Air Force Station and half its occupants'" (GP, 103). He is exultant later as he watches the Mountjoy

conflagration: "This was something altogether finer than the strangulation of a few peacocks" (GP, 110). And the flame of the cigarette-lighter during the wedding at the end of the story is a portent, as the accompanying adjectives ("hymeneal, auspicious" - GP, 117) indicate. Miles's new wife will presumably be a victim in her turn. It is not thus that authority sees Miles, however. To the state, he is not deranged or criminal but underprivileged. It is this official mentality, not Miles's psychosis, which is the central disorder of Love Among the Ruins. The viewpoint dominates the trial which follows the Air Force fire: "It was plain from the start, when Arson, Wilful Damage, Manslaughter, Prejudicial Conduct and Treason were struck out of the Indictment and the whole reduced to a simple charge of Antisocial Activity, that the sympathies of the Court were with the prisoner." And, in summing up, the judge "reminded the jury that it was a first principle of the New Law that no man could be held responsible for the consequences of his own acts" (GP, 88).

Despite his role as an exemplary product of the New Society, there still lingers in Miles an atavistic link to the remote past. The instinct which feels "an incomprehensible tidal pull towards the circumjacent splendours" (GP, 84) of Mountjoy, and which prompts the sense of exile when he leaves, also prompts him to cherish Clara and to want the child she conceives. However, these tentative stirrings are quelled by the state's treatment of Clara. The "'clever new medical director'" (GP, 108) she consults gets rid of both her baby and her beard, but the face which his new experimental operation has given her recalls the repulsive countenance of the embalmed Francis Hinsley: "Her eyes and brows were all

that was left of the loved face. Below it something quite inhuman, a tight, slippery mask, salmon pink." Miles is appalled; as "the ghastly face regarded him with fondness and pride" he "retched unobtrusively" (GP, 109). His shock finds an outlet in the Mountjoy conflagration.

The absurdities of the system which pronounced Miles rehabilitated after his two years in prison for the Air Force fire are matched by those of the Euthanasia Centre, where he is sent following his release. Euthanasia is a flourishing state activity and a fertile field for Waugh's irony:

It was a Tory measure designed to attract votes from the aged and the mortally sick. Under the Bevan-Eden Coalition the Service came into general use and won instant popularity. The Union of Teachers was pressing for its application to difficult children. Foreigners came in such numbers to take advantage of the service that immigration authorities now turned back the bearers of single tickets. (GP, 94)

The irony reaches its peak on the day Miles meets Clara, when the Director of the Centre decries the lack of private initiative: "'The country is full of the natural resources of death, but everyone has to come to us'" (GP, 97). And, when he has interviewed Clara, apparently a priority candidate for euthanasia, only to find that she has no intention of letting him put her down, he explodes again: "'Get her out of here, Plastic, and let some sane people in'" (GP, 99).

Love Among the Ruins is essentially a satire on the Welfare State, a reductio ad absurdum of its least attractive tendencies. The irony that is Waugh's weapon, the biting double-meaning that pervades his description

of the Euthanasia Centre, is used to deride both general and particular aspects of the New Society through which Miles moves. And it is sustained to the story's final scene, shifting from the narrative level to the dramatic as Miles, who has destroyed the old Mountjoy, is selected to tour the country lecturing in support of the new correctional institution which will replace it.

Irony is accompanied by fantasy in working out of Waugh's purpose, to provide the element of grotesqueness which his satire demands. Comic exaggeration is ubiquitous, so that, in the context of the New Society, Clara's beard is no more bizarre than the theories which shape the educational and penal systems or the social services. The prevailing ugliness and inefficiency in Love Among the Ruins, the tendency of things to wear out or break down prematurely, like those in Orwell's 1984, are part of the dystopian convention, recognizable projections from the disagreeable present. The exaggeration, which conditions the narrative at every point, is part of a deliberate pattern of black humour which, at its blackest, in the euthanasia passages, is unmatched even by Whispering Glades.

Commenting on the novellas, Ian Littlewood observes that, "When we turn after the war to Scott-King's Modern Europe, The Loved One, Love Among the Ruins, we can no longer speak of the humour as being random, of its point of view as being secondary. It has in these works a new coherence and with it a sterner sense of purpose." While, he adds, "there is no loss of comic poise in these books . . . they do reveal exactly the qualities which . . . were foreign to his earlier novels: earnestness and bitterness."¹⁵ The comment underlines a point about Waugh's fiction, whose

importance has already been noted here. The world of disorder that he recorded in Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies was the product of youthful comic invention, largely, though not completely, unaffected by judgemental considerations. The satire is both less direct and less evenly distributed, not so much the product of settled conviction as of impulse. However, when he comes, twenty years later, to the novellas, the elements of consistent satire are firmly in place. His comic impulse no longer functions in isolation but is joined to an increasingly settled moral standard and a heightened concern with order which provide an implicit foundation for all his work. This mature perspective is a background but pervasive influence which effectively concentrates the satire of Scott-King's Neutrialian interlude, of Dennis Barlow's association with Whispering Glades and Aimée Thanatogenos, and of Miles Plastic's career as a product of the New Britain.

NOTES

¹See p. 35, supra.

²Evelyn Waugh, Scott-King's Modern Europe, in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and Other Stories (London: Chapman and Hall, 1973, p. 29). Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text. (The original publication date of Scott-King's Modern Europe was 1947.)

³Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh: A Biography (London: Collins, 1975), p. 298.

⁴Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (London: Chapman and Hall, 1948; reset 1965, rptd. 1969), p. 46. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁵Thus, on 2 January, 1948, he wrote: "The ideas I had in mind in writing were: 1st and quite predominantly over-excitement with the scene of Forest Lawn. 2nd the Anglo-American impasse - 'never the twain shall meet, 3rd there is no such thing as an American. They are all exiles, uprooted, transplanted and doomed to sterility. The ancestral gods they have abjured get them in the end. I tried to indicate this in Aimée's last hours. 4th the European raiders who come for the spoils and if they

are lucky make for home with them. 5th Memento mori, old style, not specifically Californian" (Letters, pp. 265-266).

⁶"America and the Comic Vision," Evelyn Waugh and His World (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), p. 167.

⁷Diaries, p. 675.

⁸In his preface to the 1965 edition of The Loved One, he wrote: "I experienced there [at Forest Lawn] the authentic appetite of a writer on the track of a story. I have attributed that rare elation to the hero of this book, making him in the process a poet instead of a novelist." See also Letters, p. 247.

⁹See note 5, supra.

¹⁰En route to Los Angeles in 1947, Waugh told the headwaiter on his train: "I am a foreigner," and received the reply: "We are all foreigners in this country" (Diaries, p. 672).

¹¹See note 5, supra.

¹²Vile Bodies (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1944); Author's Note.

¹³Evelyn Waugh and His World, p. 171.

¹⁴Evelyn Waugh, Love Among the Ruins, in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and Other Stories (London: Chapman and Hall, 1973), p. 107. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text. (The original publication date of Love Among the Ruins was 1953).

¹⁵The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 55, 58.

CHAPTER SIX

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CAUSES: SWORD OF HONOURA FINAL VERSION OF THE NOVELS MEN AT ARMS (1952)OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN (1955) ANDUNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER (1961)

I

More than a lapse of time separates Helena (1950) from the three novels about the Second World War which Waugh wrote over the next decade and which appeared in a combined 'final version' as Sword of Honour in 1965. Unlike Helena, these are novels with a contemporary subject matter, written out of the author's own experience, a claim attested by the fact that "Almost all the characters, good and bad, brave and craven, probable and improbable, who appear in the war novels are present in [Waugh's] journals under their real names, most of them protected by the laws of libel."¹ As well as a new immediacy of subject, there is an altered approach, visible in the absence of any such explicit message as that which marked Helena, or even Brideshead Revisited, and in a return toward the narrative detachment and comic inventiveness of Waugh's early period. The return is not, however, an abandonment of the ground he had recently occupied, since the work is marked throughout by elements of seriousness and commitment, reflecting a consistently applied perspective that is only implicit in the early fiction. As Brian Wicker points out, the narrator's stance in the early novels was marked by a dandyish detachment, a "refusal to take part in the world's madness, or to judge its actions in

its own corrupt terms." In the trilogy, however, things are different: "now the narrator is involved. . . . The war . . . demands participation. . . . It has toppled the dandy from his superior position above the fray. . . ."2

In his preface to Sword of Honour, Waugh says: "I sought to give a description of the Second World War as it was seen and experienced by a single, uncharacteristic Englishman, and to show its effect on him. For this purpose I invented three clowns who have prominent parts in the structure of the story but not in its theme."3 This distinction between structure and theme is crucial. The description of the war as Guy Crouchback knew it, including the comedy to which the clowns contribute, constitutes the structure of the work; the meaning of all this for Guy is its theme. Though distinct, the two are closely linked; the progress of the war and of Guy's military career, particularly as these take shape in the Men at Arms and Officers and Gentlemen volumes, form the structural matrix from which the theme develops. Guy's growth in understanding of the war and of himself in relation to it, culminating in the self-recognition and commitment of Unconditional Surrender, is its thematic product.

Despite this, however, Sword of Honour is not a 'war' novel. While the war is omnipresent, it functions primarily as a background against which the events of the story are projected. As its title suggests, the book is concerned with honour in wartime, a concern symbolized by the traditional knightly weapon. Such a weapon, the Crusader's sword of Sir Roger of Waybrake, is present physically in the opening pages, and over the course of the book it acquires an increasingly figurative character in

relation to Guy Crouchback's spiritual odyssey. In the final chapters its chivalric and crusading associations receive an ironic echo in the Sword of Stalingrad forged to celebrate England's alliance with Russia.

The theme of the novel, the source of its unity and continuity, is a journey of self-discovery animated by honour. Guy Crouchback, the protagonist, moves from an initial stage of illusion, of false values and self-deception, through a lengthy and painful process of disenchantment as the experiences of war alter his ideas and values, to a final recognition and acceptance of reality by which he attains to the honour he had sought in vain under false guises.⁴ Though Guy is old for the part -- thirty-five when the story opens -- Sword of Honour is a kind of Bildungsroman, an account of his emotional education, his delayed coming of age. The basic movement of the story is from the disorder of error and confusion to the order represented by reality and truth. Its thematic core is Guy's hard-won acquisition of the knowledge that human life takes its meaning and value not from public causes, but from "private causes of the soul."⁵

The knowledge does not come easily. The Rubicon Guy finally crosses to enter into an actively willed, committed life occurs late in Sword of Honour, and the preceding years of wartime frustration serve only to reaffirm the ennui from which the war had at first seemed to promise an escape. Guy's emotional disarray as he prepares to leave the Castello Crouchback for England on the eve of war is clearly established. A condition of spiritual apathy is his most characteristic quality: "There was nothing to describe, merely a void. . . . It was as though eight years back he had suffered a tiny stroke of paralysis; all his spiritual

faculties were just perceptibly impaired" (SH, 17). In the years since his desertion by his wife, he has been "set apart from his fellows by his own deep wound, that unstaunched draining away of life and love . . ." (SH, 14). The family temperament contributes to his malaise, a point Waugh emphasized when, in 1961, he drew a correspondent's attention to "The character of all the Crouchback family of withdrawal from the world, at its lowest in mad Ivo, at its highest in the father. This explains much of Guy's failure to re-enter the world in the army."⁶ Virginia Troy delivers a comparable verdict when she tells Peregrine, "The thing about all you Crouchbacks is that you're effete" (SH, 692).

The spiritual blight which afflicts Guy renders him incapable of drawing the emotional support which he might otherwise expect from two traditions which are at his disposal -- chivalry and religion. It is typical of Guy that chivalric values still have meaning for him. He remembers Roger of Waybroke, dead for centuries, and reveres him. Before leaving Santa Dulcina he prays at Sir Roger's tomb, "for me . . . and for our endangered kingdom" (SH, 16). Even the choice of words is instinctively chivalric; he prays not for England or Great Britain, or even 'our country', but for a land ruled by a king to whom knights owe fealty.

Guy's view of politics is equally anachronistic. The confused interests and antagonisms of contemporary Europe present themselves to him in black-and-white terms, and national honour becomes a simple question of justice and loyalty. Out of sympathy with the thinking which prevails around him, he sees the Second World War as an occasion for the West to purge itself of its political and social corruption, a crusade by which

Britain's honour can be restored. Accordingly, unlike most of his compatriots, he welcomes the 1939 alliance between Russia and Germany:

News that shook the politicians and young poets of a dozen capital cities brought deep peace to one English heart. Eight years of shame and loneliness were ended. . . . When Prague fell, he knew that war was inevitable. He expected his countrymen to go to war in a panic, for the wrong reasons or no reason at all, with the wrong allies, in pitiful weakness. But now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle (SH, 14-15)

And when, soon after, Russia invaded Poland, "Guy found no sympathy . . . for his own hot indignation. . . . 'If we are concerned with justice the Russians are as guilty as the Germans.' 'Justice?' said the old soldiers. 'Justice?'" (SH, 29).

Though he is deeply Catholic, Guy's faith fails to nourish him. His religious attitude reflects his characteristic apathy, acknowledging God but asking nothing, assenting but not acting. The tiny stroke of paralysis had done its work: "Even in his religion he felt no brotherhood. . . . On the lowest, as on the highest plane, there was no sympathy between him and his fellow men" (SH, 19-20). Wrapped in his isolation and illusions, he is effectively cut off from the tradition he most respects and cherishes. Just as his chivalric ideals await exposure to the world of Realpolitik, so his faith has still to confront the moral realities which it involves.

The part played by Guy's father in the structure of Sword of Honour is relatively small, but it is vital to the novel's theme; his presence and what he represents are a prerequisite for Guy's ultimate transition from illusion to reality. It is therefore no accident that he is introduced early in the book, where his character and background are described at length and with evident sympathy. The product of a long tradition of gentility, he is "an innocent, affable old man who had somehow preserved his good humour -- much more than that, a mysterious and tranquil joy -- through a life which to all outward observation had been overloaded with misfortune" (SH, 39). Broome, the home of his family for eight centuries, is no longer occupied by Crouchbacks, but he does not repine, "And the sanctuary lamp still burned [there] as of old" (SH, 22). The reference to the lamp is a significant echo of Charles Ryder's final moments alone in the chapel after the glory of Brideshead had departed and their meaning for the story he has narrated. More immediately, it suggests the importance which Mr. Crouchback attaches to his religion, for "All his pride of family was a schoolboy hobby compared with his religious faith" (SH, 41). It is Guy's comprehension of this faith, at which he only arrives after his father's death, that shows him at last where duty and honour lie. The importance which the narrative gives to Mr. Crouchback's creed and to its influence on Guy is vital for the story Sword of Honour tells, but, nevertheless, as Marston La France emphasizes, "there is nothing specifically Catholic about plot or theme . . . the final position which [Guy] attains would have been quite acceptable to Marcus Aurelius."⁷ It is not a sectarian position or one dictated by dogma. It does not, for example, require

from the reader the doctrinal assent which is necessary for the theme of Brideshead Revisited to be fully accepted.

II

When Guy Crouchback joins the Royal Corps of Halberdiers it is the beginning of a love affair with the army. In time the affair becomes embittered, but at the outset there is no shadow on it. Though he has embarked on a crusade to fight a holy war, his introduction to it proves unexpectedly agreeable, and his first weeks with the Corps seem like "something he had missed in boyhood, a happy adolescence." In this initial euphoric glow, "He loved the whole Corps deeply and tenderly" (SH, 53, 61). The reference to adolescence is revealing; Guy's conception of the war during his first year with the Halberdiers has strong schoolboy overtones, echoing his romantic youthful reading about the heroic exploits of British officers in the Afghan wars. As a result of such conditioning he is ripe for the kind of leadership provided by Ben Ritchie-Hook. When the Brigadier announces to the subalterns at Kut-al-Imara, "Gentlemen, these are the officers who will command you in battle" (152), Guy senses the meaning of esprit de corps:

He ceased for the time being to be the lonely and ineffective man - the man he so often thought he saw in himself, past his first youth, cuckold, wastrel, prig; he was one with his regiment, with all their historic feats of arms behind him, with great opportunities to come. He felt from head to foot a physical tingling and bristling as though charged with galvanic current (SH, 152)

And, when, at Penkirk two months later, Ritchie-Hook tells his officers, "Gentlemen, tomorrow you meet the men you will lead in battle," Guy is equally inspired: "It was the old, potent spell, big magic"; the Brigadier's phrases "set swinging all the chimes of his boyhood" (SH, 182).

A concern with order is clearly implicit in the attention, only slightly qualified by irony, which Waugh gives to Halberdier convention and ritual and to the minutiae of army hierarchy -- ranks, privileges, rights, duties and relationships. Guy and Apthorpe buy patrol dress because it is 'traditional'; wine is not drunk except at mess nights; port and snuff go round the table after dinner; "they even make a drill-movement out of eating"; there is "a tradition of firm churchmanship" and "a complete 'survival of a late Victorian Sunday'; the ritual-encrusted guest night at the end of Guy's elementary training is "one simple sublime delight" (SH, 61, 69, 70, 88).

This emphasis on order is part of a larger set of values which receives its fullest examination in the early chapters, where Guy's illusions are still intact and his faith in the army still unshaken. It is the tradition of the military code, not as ancient or noble as the religious and chivalric traditions which also inspire Guy, but still impressive. The tradition issues in the individual as courage in the face of the enemy and in the group as the ability to preserve order under adverse conditions. It shows in the reliance of the Halberdiers Corps on its proven training methods when dealing with unpromising recruits: "The discipline of the square, the traditions of the mess, would work their magic and the esprit de corps would fall like blessed unction from above" (SH, 50).

There are reflections of it in Ritchie-Hook's luncheon-table soliloquy about training men to perfection and "staking them against the odds," and in Guy's meditation at Penkirk about "this strange faculty of the army of putting itself into order" (SH, 79-80, 180). It is echoed again much later when Guy meets Colonel Tickeridge and another Halberdier in the confusion of the Cretan debacle: "They were . . . cleanshaven . . . all their equipment in order, just as they had appeared during battalion exercises at Penkirk" (SH, 461). Tickeridge, professional and competent, personifies the tradition. When, at this Cretan encounter, Major Hound suggests that "it's saue qui peut now," his reply is appropriately curt: "Don't know the expression" (SH, 462).

Men at Arms is not only the most 'military' volume of the trilogy; it is also the funniest. The comic abundance of the early fiction appears here almost undiminished a generation later, concentrated principally in the speech and behaviour of Apthorpe, and in Ritchie-Hook, a less purely humorous but still brilliant comic creation. While these two dominate, the humour extends to a variety of other characters and situations: Air Marshall Beech, Ian Kilbannock, Jumbo Trotter, Trimmer, the Army Training Memorandum (SH, 186-190) the cumulative Grace-Groundling-Marchpole joke. It is present, too, in the book's picture of the monotony and boredom of army life and its suggestion of the "measureless obstructive strength" of military bureaucracy (SH, 151). Waugh's observation of this environment nicely combines affection and irony. He is always alert to "the grit in the military machine,"⁸ the confusion, frustrations and tensions which routinely enter into the texture of military life.

The inspired solemnity of Apthorpe's speech and his utter lack of humour make him a larger comic creation than Ritchie-Hook, just as the latter's aggressiveness and talent for surprise render him altogether more formidable than Apthorpe. Both are essentially adolescents acting out their youthful fantasies on the stage of war. They give performances which Guy finds in one case, given his illusions, inspiring and in the other richly humorous. As the winter months pass at Kut-al-Imara House and the battle between Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook over the thunder-box approaches its climax Guy becomes a connoisseur of the comic values involved: ". . . those mad March days and nights of hide and seek drained into a deep well of refreshment in his mind" (SH, 171).

The influences which alter Guy's conception of the war and his trust in the Halberdiers begin to make themselves felt before the first year is out. Little by little, events in Europe and in his daily life as a soldier eat away at the faith and hope which originally sustained him. The news of Finland's conquest by Russia "quickened the sickening suspicion he had tried to ignore . . . that he was engaged in a war in which courage and a just cause were quite irrelevant to the issue" (SH, 156), and his uneasiness becomes progressively greater as, in the next few months, the Germans occupy Scandinavia and overrun France. These large-scale disasters coincide with personal frustration. When the Halberdier brigade forms at Penkirk and appointments are announced, Guy is denied the promotion he feels he has earned. The best he can achieve is Major Erskine's promise, in the event highly ironic, of better things to come: "None of the temporary officers who've started high will ever get a rifle

company. You will . . . unless you blot your copy-book in a pretty sensational way" (SH, 188).

In the Army Training Memorandum for April 1940 Guy finds "the question that was quintessential" to his very presence in England, in the army, among his fellow-Halberdiers, "What are we fighting for?" (SH, 190). The answer he would have given eight months earlier in Italy or six months earlier when he joined the army is not the one he would give now: "England had declared war to defend the independence of Poland. Now that country had quite disappeared and the two strongest states in the world guaranteed her extinction . . . it was announced that all was going well. Guy knew things were going badly . . . the smell of failure had been borne to them from Norway on the east wind" (SH, 190).

The seeds of disillusionment sown by these events bear their first fruit at the Dakar raid, in the "very unofficial fun" devised by Ritchie-Hook. Guy's involvement is completely in the line of duty and his conduct is irreproachable, but the surreptitious intervention and consequent wounding of the brigadier make the sortie public and the subject of an official inquiry. Instead of being in line for a decoration Guy has "blotted his copy-book," the unlikely contingency mentioned by Erskine. Guy's sense of injustice at this is compounded by his involvement in the death of Apthorpe. He feels not so much ashamed as depressed at what appears to be an ignominious end to the career on which he had embarked so confidently. He had acted honourably and in good faith, but these were not enough to ensure success; they were incalculably affected in practice by the actions of others and by unforeseeable, uncontrollable events. It is a

lesson he will learn again in Crete and Yugoslavia.

As his gift of the whisky to Apthorpe suggests, Guy is something of a naif, a protagonist in the tradition of Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes, Tony Last, and William Boot -- the accident-prone victim of wartime circumstances, ripe for exploitation. It is a character of which his 'uncle' role in the regiment and his experiments with moustache and monocle are manifestations, as is his sexual contretemps with Virginia. Here, in his single-minded concentration on what canon law allows him, he is quite unconscious of how Virginia will react and completely surprised by the explosion which follows. The incident is deeply revealing. Nevertheless, despite his naiveté, Guy has qualities which his predecessors in the line of victim-heroes lacked. As his creator said, he "is a prig. But he is a virtuous, brave prig."⁹ Despite his failings, he is a real person, a three-dimensional human being capable of self-knowledge and growth and able to draw on strong and enriching traditions to which he is deeply attached.

There is no evidence of such a capacity in the earlier naifs. They are all passive characters, people to whom things happen and who are no more knowledgeable after the event than before. The attitude of the Paul who returns to Scone College is the same as that of the Paul who left. His ordeal at the hands of Margot Beste-Chetwynde has left him neither sadder nor wiser; it has all been experienced by a shadow. Adam, on "the biggest battlefield in the history of the world" (VB, 217), is the same creature of circumstance that lost his manuscript to the Customs officers. William Boot's authorship of "Lush Places" is just as meaningful and

satisfying to him after the war in Ishmaelia as it was before. Not only do these protagonists not change; one knows that they are incapable of it. Even Tony Last never acquires self-knowledge. More recognizably 'human' than the others and so more open to a realistic possibility of growth, he still never achieves it. He is, as they are not, three-dimensional, but the imperatives of his role demand that he end as he began, a victim. The image which Guy Crouchback projects, however, is different from these; the story of Sword of Honour is, above all, a story of emotional growth, of how, over the three volumes, his understanding of himself and his fellow creatures progressively deepens.

III

The months of training with the Halberdiers, culminating in the Dakar episode and its consequences, are the initial stage in Guy's odyssey. His fundamental misconception of what the war means and how it is being fought receives its first serious challenge in this exposure to the workings of the military machine. The story's theme is still hidden -- it will not emerge clearly until much later -- but the developing structure of the work has already sullied his initial innocence. In effect, each volume of the trilogy can be seen as the record of an encounter in which a central element in Guy's mythology surrenders to wartime reality. In Men at Arms, it is the myth of army-as-adventure which suffers; "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers" is not an adequate formula to explain the compromises Guy observes and the disappointments he experiences. In Officers and

Gentlemen, the ideal of chivalric behaviour is tarnished by the shameful act of a knightly figure. And in Unconditional Surrender, national honour yields to the exigencies of Realpolitik.

There are less serious interludes, however, before these latter developments occur. To find Chatty Corner and deliver Apthorpe's 'gear' is for Guy "an act of pietas" by which Apthorpe's spirit will be placated. It is with this obligation, sober enough in concept, wholly comic in fact, that he "set[s] out on another stage of his pilgrimage, which had begun at the tomb of Sir Roger" (SH, 279). The quest leads him to the Isle of Mugg and X Commando, to which, by a fortunate coincidence, he has been assigned for training. It is in this setting that the chapter in Guy's wartime journey which concentrates on knightly honour opens.

The officers Guy encounters on his arrival are essentially patrician dandies, with a studied indifference to everything outside the sphere of their own special interests. These are not the "poor men" of the Halberdier Officers' House, and their casual attitude to military service is a far cry from the Halberdier tradition of firm discipline and thorough training. This dandy attitude plays an important part in the working out of Waugh's chosen theme, "the humanizing of Guy."¹⁰ The latter's faith in Ivor Claire and in the values he believes Claire personifies is the principal thematic strand in Officers and Gentlemen, and the revelation which comes when Claire, in the ultimate dandy gesture of choosing flight and dishonour over the boredom of a prisoner-of-war camp, betrays that faith is the climax of Guy's disillusionment with the war and the army.

When Guy first enters the makeshift officers' mess at Mugg, Claire is reclining on a sofa,

his head enveloped in a turban of lint, his feet shod in narrow velvet slippers embroidered in gold thread with his monogram. He was nursing a white pekinese; beside him stood a glass of white liqueur The pictorial effect was of a young prince in the Near East in his grand divan in the early years of the century. (SH, 311-312)

To Guy, a natural hero-worshipper, the elegant, fastidious and accomplished Claire represents the beau idéal of English soldiery. To Ian Kilbannock, however, Claire and his fellows of X Commando appear in a different light. He sees them from the perspective of Fleet Street. "They just won't do, you know," he explains. "Delightful fellows, heroes, too, I dare say, but the Wrong Period. Last-war stuff, Guy. Went out with Rupert Brooke. . . . Hopelessly upper class" (SH, 374-375). Guy remains impervious to such barbs; the glow of idealism which Ritchie-Hook's rhetoric had kindled at Kut-al-Imara and Penkirk is fanned to flame again in this even bleaker spot, a flame which continues to burn throughout the time Claire and Guy are together. At Cape Town he thinks

with deep affection of X Commando. . . . He remembered Claire as he first saw him in the Roman spring in the afternoon sunlight amid the embosoming cypresses of the Borghese Gardens, putting his horse faultlessly over the jumps, concentrated as a nun in prayer. Ivor Claire, Guy thought, was the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account. (SH, 385-386)

Against this tribute must be set the fact that nowhere in Sword of Honour does Claire do or say anything that might be considered as justifying such faith in him. The faith must be taken, therefore, like the response to Ritchie-Hook's rhetoric, as further evidence of Guy's proneness to romanticize.

The hierarchical and administrative complexities of army life are the background of Sword of Honour, the setting in which Guy acts out his destiny. As well, they are the principal source of the comedy which leavens it. The comic element is threaded through Officers and Gentlemen, emerging periodically in extended passages like Jumbo Trotter's leisurely travels with Apthorpe's equipment, or Operation Popgun, or the caricature of baronial Highland life when Guy and Tommy dine with Colonel Campbell.

Operation Popgun is the most elaborate of these comic set pieces and one with important implications for the larger story Sword of Honour tells. Waugh's account of the operation focuses on a favourite topic, the disorders of wartime bureaucracy. The battle in London for the survival of Hazardous Offensive Operations is the staff-level counterpart of the soldiers' war in the Middle East. Here the struggle is for departmental influence and status, and the enemy is those members of the General Staff who wish to dismantle the department. Public opinion, the press and politicians all become involved in the bureaucratic battle. The artificiality of the situation, its remoteness from wartime realities, is reflected in the hollowness of the part played in it by Trimmer. Though his role in the operation is central, he is never more than a puppet, doing what Ian Kilbannock tells him and speaking the words Kilbannock puts in

his mouth. As a result of the 'successful' raid into enemy territory, he becomes a national hero and ends up seconded to a succession of government departments "to boost civilian morale and Anglo-American friendship" (SH, 435). The forces which have produced this bizarre result have little to do with the actual waging of war and still less with the struggle for justice which means so much to Guy Crouchback.

However, to consider Popgun as merely an interlude, a comic diversion from the main stream of the novel, would be to do less than justice to the architecture of Sword of Honour's plot. The operation, with all its ramifications, contributes to the book's structure by its ironical exposure of a theatre of war remote from the battlefield. As well, it makes, through the presence of Trimmer, an important contribution to the theme. Though he is treated throughout with ironic contempt, Trimmer's significance goes well beyond comedy or contemptibility. His role in the trilogy makes him a foil for Guy Crouchback in three vital areas: in his army career, in the values that motivate him, and in his relationship with Virginia Troy. From the time that Ritchie-Hook terminated his temporary commission as a Halberdier to the end of Operation Popgun, Trimmer has bluffed, shirked and wangled his way successfully through the intricacies of the military machine. The opportunism of its conception and the deceit attending its execution make Popgun the perfect metaphor for Trimmer's army past and for the career of public adulation on which at the end he is about to enter. His whole shabby history is the reverse image of Guy's career over the same period, a career which, despite blameless motives, devotion to duty, and professional competence has resulted in a record

that is little better than passable.

It is in the domain of values that the contrast emerges most clearly. As we have seen, it is the values Guy accepts and the traditions that support him which give his life its meaning, and which in fact are the reason for his involvement in the war. Trimmer, in contrast, is ruled solely by appetite and self-interest, a coward who seeks in the army only personal gratification, "with all the panache of a mongrel among the dustbins, tail waving, ears cocked, nose a-quiver" (SH, 341).¹¹

Trimmer's involvement with Virginia, beginning in a Glasgow hotel in the November fogs of 1940 and ending in her pregnancy three years later, links him to Guy in a sense of which he is never aware and which Guy recognizes only when he agrees to remarry Virginia. The marriage clinches the thematic importance of Trimmer's part in the novel, since it is through the acceptance as his own of Trimmer's bastard child that Guy is finally "humanized".¹²

Guy's Cape Town meditation about his affection for his brothers in arms -- repeating the "deep and tender" love he had felt earlier for the Corps of Halberdiers -- marks the end of his initial association with X Commando. He is en route with them to the Middle East and to an experience of warfare which will put to the test the casual attitude to soldiering that marked their time at Mugg. That experience is the participation of Hookforce in the final days of the disastrous Cretan campaign, a major event in the story Sword of Honour tells. Crète, "this island of

disillusion" (SH, 464), through the life-and-death experience it thrusts upon everyone involved, becomes a vital test of preparedness and leadership, of courage and honour. The evacuation offers a picture of disorder on a grand scale, and for Guy it becomes a crucial stage in his pilgrimage toward reality. The days in Crete are the climax of his soldiering and of Hookforce's Middle Eastern experience, and Waugh's description of the evacuation is the military centre-piece of the trilogy. As his diaries make clear, he drew heavily on his own experience of the operation for the account he gives in the novel. Nearly all the events described there have their counterparts in his 1941 "Memorandum on Layforce."¹³

Two cardinal facts fix the conditions for Hookforce's role. One is the strategic decision, almost coincident with their arrival, that Crete is to be abandoned. The other is the order, delivered to Major Hound two days later, that his brigade is to stay behind to cover the withdrawal: "Hookforce were last on, so I'm afraid you're the last off" (SH, 481). This, of course, means capture by the enemy.

The disintegration of Hound's personality under the stress of combat is an important element in the Gretan narrative, reducing the military debacle to a human scale. His incompetence and panic are a reflection of the widespread disorder which marks the culmination of the campaign. Side by side and contrasting with this is Guy's performance under the same conditions. That Hound receives more space than Guy in the account of this central event of Officers and Gentlemen is in line with the focus on failure which marks this phase of the story.

Until his arrival in Crete the narrative always accords Hound his army rank. The first use of his nickname -- when he tells Guy: "My friends usually call me Fido" (SH, 457) -- seems casual enough, but its introduction here is dramatically meaningful. Despite the suggestion of fidelity in the name -- ironic in this case -- the ordinary associations of 'Fido' are animal rather than human, associations which are emphasized when, faced with "the first great temptation of [his] life," Hound yields. Knowing he shouldn't, he barter[s] with soldiers, who know he shouldn't, for bully beef and biscuits: "The deal was done. Fido took his price of shame in his hand, the little lump of the flaky fatty meat and his single biscuit. He did not look at Guy but went away out of sight to eat. It took a bare minute. Then he returned to the centre of his groups and sat silent with his map and his lost soul" (SH, 459).. The meaning of the rhetoric is unmistakable: Fido has been unfaithful to his trust as an officer and a leader. His action is a rupture of the order on which military discipline is founded and a symbol of the breakdown of order which appears on every side.

Fido's fear goes hand in hand with his infidelity. Once he comes under fire, it rapidly erodes his self-control, so that, left alone after Guy has gone to seek rations and information (SH, 474), his behaviour becomes increasingly degraded. A variety of canine imagery suggests the process of decline. He "scratches and snuffles" at Guy (SH, 470), and he sleeps in a kennel-like culvert. The imagery intensifies when, instinctively seeking orders, he finds Creforce Headquarters. Arrived there, he realizes that "he had nothing to report, nothing to ask; no reason to be

there at all. He had been led by instinct, nosing out his master. He brought no propitiatory rat. 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" (SH, 480).

When he left the Headquarters, "he left the world of good order and military discipline and was on his own in the wilderness" (SH, 482). The image is prophetic; he is lost in body and spirit. There remain only the indignity of being robbed by a Cretan brigand and of abjectly 'surrendering' to his own corporal-major. It is the end of the road for Fido. His time with Hookforce has been a chronicle of disorder and its conclusion is suitably obscure. Presumably he dies at the hands of Ludovic ("Things had happened to Ludovic in the summer of 1941, things had been done by him which, the ancients believed, provoked a doom" -- SH, 626).

The description of Hound's decline and fall is succeeded by the account of what happens to Guy after they part company. The latter's conduct is disciplined and orderly, and the record of it is relatively short, reflecting, as has been noted, the minor role of order in the Cretan affair. The things Guy observes and does during his hours alone all serve to suggest the price at which order is purchased under these extreme conditions: self-control, courage, good discipline, good training, good leadership. The confusion and disarray which surround Hound and Guy are large-scale military phenomena. They affect all of Creforce in varying degrees, but Waugh epitomizes them in the cowardice and disarray of a single soldier. In the same way, he illustrates in Guy the individual soldierly qualities on which the order of armies depends.

The note of order is struck in a variety of small incidents. When, on the morning after their landing, Guy surveys the brigade headquarters which has just been established, "It occurred to him on that morning of uncertainty that he was behaving pretty much as a Halberdier should" (SH, 460). And, when, a little later, he finds the Hookforce leaders to advise them of the planned withdrawal, he records the battlefield organization of the several Commandos, "taking a dry relish in punctiliously observing the forms of procedure" (SH, 468). He is unable to bury the dead soldier whom he finds in the deserted village, but he prays, salutes, and removes the identity disc so that some day the boy's family can know what has happened to him. Soon after this he comes upon the Halberdier battalion, where "Everything was in order" and "everything was done correctly" (SH, 492, 497) as they carried out their assigned defensive action.

Ivor Claire's conversation with Guy in the final hours before the British surrender is a crux in the novel, exposing for the first time the reality behind the illusion which has held Guy's imagination captive. Guy himself is clear about what has to be done that day. He has "found Creforce headquarters and brought from them to the Hookforce commanders the last grim orders. . . . Surrender at dawn" (SH, 507). His faith in Claire is so complete that he treats the latter's doubts about the wisdom of ordering officers to surrender with their men as idle speculation, not the serious misgivings of a man considering desertion. However, Claire's sense of honour is by no means as delicate as Guy's wishful thinking would have it. He was at Dunkirk, he reminds Guy; "Not much fuss about priorities there. No inquiries afterwards" (SH, 507). The hint of ruthlessness

and self-interest recalls Trimmer's remark to Guy the first day at Mugg: "Did you spot his M.C.? Do you know how he got it? At Dunkirk, for shooting three territorials who were trying to swamp his boat. Great chap old Ivor" (SH, 318). But all this is lost on Guy. Claire's face, as they part in the moonlight, is once again "calm and recollected, as he had first seen it in the Borghese Gardens" (SH, 509), and Guy's faith in knightly honour remains unshaken until he learns from Julia Stitch that Claire has deserted the men of his troop and returned to Egypt with the Navy.

Guy's own escape is differentiated from Claire's. Offered a place in the fishing boat with the sapper captain, he accepts. He gives his men the chance to accompany him, the one chance in five of survival, but only Ludovic takes it and embarks with him. As recounted in Sword of Honour, Guy's conduct is irreproachable, particularly since escape by small boats, where possible, has been encouraged by Creforce Headquarters (SH, 482). However, it should be noted that the text of Officers and Gentlemen, though not that of Sword of Honour, contains a sentence which casts doubt on his behaviour. The sentence describes Guy's awakening on May 31, the day the surrender is to take place: "He had no clear apprehension that this was a fatal morning, that he was that day to resign an immeasurable piece of his manhood."¹⁴ As it stands, the sentence is ambiguous; it could refer to the anticipated surrender to the Germans as well as to Guy's escape in the fishing boat. Whatever its significance, Waugh did not include it in Sword of Honour. He gave no reason for his original use of the wording or its later deletion. The most likely explanation would

seem to be that he removed it in order to ensure that Guy's conduct appeared in an unequivocally favorable light. Certainly, this is the effect of the change.¹⁵

The final words describing Guy's escape ("So they sailed out of the picture," SH, 515) are an ironic play on the Services catch-phrase, "in the picture," which recurs throughout the Cretan narrative and is used as the title of the second book of Officers and Gentlemen. The phrase has echoes of order and control, suggesting that there is a picture whose elements can be understood, that the situation it depicts is inherently manageable. Used in the context of the Cretan debacle it is, of course, wholly ironic, designating a reality which is completely out of focus, a scene of kaleidoscopic disorder.

Guy's long silence in the hospital at Alexandria is an interlude which probes the chronic strain of melancholy in his temperament. Waugh's emphasis on withdrawal as a Crouchback family characteristic has already been referred to,¹⁶ and in a letter to Maurice Bowra he ties it specifically to the present situation: "Ivo the mad dead brother who died before the story began is a key character. Guy's silence in the hospital is all part of the strain that works out variously in the members of the family."¹⁷ It has been made clear earlier that Guy is "Ever prone to despond" and that he sees himself as "a gentler version of poor mad Ivo" (SH, 303). Though precipitated by the ordeal of his Mediterranean crossing in an open boat, his trauma is not purely a reaction to shock. It is of his

own making, his "private possession, all his own work" (SH, 515). As his physical condition improves his eyes assume again "their habitual soft melancholy," but he has "lost the knack" of talking (SH, 520, 521), and despite medical care, says and does nothing.

When release arrives it is as arbitrary and unexplained as the muteness. It comes in a visit from Julia Stitch, "a new clear voice [which] called Guy irresistibly to order" (SH, 521). It is from her that he learns Ivor Claire is not, as he had thought, "that young prince of Athens sent as sacrifice to the Cretan labyrinth" (SH, 522), but a deserter who has put into action the thoughts he had voiced at their last meeting. The revelation comes to Guy as a radical shock. For Mrs. Stitch, however, the matter presents no complications; she is fully aware of what Claire has done, but he is a friend and that is all that counts. For Tommy Blackhouse, too, the matter is quite simple; like her, he has no illusions about Claire's conduct, though, unlike her, he condemns it. However, his reaction is professional not moral, so that, when Guy asks if he plans to take any action, he can reply:

'Now the best thing is for everyone to keep quiet and forget the whole business. It's far too big a thing for anyone to do anything about. He might have to stand court-martial for desertion in the face of the enemy. That would be the bloody hell of a thing. They shot people for it in the last war. Of course no one's going to do anything.' (SH, 527)

Guy says nothing about his own attitude. However, he has in his War Diary the proof of Claire's guilt, and his question indicates his instinctive

feeling that some action should be taken, that, if the phrase 'officer and gentleman' is not wholly meaningless, such conduct cannot be overlooked. Clearly, this is not the popular view, but it is central to the values which inspire the second part of the trilogy, and to the qualities in Guy around which the theme of Sword of Honour develops.

Later, convalescing at the residence of Mrs. Stitch, he is still unable to accept the simple code that suffices for others, the code of those who, like her and Tommy Blackhouse, are guided by interest rather than principle:

Guy lacked these simple rules of conduct. He had no old love for Ivor, no liking at all, for the man who had been his friend had proved to be an illusion. He had a sense, too, that all war consisted in causing trouble without much hope of advantage. Why was he here in Mrs. Stitch's basement, why were Eddie and Bertie in prison, why was the young soldier lying still unburied in the deserted village of Crete, if it was not for Justice? (SH, 530)

It is the kind of question he had put to the old soldiers at Bellamy's at the beginning of the war, the eternal cry of the idealist confronted with the world's disorder, and, as then, no answer is forthcoming.

It is during Guy's time with the Stitches that the German invasion of Russia takes place, "a day of apocalypse" (SH, 530) on which Britain and Russia become allies. These international developments only intensify his bitterness and frustration. When he had planned his crusade, in the

summer before the War, everything had seemed clear; he had known then what he was fighting for.

Now that hallucination was dissolved, like the whales and turtles on the voyage from Crete, and he was back after 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.

That afternoon he took his pocket-book to the incinerator which stood in the yard outside the window, and thrust it in. It was a symbolic act; he stood like the man at Sphakia who dismembered his Bren and threw its parts one by one out into the harbour, splash, splash, splash, into the scum. (SH, 531-532)

Once again, Guy has "dissociated himself from the army in matters of real concern" (SH, 395), but this time the act is formal and deliberate, product of a more conscious disillusionment. The disappointment he had known at the end of Men at Arms, the sense of a trust misplaced, is redoubled here. He wishes only to return to the Halberdiers and regimental soldiering, and to put all this "ambiguous world" behind him, but, thanks to Mrs. Stitch, he is frustrated even in this. She pulls strings without compunction to protect Ivor Claire by having Guy returned to England on a ship that will keep him out of the way as long as possible. Even his parting gesture to the memory of the dead soldier is negated when she unhesitatingly drops in the wastebasket the envelope containing the identity disc, which he has left behind for Headquarters Middle East.

Here in Egypt, as at Dakar, Guy's lot is conditioned by the actions of others and by events beyond his control. Though he does not know it,

the treachery of Ivor Claire, which Guy sees as irrevocably part of the past, has reached out, through the hand of Mrs. Stitch, to contaminate the present. As a result, Guy's military career is radically altered, taking a turn he has neither expected nor wanted. The disorder which surrounds him as he leaves Alexandria is the climax of the trilogy. The Cretan debacle, Claire's defection, and Britain's alliance with Russia are events of critical importance -- more important than anything in Men at Arms -- in the process of Guy's progress from illusion to reality, and thus in the development of Sword of Honour's theme. The novel's structural fabric, too, is richer than in the earlier volume, resting on a more penetrating treatment of character and on the larger and more intricate military background provided by the Cretan operation.

IV

Waugh's choice of titles for his trilogy was apt. The names he gave to the three volumes function effectively at both literal and figurative levels, not only indicating the character of each in the overall pattern of the work, but pointing to the successive stages in Guy Crouchback's journey of self-discovery. Men at Arms is primarily a book about the army, about the esprit de corps, the comedy, the confusion, and the initial euphoria of military training. But it is also about Guy's vision of the Second World War as a crusade, a twentieth-century equivalent of the cause in which Sir Roger of Waybroke served. Officers and Gentlemen, by contrast, is about questions which are essentially social and personal

rather than military; despite its elaborate army setting, the story is not so much concerned with the nature of soldiering as with the nature of honour and justice and of the forces which compromise them. At the figurative level, accordingly, the title can be seen as evoking the values which tradition has accumulated around its two nouns and illuminating them through the relationship between Guy and Ivor Claire.

The title of the third volume, despite its warlike associations, is devoid of military significance. The emphasis throughout the book is on the contrast, which Officers and Gentlemen has introduced, between public and private morality. Of the three titles, Unconditional Surrender is thus the most inward-looking, the least concerned with soldiering and military life. As such, it matches the climactic phase of Guy's metamorphosis and suggests the radically altered perspective from which, at the end, war and politics are viewed. Reflecting this new realism, Unconditional Surrender is more sombre than either of its predecessors, darker in tone and with less place for comedy. Save for Guy, its key figures are civilians, not soldiers, and its major events -- Mr. Crouchback's funeral, Virginia's pregnancy, the plight of the Jewish refugees -- are all in the civil domain. It is a book about perennial human concerns. "Gaiety, charm, grace, style are notably lacking in its characters," says Ian Littlewood, "partly . . . because these qualities no longer command the writer's allegiance as once they used to."¹⁸ There is nothing here of the dandyism which dominated the comic novels and lingered on into Brideshead Revisited.

Together with the Crusader's sword which gives the whole work its title, the Sword of Stalingrad, commemorating Britain's alliance with Russia, is the trilogy's most important symbol. The weapons represent the two poles of Guy Crouchback's wartime experience: the fantasy of romantic idealism with which he left Italy in 1939 and the gritty world of contemporary reality with which he grapples in Unconditional Surrender. Situated as it is in the story, just after the climax of Guy's disillusionment, the Sword of Stalingrad symbolizes the 'public causes' from which he is turning away. Chief among these is the realm of international politics — of alliances and power, of deception and compromise. The state sword was created to mark such a cause: Britain's devotion to "the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad". . . . The people were suffused with gratitude to their remote allies and they venerated the sword as the symbol of their own generous and spontaneous emotion" (SH, 551). It is not an enthusiasm Guy shares. For him, the weapon is associated not with current Russian victories but with "The enemy . . . huge and hateful . . . the Modern Age in arms" (SH, 15), which he had seen so plainly four years ago and with which he had believed his country was joining battle. He associates it, too, with the pervasive pro-Soviet attitude he had encountered on his return from the Middle East: "Tanks for Russia . . . 'Aid to Russia' . . . 'Naturally the workers are keen to help Russia. It's how they've been educated'" (SH, 538).

This attitude and all it implies are repugnant to Guy. His war aims are of a different kind and, accordingly, it is with another sword, Sir Roger's, that his faith and hope are increasingly linked. The things he

believes in and values, the traditions he defends, are becoming more and more associated not with public causes and their attendant disorder and disappointment, but with the domain of personal conduct.¹⁹ Sir Roger's sword is a metaphor for the values inherent in this new perspective, and it is in terms of this, though he is not conscious of such figurative overtones, that Guy ultimately finds the cause which justifies his existence.

The awareness of his particular task does not come to him at once; there is an interval of two years after his return to England which the narrative passes over lightly. At its end, he is told that he will not be going overseas with the Halberdiers' Second Brigade; at forty he is too old to be taken into action, and the 'no can do' he receives is final. His career as a Halberdier is ended.

The military world to which the liaison job at the War Office offered by Tommy Blackhouse now introduces Guy is vastly different from the one of regimental soldiering he has known for four years. It is a world in which political considerations bulk large, and, accordingly, the role which the army has hitherto played in the story is here greatly reduced, its place taken, as in Operation Popgun, by struggles for political advantage and the absurdities of wartime bureaucracy. Guy observes both in action in his work at the headquarters of Hazardous Offensive Operations. The subtleties of para-political infighting are epitomized in Sir Ralph Brompton, diplomatic advisor to H.O.O., "who daily patrolled the building in the self-imposed task of 'political indoctrination'" (SH, 559). Brompton's interests and influence are a continuing thread in the plot of Uncondi-

tional Surrender, tying together the roles of anti-Fascist activists like de Souza and Gilpin and cultural establishment figures like Everard Spruce.

Waugh clearly means the attitude of Brompton and his associates to be seen as part of a general disorder symbolized by the Sword of Stalingrad.

It is an attitude which is more concerned with post-war political advantage than with fighting the war, and which is prepared to subordinate human values, and if necessary human lives, to that end. The influence of this attitude on the various civil and military factions involved is a key element in the Yugoslav section of the novel.

Less momentous than this is the comic disorder for which Hazardous Offensive Operations H.Q. is also a locus. At its inception the headquarters was a relatively modest enterprise, but it has since proliferated and now includes

numerous mansions . . . 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 Edgeware Road who had been engaged to cast spells on the Nazi leaders. . . . Even

Dr. Glendenning-Rees, fully recovered from the privations of Mugg, had a dietary team in Upper Norwood, from whose experiments batches of emaciated 'conscientious objectors' were from time to time removed to hospital. (SH, 556)

H.O.O.'s motley collection of projects, ranging from ultra-sophisticated to mumbo-jumbo primitive, is presented as an exercise in absurdity.

a picture of what happens when theory runs riot. The account recalls the description of the department when Guy first encountered it, en route to Mugg in 1940. Already its leanings towards the bizarre had resulted in the heather-and-seaweed experiments of Glendenning-Rees and in the assignment of Chatty Corner, whose expertise was in tropical warfare, to provide training in rock-climbing to X Commando. In Waugh's elaborately ironical treatment H.O.O. H.Q. becomes a Second World War version of Swift's Academy of Lagado.

Comedy also dominates Unconditional Surrender's treatment of the former Corporal-Major Ludovic. However, though he is assigned one of the trilogy's three clown parts, Ludovic never achieves the clear definition of Apthorpe or Ritchie-Hook. Alone of the important characters, he is treated inconsistently. Enigmatic in the second volume, he emerges at the beginning of the third as a figure of some intellectual pretensions and the author of a best-selling novel which recalls Brideshead Revisited. Apparently decisive and ruthless when he disposes of Major Hound and the sapper captain, he has become, three years later, a man haunted by his past and terrified of Guy Crouchback, who suspects him of nothing. At the end, isolated in his dreary parachute-training school, he alternates between the pompous and the ridiculous, quite devoid of his original suggestion of menace.

Ludovic's negative role serves to remind us that plot elements making for disorder in Sword of Honour are separate from the theme. Moreover, they tend to be large-scale and public in nature, whereas those making for order are immediate and personal, directly affecting Guy. Thus,

international developments, such as Russo-German relations and their impact on Britain, strategic events like the Cretan campaign and the British Mission to the Yugoslav partisans, or such matters as Ralph Brompton's plotting or military and government bureaucracy, are all in varying degrees disorderly, negative and disintegrative in tendency. On the other hand, Guy's religion, his chivalry, his bond to his father, his treatment of Virginia, and his efforts for the Jewish refugees, are all intimately linked to a private process of emotional and spiritual growth which has been a preoccupation of the narrative from the outset. From the perspective of Sword of Honour's theme, their influence is positive and integrating.

The way in which these external and internal elements of the story interact makes an important contribution to its overall effect. The former, in addition to their value as story, support the theme and facilitate its gradual emergence from the matrix of the plot. The latter illuminate and enhance the narrative events by giving them a new and unifying dimension. The distinction between public and private causes is consistently respected, while their interdependence is never slighted.

The opposition between disorder and theme which is argued here is not really contradicted, as it might seem to be, by such important episodes as the Dakar raid, Apthorpe's death, Ivor Claire's desertion, and the death of the Kanyis, all of which touch Guy closely and contribute to his progress from illusion to reality. It is true that these events are inherently negative and disorderly, but, in terms of their function in the novel, they are private rather than public, incidents of particular rather

than general import. Their support of the theme is more significant than their contribution to the action. As a result, they are firmly tied to the movement from disorder to order which helps to give the trilogy its meaning.

The association of disorder with external and order with internal aspects of the story is not confined to Sword of Honour. It can be seen, too, in Tony Last's search for the City, and, in Brideshead Revisited, in the meaning Charles Ryder extracts from his experience with the Flytes. The poles of order and disorder emerge clearly also in the contrasted lives and attitudes of Helena and Constantine. The parallel does not apply, however, to the comic novels or the satirical novellas. In these, where the meaning of the fiction coincides with its satire, theme and action are both expressive of disorder, and order is only present by implication.

The integration of order and disorder with the different levels at which Sword of Honour engages the reader is no accident. Here, as in all his 'serious' work, Waugh is articulating in fictional terms his conviction that the world unredeemed by Grace is always a place of disorder, and that, in the last analysis, order in both the individual and society is the result of conformity to a divine plan.

Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in Guy's relationship with his father. It is through his love and respect for his father and because of the latter's wisdom that Guy comes to a recognition of his own spiritual state. The process of understanding begins during their conversation about the Lateran Treaty between the Vatican and Mussolini, when Guy

argues that such accommodations with dubious worldly powers should be beneath the dignity of the Papacy. Mr. Crouchback is upset at this lack of insight: "My dear boy . . . you're really talking the most terrible nonsense, you know. That isn't at all what the Church is like. It isn't what she's for" (SH, 544). His letter the next day explains the situation further:

The Mystical Body doesn't strike attitudes and stand on its dignity. It accepts suffering and injustice. It is ready to forgive at the first hint of compunction.

When you spoke of the Lateran Treaty did you consider how many souls may have been reconciled and have died at peace as the result of it? How many children may have been brought up in the faith who might have lived in ignorance? But quantitative judgements don't apply. If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face' (SH, 546-547)

The statement about quantitative judgements profoundly affects Guy. He recalls it at his father's funeral, where the process of his enlightenment is completed as he meditates on his father's goodness and his own spiritual apathy, the passivity that had been his customary attitude before God.

The act of prayer

had for Guy come to mean a mere act of respect. . . . He reported for duty saying to God: 'I don't ask anything from you. I am here if you want me. I don't suppose I can be any use, but if there is anything I can do, let me know,' and left it at that.

'I don't ask anything from you'; that was the deadly core of his apathy. . . . Enthusiasm and activity were not enough. God required more than that. He had commanded all men to ask.

In the recesses of Guy's conscience there lay the belief that somewhere, somehow, something would be required of him; that he must be attentive to the summons when it came. . . . One day he would get the chance to do some small service which only he could perform, for which he had been created. Even he must have his function in the divine plan. He did not expect a heroic destiny. Quantitative judgments did not apply. All that mattered was to recognize the chance when it offered. . . . 'Show me what to do and help me do it,' he prayed. (SH, 603-604)

This meditation is the crucial point in the history of self-discovery around which the whole trilogy is constructed. After eight years of self-imposed isolation Guy had embarked in 1939 on what he believed to be a crusade for justice and honour, only to find instead disappointment and disillusion. During all this time he has been spiritually crippled by the refusal to meet God halfway. Now, moved by his father's example and teaching ("the best man, the only entirely good man, he had ever known" - SH, 602), he breaks out of his apathy and commits himself to the task which, "in the divine plan," is his alone to do. He does not yet know its nature but stands ready to accept it when it comes.

The task is even then readying itself. Virginia, having failed to find a doctor who will perform the abortion she seeks, is highly receptive to Ian Kilbannock's suggestion that she marry someone and that Guy is the obvious candidate. Her visits to Guy at Peregrine's flat while he recuperates from his parachuting accident are the result. She is, as always, charming, frank, and quite without shame. Marriage is on her mind but not

on his until she tells him, "without any extenuation or plea for compassion, curtly almost, that she [is] with child by Trimmer" (SH, 695).

Kerstie Kilbannock, in her affection for Guy and her shock at his decision to remarry Virginia, articulates the conventional wisdom: "'You poor bloody fool. . . . You're being chivalrous. . . . Can't you understand men aren't chivalrous anymore and I don't believe they ever were'" (SH, 698). His admission that he knows Virginia is pregnant makes his conduct even more incomprehensible. He tries to explain that he is doing it for the child, not for Virginia, and, when Kerstie tells him that this is no business of his, replies: "'It was made my business by being offered.'" He knows the world is full of unwanted children, but "'I can't do anything about all those others. This is just one case where I can help. And only I really'" (SH, 699).

The commitment Guy makes here is the culmination of the theme which has been maturing over the three volumes of the novel. He has found the task which only he can perform.²⁰ As Kerstie said, he is being chivalrous, but it is chivalry rooted in reality. It does not matter to him that his action will be misunderstood; his concern, unlike that of Mrs. Stitch and Tommy Blackhouse for Ivor Claire, is not with how things will look or what people will say, but with the hard fact of Virginia's condition and the needs of her unborn child.

This distinction between reality and appearance implicit in Guy's action has a parallel in "the antithesis between the acceptance of sacrifice and the will to win" which is implicit in Ian Kilbannock's report that Ivor Claire has left the Viceroy's staff and is with the Chindits in

Burma. Claire wants to win and "doesn't believe in sacrifice" (SH, 672), an attitude which, at bottom, represents naked self-assertion. Seen from the perspective which the trilogy has been steadily developing, such an attitude is socially and individually negative, whereas the willingness to accept sacrifice contributes on both planes to integration and order.

The contrast in attitudes emerges clearly during Guy's period of service in Yugoslavia. The assertion of self — or, more accurately, of a cause with which self has become identified — is a natural product of the antagonisms generated around the struggle of the Yugoslav partisans. It can be seen in Frank de Souza's unhesitating support of the tactics dictated by the political aims of the Anti-Fascist Forces, as well as in Gilpin's surly suspicion of everyone not recognizably committed to the cause he serves. Both are British officers but, like Sir Ralph Brompton and the brigadier with whom he plans "liaison with Balkan terrorists" (SH, 688), their aims are not British war aims. For the partisan general staff at Begoy, the supremacy of Tito's adherents over those of Mihajlovic and, thus, control of post-war Yugoslavia are more important than defeating the Germans. (As Brigadier Cape observes, "'This isn't soldiering as I was taught it'" — SH, 713.²¹) In all these situations, it is the omnipresence of the will-to-win mentality that illuminates one aspect of the crucial distinction between Guy's remarriage to Virginia and the career of Ivor Claire.

Guy's involvement with the Jewish refugees in Yugoslavia illustrates the other term of the distinction. His initial decision not to become involved in their problems ("'Keep clear of civilians'" was one of the

precepts of the mission" - SH, 727) is altered by the official interest of UNRRA in displaced persons. Prompted by this and notwithstanding suspicion and obstruction at partisan headquarters, he does become involved. What he learns about the refugees gives rise to compassion for them, "something less than he had felt for Virginia and her child but a similar 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" (SH, 742). However, the act -- passage for the Jews from Croatia to Italy -- remains unperformed. When Guy is recalled to Bari they are still stranded at Begoy, victims of administrative delay, partisan opposition and winter weather. It is Madame Kanyi, wiser than the rest, who tells him that Italy will not be a promised land, that no place is free from threat; and that the death wish which helped to precipitate the war was everywhere; even good men believed that wartime risk retroactively justified pre-war privilege. She asks Guy if there were such people in England, and he recognizes himself in the question: "God forgive me," he replies, "I was one of them" (SH, 788).

Guy's good intentions, his willingness to accept sacrifice in order to help the refugees, have apparently been frustrated. Once more, as with the Dakar raid and Mrs. Stitch's intervention at Alexandria, contingencies -- people and events over which he has no control -- combine to defeat him. When, at last, the liberation of the refugees does occur it is not his doing, and, to add to the irony, only the Kanyis, compromised by his interest in them, are left behind. The final ironic touch to the episode is the army's decision to withdraw Guy from his liaison assignment

on the grounds that his association with the Kanyis, "a thoroughly shady couple . . . was most compromising to the Mission" (SH, 792).

When he leaves Begoy, Guy comes "to the end of the crusade to which he had devoted himself on the tomb of Sir Roger. His life as a Halberdier was over. All the stamping of the barrack square and the biffing of imaginary strongholds were finding their consummation in one frustrated act of mercy" (SH, 788). He is over forty, still only a captain after five years in the army, apparently a failure as a soldier. Nevertheless, considered in the light of the novel's theme his wartime experience has been a success. He has moved from romantic illusion to the clarity of reality, to a wisdom which comprehends both himself and his fellows. At the end, his effort for the refugees, like his decision to marry Virginia, is an affirmation of purpose in his life of which he would not have been capable in 1939. Like that decision, it is a demonstration of Mr. Crouchback's principle that, in the realm of the spirit, quantitative judgements don't apply. It is "a private cause of the soul," a uniquely personal commitment to order.

While artistically consonant with what has preceded it, the point of rest at which Guy has finally arrived leaves a lingering question about the theme and its development over the course of Sword of Honour. There is no doubt that, from Guy's first appearance at the Castello Crouchback until his return from Yugoslavia, the theme is consistently treated; the experiences which the war brings and his reaction to them constitute a steadily realized history of personal growth that is securely rooted in his character and background. It is this consistency of handling that

renders the treatment impressive. Guy moves from an initial self-doubting reclusiveness to a belief in the war as a public cause with which his values are linked, and then, disillusioned, to the recognition of an order founded on personal honour and private commitment. His final position is thus a declaration of lack of faith in the possibility of honourable activity beyond the purely personal. Its effect is to categorize as futile and unworthy all that area of human activity which includes government and large-scale enterprises generally.

Such a position is equivalent to political quietism, an abandonment of civic responsibility which risks leaving public affairs in the hands of fools and scoundrels. Yet, Guy's position is not grounded in selfishness; on the contrary, the lesson he has learned is one of commitment to others, but -- and this is important -- these must be close to him and need him. It is a lesson which is entirely consonant with the retiring character Waugh has bestowed on Guy and on the Crouchbacks as a family. Nevertheless, in a wider context it is almost a counsel of despair, one which reflects the pessimist's ultimate distrust of the human condition, and which, in so doing, places in doubt the meaning and possibility of large-scale social order. While the solution the novel offers to the problems it confronts is satisfactory within the framework Waugh postulates, the extent to which the reader finds it acceptable outside this fictional universe depends ultimately on the degree to which he shares its underlying pessimism.

Mention was made at the beginning of this chapter of the presence in Sword of Honour of "elements of seriousness and commitment, reflecting a consistently applied value system which is only implicit in the early fiction." The crucial points in Guy's spiritual odyssey -- the Dakar fiasco, his misplaced faith in Ivor Claire, the spiritual perception which comes to him at his father's funeral, his readiness to accept the challenge offered by Virginia's pregnancy and by the plight of the refugees -- are all indicative of a deeply serious authorial perspective. This new gravity, already displayed in Brideshead Revisited and Helena, was the product of religious convictions which never really surface in the comic novels. For Waugh, as for Guy, the war was a spiritual and emotional watershed.

The conclusion of the trilogy also incorporates another important change in Waugh's attitude, his farewell to dandyism. The point in Unconditional Surrender at which his theme reaches its climax is also the point at which he implicitly abandons the idea of the gentleman, the patrician, as the bearer of civilized tradition. With the surrender of this myth, signified by Claire's disgrace and the assimilation of Trimmer's son into the Crouchback family as Guy's heir, "the whole scheme of values that has so far pervaded Waugh's fiction falls to the ground."²² It is this wider humanity, animating a clearly conceived, consistently developed, and artistically balanced theme, that makes Sword of Honour an altogether more convincing novel than Brideshead Revisited, the only other Waugh work which can be justly compared with it. The trilogy is a history of

spiritual growth, a pilgrim's progress, set in an ambitious fictional frame, and it succeeds both as theme and structure.

NOTES

¹Eric Newby, "Lush Places," Evelyn Waugh and His World (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 194.

²The Story-Shaped World: Fiction and Metaphysics, Some Variations on a Theme (London: Athlone Press, 1975), p. 167.

³Sword of Honour: A Final Version of the Novels Men at Arms (1952) Officers and Gentlemen (1955) and Unconditional Surrender (1961) (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), p. 9. Subsequent quotations from this edition are indicated by page references in the text.

⁴Cf. Marston La France, "Sword of Honour: The Ironist Placatus," Dalhousie Review, 55 (1975-76), 23-53. I am indebted to this essay for a number of the insights in this chapter.

⁵Evelyn Waugh: "I shall deal with Crouchback's realization that no good comes from public causes, only private causes of the soul." Cited by Frederick J. Stopp in Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 46.

⁶The Letters of Evelyn Waugh (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 569.

⁷Dalhousie Review, 55 (1975-76), 26.

⁸The phrase is Andrew Rutherford's in "Waugh's Sword of Honour," Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novels and Novelists in Honour of John Butt, ed. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 450.

⁹Waugh, Letters, p. 443.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 383.

¹¹Cf. the canine behaviour of Fido Hound, pp. 470-86.

¹²See Note 10, *supra*.

¹³Waugh, Diaries, pp. 489-517.

¹⁴Officers and Gentlemen (Boston, 1955), p. 300.

¹⁵Cf. Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 315 (note 17). The conduct of Guy and Claire, and the links between the fictional departure from Sphakia and Waugh's own escape (described in "Memorandum on Layforce") are analyzed in detail by Heath, pp. 238-41.

¹⁶See note 6, supra.

¹⁷Letters, p. 444.

¹⁸Ian Littlewood, The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 32.

¹⁹Cf. Waugh's 'war aims' at about the same stage of the conflict. His diary for 29 August 1943 includes the following: "[I] don't want to influence opinions or events, or expose humbug or anything of that kind. I don't want to be of service to anyone or anything. I simply want to do my work as an artist" (Diaries, p. 548).

²⁰In a letter written at the time of Unconditional Surrender's appearance, Waugh drew attention to "the idea that God creates no man without a special purpose. Guy's was to rescue Trimmer's son from a disastrous upbringing" (Letters, p. 569).

²¹Cape's remark repeats that of Major Erskine to Guy on Crete (SH, 493), the reaction of the professional to unprofessional conduct.

²²Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel (1970; London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 116.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALTER EGO: THE ORDEAL OF GILBERT PINFOLD

I

It has been the underlying assumption of this thesis that a knowledge of the place of order in Waugh's fiction can increase our understanding of the forces that shaped him as a writer. Accordingly, the study has attempted to show how the principle of order functions in his work and to identify the pattern which emerges. As the novels succeed each other the pattern can be seen as one of growing significance. In the five comic novels, following the model established by Decline and Fall, comic exuberance is the dominant influence, a reflection of youthful energy and of the mingled fascination and revulsion which the world of the Twenties and Thirties inspired in Waugh. The values which support the narratives are well in the background, masked by the comic momentum and the prevailing tone of irony. They are in the background, too, because at this stage of his life they are less important for Waugh himself, more hidden from his consciousness, more obscured by curiosity and the appetite for new experience.

In terms of the responses it evokes, A Handful of Dust is an anachronism in the canon. Coming between Black Mischief and Scoop, both indisputably comic, it strikes an unexpectedly sombre note, suggesting dimensions of feeling, of hitherto unencountered emotion, which do not appear again until Brideshead Revisited, a decade later. This seriousness, explicitly affirmed in Brideshead and Helena, marks a new stage in Waugh's

work, a changed fictional attitude in which order and disorder begin to acquire transcendental significance.

The three satirical novellas all involve departures from the 'Metro-land' setting that had previously been Waugh's characteristic milieu. They are departures also in their concentration on cultural and political disorder, an emphasis which gives them, notwithstanding their comedy, a slightly tract-like flavour. Nevertheless, the novellas represent a notable development in Waugh's concern with social and individual order, a concern which reaches its peak in the war trilogy. Here, order is at the heart of the story, inextricably linked with the process of Guy Crouchback's redemption, a part of the clearest and most sustained theme in all his work.

In a dedicatory note to Officers and Gentlemen, Waugh speaks of the story as "pure fiction: that is to say of experience totally transformed." However, the claim is somewhat disingenuous; a comparison with Waugh's diaries shows how far the transformation is from totality and, in fact, how closely the events of the novels, the war trilogy in particular, reflect his own experience. Nowhere, however, is the link so direct as in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and, accordingly, nowhere is the place of order in his fiction so analogous to its place in his life. The analysis which follows, therefore, will complement the study that has occupied the previous chapters by using this novel to illuminate the place of order and disorder in Evelyn Waugh's life as well as in Gilbert Pinfold's.

II

Waugh's other novels all deal in varying ways with characters and events which are expressions of the author's purpose. In them, rational experience, however eccentric, is assimilated and imaginatively transformed into fiction. In Pinfold, on the other hand, it is psychotic experience which Waugh subjects to this process. The story's protagonist is a writer by trade, but on this occasion, temporarily deranged, he cannot control the images which his disturbed mind calls into existence. Freed from his authority, they turn and attack him. While his derangement lasts Pinfold is no longer an artist who causes imaginary things to happen but a person to whom imaginary things happen, a character in a fantasy devised by his own subconscious. It is only after his sanity is restored that he is able to transform this experience into art.

The Pinfold presented in the opening "Portrait of the Artist in Middle-age" is still the rational author, in command of his mind and his material. The Pinfold described in the second chapter is substantially altered, an elderly party on the verge of physical and mental collapse. The Pinfold of the rest of the story is mentally unbalanced, the helpless victim of his own fantasies. The significance of the metamorphosis, of course, is that it not only happened to Pinfold, but that it also happened to Waugh. We have his own testimony for this. Writing to Robert Henriques in 1957, he said: "Mr Pinfold's experiences were almost exactly my own. In turning them into a novel I had to summarize them. I heard 'voices' such as I describe almost continuously night and day for three weeks. . . . I have given the gist of them."¹ Later, asked in an interview how far

the book was an account of his own illness, Waugh answered: "Almost exact. . . . It's the account of three weeks' hallucinations going on almost continuously."² He identified himself also with the Mr. Pinfold of the opening chapter: "The central character is to a large extent a portrait of myself."³

It is this identity of writer and protagonist which gives The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold its special place in Waugh's fiction. Considered as a completed fictional artefact, a 'made' thing, it is, like his other novels, the product of a controlled creative process, a 'work of art' in the usual sense. Considered, however, in terms of the process by which fact is transmuted into fiction, it differs from them in two important respects. The first of these concerns the subject of the story, the nature of the material with which it deals; this is not the product of a deliberate imaginative effort, but the involuntary result of mental derangement. As such, both its origin and nature are beyond the author's control. The book records the protagonist's experience while in this state, so that after its opening chapters Pinfold is not so much fiction as psychiatric case history. When he recovers, Mr. Pinfold recognizes his illness as something that was unexpectedly bestowed on him, "a hamper to be unpacked of fresh, rich experiences — perishable goods,"⁴ to be used without delay. It is the same reaction as that of Dennis Barlow to the distressing events of The Loved One, the knowledge at the end that he had been enriched by "the artist's load, a great shapeless chunk of experience" (LO, 128). Pinfold also — sane once more — imposes order on his disordered experience by subjecting it to the control of his art. It

is this process which provides the second distinction between Pinfold and Waugh's other fiction. All of these present significant transformations of the author's experience. In Pinfold, however, even after allowance is made for the distortion inherent in the fact that the experiences of the novel have been recollected in tranquility and recorded by the artist, the degree to which they have been transformed is, if Waugh's testimony is to be accepted, negligible.

The isolation of the protagonist is another feature which distinguishes Pinfold from the bulk of Waugh's work. Typically, his characters are presented in group situations and most of what we learn about them comes from their interaction with others, particularly in dialogue. Mr. Pinfold, in contrast, is almost completely alone throughout the central part of the novel. There is a similar focus, though less pronounced, in Waugh's treatment of such other 'solitaries' as Miles Plastic and Ludovic. It is worth noting in this context that Miles, like Pinfold, is unbalanced and that, at the end, Ludovic has become compulsively reclusive. Even Angela Lyne's solitariness, a rare example of isolation in the early novels, has overtones of mental disturbance.

In the novels examined earlier the degree of transformation of experience was sufficient to separate the artist from his creations so that they could be considered as "objects which he had made, things quite external to himself" (GP, 121). This is not true here, however; since the introductory section is a self-portrait and the remainder establishes little or no distance between author and protagonist, it is Waugh as much as a fictional figure who is presented to the reader. Accordingly, the

value of Pinfold for this study rests in the unique testimony it offers about Waugh's involvement with order and disorder -- directly, through the Portrait, and indirectly, through the hallucinations. Both levels are relevant since, no less than the "Portrait," the disorder which follows the breakdown reveals the author. It is the part of him which is disclosed when his customary controls have ceased to function.

The image presented by the "Portrait of the Artist in Middle-age" is of a writer who combines professional success with a becoming modesty, and whose behaviour is distinguished by an obsessive desire for privacy and a hypersensitive aversion to anything which deviates from his rigid standards of propriety. - It is the latter characteristics which dominate the picture. All the details reinforce the impression of Mr. Pinfold as a person settled in the groove of habit and profoundly hostile to change, someone for whom order and regularity have become essential. The chapter title must be read as mock-serious rather than ironic; there is nothing of the artistic poseur about Mr. Pinfold. He is quite objective about his talents, viewing writing as his "trade" (GP, 125) and himself as a craftsman. He considered his books "well made, better than many reputed works of genius, but he was not vain of his accomplishment, still less of his reputation" (GP, 121-22).

The life he leads is "strictly private", a succession of "long, lonely, tranquil days [in] a secluded village some hundred miles from London" (GP, 122). Inwardness and withdrawal also characterize Mr.

Pinfold's attitude to politics and religion. He plays a minimal part in the affairs of his community and has "never voted in a parliamentary election, maintaining an idiosyncratic toryism which was quite unrepresented in the political parties of his time . . ." (GP, 122-23).⁵ His Roman Catholic faith is equally idiosyncratic. It is something to which he has come in adult life, not so much by "conversion" -- too strong a word, the narrative suggests -- as by the "calm acceptance of its propositions" (GP, 125).⁶ Mr. Pinfold is reputed to be "bigoted rather than pious" in his faith and, characteristically, his practice of it is a largely solitary exercise: ". . . at the very time when the leaders of his Church were exhorting their people to emerge from their catacombs into the forum, to make their influence felt in democratic politics and to regard worship as a corporate rather than a private act, Mr. Pinfold burrowed ever deeper into the rock" (GP, 125).

The picture which emerges is of a man identified not by his allegiances but by what he is against, a personality marked by exclusiveness and dominated by antagonisms. In the bitterest lines of the Portrait the liveliness of the writing cannot hide the underlying grimness:

His strongest tastes were negative. He abhorred plastics, Picasso, sunbathing and jazz--everything in fact that had happened in his own lifetime. The tiny kindling of charity which came to him through his religion, sufficed only to temper his disgust and change it to boredom. . . . He wished no one ill, but he looked at the world sub specie aeternitatis and he found it flat as a map; except when, rather often, personal annoyance intruded. Then he would come tumbling from his exalted point of observation. Shocked by a bad bottle of wine, an

impertinent stranger, or a fault in syntax, his mind like a cinema camera trucked furiously forward to confront the offending object close-up with glaring lens; with the eyes of a drill sergeant inspecting an awkward squad, bulging with wrath that was half-facetious, and with half-simulated incredulity . . . (GP, 126-27)

Mr. Pinfold has become a 'character' by assuming a character, by adopting a persona designed to keep any threat to the order of his life at a safe distance:

the part for which he cast himself was a combination of eccentric don and testy colonel and he acted it strenuously . . . until it came to dominate his whole outward personality. When he ceased to be alone . . . he left half of himself behind and the other half swelled to fill its place. He offered the world a front of pomposity mitigated by indiscretion that was as hard, bright and antiquated as a cuirass. (GP, 127)

As the notes accompanying this sketch of Mr. Pinfold's political and religious outlook indicate, his views have their analogues in the personality of his creator. These and other affinities between Pinfold and Waugh will be considered later, after the relationship between the ideas of the rational Pinfold and the fantasies of his derangement has been examined, and, beyond this, after the attitudes that characterize Mr. Pinfold at both stages of the novel have been compared with the opinions that Waugh articulated in his non-fiction writing and that were surveyed in Chapter One. As a prefatory note to these investigations, it should be pointed out that "The Portrait of the Artist in Middle-age," while faithful as far

as it goes, is incomplete. It deals only with the external aspect of Pinfold, the part associated with his public image and behaviour. His interior life remains unexamined, and there are few suggestions of regret or self-doubt. The part of him which lay below the surface, the half of himself he left behind when he ceased to be alone, is not included.

The information revealed by the 'voices' that assail Mr. Pinfold belongs to a different world from that of the opening Portrait. In the latter, each detail has been chosen for its contribution to the completed work; it represents a purposeful direction of the author's imagination towards a preconceived end. In the chapters dominated by hallucination, however, nothing is predetermined or foreseeable from Mr. Pinfold's perspective; there is, though he cannot know it, no consciousness controlling the voices he hears, no rational process governing his actions. While the ordeal lasts mere anarchy is loosed upon his world.

Aside from that of the amorous Margaret, the voices are hostile and vindictive, their accusations centring on the charge that Pinfold is a fraud: "his whole account of his early life is a lie" (GP, 216). His nationality, his political and social attitudes, his religious convictions and his sexual orientation (a "queer" and a "sodomite" - GP, 180, 184), all come under attack. He is not really English at all; the voices tell each other: "He came to Lychpole in 1937 with the German refugees. He was called Peinfeld then" (GP, 181). Not only that, he has schemed to advance himself socially, using the war as an opportunity "to change his

name and pass himself off as an Englishman, to make friends with people who did not know his origin, to get into Bellamy's Club." Mr. Pinfold and his kind "typified the decline of England, of rural England in particular." His religious conversion, too, is linked to his social ambitions, "assumed in order to ingratiate himself with the aristocracy" (GP, 184). As the days pass the attacks become more and more extreme. He has neglected his mother, "let her die alone, uncared for" (GP, 184); he is killing himself with drink and drugs; he is a fascist on one page and a communist on the next (GP, 214-16). This is an altogether different story than that told in the skillfully crafted Portrait or in the controlled revelations of Waugh's non-fiction. Even Pinfold's art does not escape the general condemnation. His writing, he is told, "typifies all that is decadent in contemporary literature", and it is presented, moreover, "in a style which, when it varies from the trite, lapses into positive illiteracy" (GP, 175).

The charges thus brought against Mr. Pinfold are presumably linked to attitudes and feelings about himself of which hitherto he may scarcely have been conscious, and whose significance he is presumably only able to guess when, the hallucinations behind him, he comes to write his novel. While the hallucinations belong more to psychiatry than to literature -- or at least can be better investigated there -- much of what emerges from them is still suggestive for the critic. What these fantasies disclose about Mr. Pinfold is an ugly mirror image of what he says about himself in the opening chapter. All the props of his settled existence at Lychpole -- the foundation of the Portrait -- are subjected to the same charge of

falseness and pretense. Hidden fears and guilt presumably underlie this hallucinatory process, feelings which are suggested in the various Shakespearean references that the narrative employs. There is the primary fact that Pinfold's ordeal, which introduces him to a monstrous world, takes place while Caliban has him in its keeping. Later, the father-daughter relationship of King Lear is echoed in two of the fantasy characters, Coneril and Margaret (in part of Cordelia - GP, 172), a relationship given Freudian overtones by the reaction of Margaret's father to her affair with Pinfold and by Waugh's attitude to the marriage of his own daughter, also called Margaret.⁷ And when, at the moment of his greatest fear, of sudden, overwhelming panic, Pinfold prays, he prays in the words of Lear: "'O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven'" (GP, 209).

III

In previous chapters the focus has been on the texture of the novels, the way in which Waugh's treatment of order and disorder becomes a significant element in the reader's encounter with his fiction. This has been possible because, in the books considered there, order and disorder exist in a world outside the author; these are all creations in which Waugh's view is turned outward. With The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, however, the same focus is not possible; the book reflects the interplay of subconscious forces in Waugh's personality, and, accordingly, the disorder it records differs generically from that reflected elsewhere in his writing. Pinfold is thus an important document for any inquiry into the sources of

the order and disorder which help to shape Waugh's novels. The dual witness it offers -- at the level of the "Portrait", dominated by the sane Mr. Pinfold, and at that of the remaining chapters, dominated by his derangement -- is fictional evidence which can be set beside the already existing biographical evidence. The latter is also twofold: that found in Waugh's non-fiction, reflecting the place of order in his thought, and that provided by the persona and conduct of Waugh himself. Each kind of testimony, fictional and actual, serves to measure the attitudes and values implicit in the other.

Given the Pinfold-Waugh identity of the "Portrait" and the essentially rational nature of its material, one can logically expect a high degree of congruence between Mr. Pinfold's views and those of Waugh, the subject of Chapter One above. There is, in fact, no conflict at any point, though the non-fiction, written over a lifetime, naturally provides a much wider and more detailed range of opinion. Mr. Pinfold's ultra-conservatism, as we encounter it in the few pages allocated to the "Portrait", can be seen as the equivalent of Waugh's 1946 diary entries about the loss of liberty, diversity and privacy, and "the reek of the Displaced Persons' Camp,"⁸ and of a variety of journalistic pieces in which he lamented the decline of civilization. Both Waugh and Pinfold refused to vote, expressing their refusal in almost identical words, and both explained their religious conversion in the same terms.

Waugh's comments on the class system are the one area of his non-fiction which is not reflected in the Pinfold portrait. The aristocratic principle had an important place in his thinking, and it is prominent in

the charges Mr. Pinfold's 'voices' bring against him. However, whether consciously or not, Waugh neither gave Mr. Pinfold aristocratic friends nor allowed him to voice an opinion on class.

Mutually corroborative as expressions of the attitude of the rational Waugh, the Portrait and the non-fiction differ only in comprehensiveness. It is in the other chapters of Pinfold, where unreason rules, that a contrast with the non-fiction personality becomes apparent. The image of Pinfold created by his shipboard fantasies is unlike anything else in Waugh's work. Most of the subjects the voices talk about are also dealt with in the essays and journalism, but their treatment here is diametrically different. Pinfold's tormentors are uniformly hostile, overturning and deriding all his and Waugh's declared values. They range widely and fancifully, touching areas of Pinfold's life and experience for which the Portrait provides no counterpart. As well, they are retrospective, concerned not only with the artist in middle-age, but with the actions and attitudes of his earlier life.

Waugh himself never tried to indicate the origin of the voices he and Pinfold heard or to suggest their meaning, but, nevertheless, the question of their background influence is of obvious importance for any critical study of his fiction. As Ian Littlewood points out, "The randomness of these fantasies is a temptation to critical ingenuity,"⁹ and many critics have succumbed to it. Most of the resulting interpretations rest on the theory that the voices represent a rebellion by the suppressed part of Waugh against the order and discipline he had systematically imposed on his life and work. They are epitomized in Frank Kermode's statement that

"all the enemies of his myth of order emerged from his mind and plotted against him."¹⁰ John Lehmann offered another such interpretation when he described Pinfold as "further confirmation of one's suspicion that with Brideshead Revisited Mr Waugh began to work against the grain of his real nature as a writer; that he has tried to impose on the violence of his imagination a conventional mask of cultured -- if slightly eccentric -- gravity . . . and that the painful hallucinations he suffered were as much the revenge of his nature as the result of chloral and bromide in crème de menthe."¹¹ The most notable advocate of this approach was J. B. Priestley whose ad hominem review of the book concentrated on the perceived defects of the author's lifestyle. Mr. Pinfold, said Priestley, "is not a Catholic landed gentleman pretending to be an author. He is an author pretending to be a Catholic landed gentleman. . . . Let Pinfold take warning. He will break down again, and next time may never find a way back to his study. The central self he is trying to deny . . . will crack if it is walled up again within a false style of life."¹²

Ian Littlewood offers an alternative interpretation. While acknowledging that "the accusations point to . . . those impulses that Pinfold has spent his career resisting," he views the suppression of them not as a denial of Waugh's true self and its replacement by a hypocritical façade, but as the assertion of an equally genuine part of him, and, moreover, as the enabling condition for his achievement as an artist. Through the voices, he writes, "We glimpse the world of Evelyn Waugh as it might have been represented had romanticism been unchecked by irony, delight in anarchy by a concern with form, disgust with his fellow men by a kindling

of religious charity—had he been unable, that is, either to write or pray. This is no tormented subconscious indictment of the various sorts of censorship and repression practised by Mr. Pinfold, it is a vindication of them."¹³

Before deciding between these interpretations, it may be helpful to look again at the charges which his accusers bring against Mr. Pinfold. It has already been noted that the voices attack him on a wide front. His nationality, family background, religion, social position, and professional competence are all ridiculed. He is accused of perverse sexual leanings, shame about his origins, filial ingratitude, and a complex of unpleasant attitudes about race and class. In all of these disparate areas the charge is the same: Mr. Pinfold is a fraud; his whole life has been an attempt to deceive those whose approval he covets and to enjoy rewards to which he is not entitled.

^ This is the disagreeable self-portrait which emerges from the subconscious of Waugh and his protagonist. Set against it is the fact of Waugh, the successful novelist, a person whose origins are respectable if not distinguished, and whose career is an open book. His social, political and religious views are firmly on the side of order and firmly on the record. The sane Waugh and the deranged Waugh are clearly quite different people but, equally clearly, they are related; the things which the voices attack are just those to which, in his normal life, Waugh attaches the most importance: religion, social order, tradition, class. In other words, the meaning and worth of his life at the conscious level are being sabotaged at the subconscious level. Why? The gross deceit of which the

voices accuse him, the charge that he is a palpable fraud, is contradicted by the facts. But, if the charge is false, what is the reason for it? Given the nature of the situation, any answer can only be speculative. Nevertheless, the obligation to seek one cannot be avoided if the contradiction between the order of Waugh's life and work and the disorder of his breakdown is to be explained.

The answer would seem to reside in the contrast between the place from which Waugh had come and the place at which he had arrived, between what he had been and what he had become. His success as a writer, his material prosperity, his place in the mass media, his role in the Catholic community, his social position and circle of acquaintances -- all these are more conspicuous and heady than the environment in which he grew up. Life at North End Road, Hampstead, was scarcely a preparation for Combe Florey, White's, and the people and places Waugh knew in 'Metroland.' For some personalities such a transition carries with it a hidden burden of insecurity: perhaps the bubble of success will burst, perhaps the success is not deserved. There is the sense of vertigo, the fear of falling. The association of these feelings with the sham of which Pinfold is accused is obvious. Such fears may rarely reach the level of consciousness, emerging, masked, only in dreams or, as here, in hallucinations. They are threatening, and because of that they are suppressed. This mechanism would seem to be part of the reason for Waugh's acknowledged reluctance to reveal himself in his writing, which was noted at the end of Chapter One.

To recognize the existence of such hidden emotions is not to accept them at face value when they rise to the surface. The form in which they

find expression may differ widely from their meaning, reflecting a locus of the emotion rather than the objective reality which the form suggests. This would appear to be the light in which Waugh's shipboard voices should be interpreted -- as a wide-ranging expression of subconscious fear and insecurity rather than a condemnation of the values to which in daily life he gave assent.

In the last analysis, we cannot know why Waugh broke down; we can only guess. An attempt "to work against the grain of his real nature as a writer"? But the grain was changing, as Sword of Honour attests. A denial of his "central self"? But everything indicates that the self which appeared in his daily life, his writings, his diaries and his letters, was his central self. Neurotic guilt and insecurity? The preceding paragraphs suggest a significant place for this in the pattern, and to this must be added the critical part played by Waugh's abuse of drugs and alcohol. To say all this is to suggest that the breakdown was more complex in origin than the judgements of Lehmann and Priestley might indicate, and that Littlewood appears to be nearer the truth when he says that Pinfold's ordeal is less an indictment of the role of order in Waugh's life and work than a vindication of it.

IV

Mention was made earlier of the testimony which The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold offers, through the Portrait and through the hallucinations, about the place of order and disorder in Waugh's personality. The analysis of

this testimony which has just been presented provides one part of the background for their place in his novels. The other part comes from the non-fiction writings and from the normal life of the middle-aged Evelyn Waugh. It is this final, supplementary testimony which is examined in the following pages.

Waugh was undoubtedly a complex human being. At one extreme, his friend Frances Donaldson considered him inexplicable, attributing both his personality and his novels to "a kind of dislocation of spirit so violent" as to render him "forever . . . a subject of speculation for biographers and psychologists."¹⁴ The nature of this dislocation is the heart of the matter.

All the aspects of Waugh's personality -- his dandyism, his snobbishness, his romanticism, his religious faith, his melancholy -- which are reflected in his work are explainable as manifestations, nearer or more remote, of the desire to render tolerable a world which, always less than ideal, became as the years passed increasingly hard to endure.¹⁵ The melancholy, which also increased with age, seems to have been both cause and effect of his hypersensitivity to his environment. He was constitutionally unable to accept with equanimity the failure of his milieu, whether local or universal, to correspond to some Platonic conception of order deep within him.

The dandyism which Waugh displayed both as man and writer and which was examined in Chapter Two is another expression of this hypersensitivity, a characteristic reaction against the surrounding drabness. It is an element of major importance in his writing, reflecting, as Martin Green

suggests, his artistic reliance on charm and conservatism rather than "aestheticism and modernism."¹⁶ Green sees dandyism as the 'safe' option for English artists of Waugh's generation and equates his choice of it with the surrender to charm which Anthony Blanche condemned in Charles Ryder's painting.¹⁷ Even if Green's argument is not accepted, the fact remains that, for Waugh, dandyism was a weapon in his battle with the world, a way of keeping his environment at a distance. He was the kind of writer his temperament and circumstances made him; "'Metroland' is my world," he wrote, "and I don't know any other except at second hand or at a great distance."¹⁸ Socio-cultural criticism in the manner of George Orwell, concentrated appreciatively on the average man, was not his gift. His fiction embodied a critical response to the world, but it was expressed in a different, lighter form.

The dandy emphasis on exclusivity was an essential element in Waugh's snobbishness. Quite aside from the importance he attached to the aristocratic principle, the civilizing role he saw for the upper classes in culture and society,¹⁹ he valued the stimulation which the gently born were more likely than others to bring to his own life. It was an attitude which had a definitely unattractive side, as even his biographer, who knew him well and was basically sympathetic, recognized. He was more prone, Sykes says, to look down on those below him socially than to look up to those above him: "his belief in the existence of the 'right' kind of people was very much weaker than his belief that there are 'wrong' kinds."²⁰ Frances Donaldson's assessment is even more revealing:

Evelyn liked the smarter of the intellectuals, the more intellectual of the smart -- no one else. No one else liked him. With all the more ordinary people of the world, but also with three-quarters of the most interesting, he was unable to establish any communication. . . . He had a romantic attachment to the aristocratic virtues, but he had no use for those of the aristocracy who lacked these. . . . His aggressiveness, his exclusiveness and his terror of boredom were far stronger than his snobbishness.²¹

Such testimony shows us the public side of the character with which Mr. Pinfold's accusers deal. The aggressive social personality described here betrays none of the insecurity at which the voices direct their mockery, yet the aggressiveness and the insecurity coexisted in Waugh. That he could habitually behave thus and at the same time place on record an attack which calls into question the very foundations of his behaviour testifies to the artistic objectivity which governs "The Portrait of the Artist in Middle-age."

Frances Donaldson's description makes clear the ~~rigid~~ bounds within which Waugh's sympathies operated and the narrow world to which they confined him. At the same time, the qualities which drove him to this -- hypersensitivity to his environment and "terror of boredom" -- were also the qualities which fostered his acutely critical observation of people and his highly-developed sense of social discrimination.²² They were qualities, however, for which, because they were negative rather than positive and rooted in criticism rather than acceptance of the mass of his fellow men, he paid a heavy price in lost human contacts. Intellectually, Waugh was capable of recognizing this limitation for what it was, as Guy

Crouchback's unconditional surrender and Helena's wish that the Wall around the City might be inclusive rather than exclusive indicate, but his instincts pushed him in another direction.²³

Reviewing a book by John Betjeman, Waugh wrote: "An heroic past, an idyllic future -- those are the alternatives, according to temperament, of the unhappy artist in any age. Never jam today."²⁴ As we have seen, his own temperament led him unhesitatingly to the former alternative and to a firm belief in the myth of decline. It underlay his preference for the past over the present, his love of old buildings, old families, old customs, traditional virtues, ritual and elegance. It was also behind his idealization of the Edwardian world which came to an end in 1914 and of the period charm which it epitomized. Waugh himself gave the metamorphosis and its accompanying myth lapidary expression: "To have been born into a world of beauty, to die amid ugliness, is the common fate of all us exiles."²⁵ The outlook implied in such a judgement is unmistakably romantic, expressing the settled distaste for the present and all its works which colours Waugh's whole aesthetic. And, whatever the evidence against his position, the fact remains that, for him, it was deeply real. In this context it is "nostalgic truth" that counts, not historical truth; a golden age is golden for the one who thinks it so.²⁶

Waugh's lifelong interest in Victoriana and Victorian art, at a time when these were very much out of fashion, is part of the pattern. His fondness for the past made itself felt early. Looking back near the end

of his life to the childhood visits he made to his aunts at Midsomer Norton, he wrote: "I am sure that I loved my aunts' house because I was instinctively drawn to the ethos I now recognize as mid-Victorian."²⁷

Viewed from the perspective of his later years, Waugh's religious belief and his romantic nostalgia in all its aspects can be seen as the two most abiding features of his character. Ultimately, the religious influence was paramount, reflecting his mature realization that nostalgia was not enough to provide a foundation for his life. He had been religious as a boy and his parents chose his school accordingly.²⁸ A decade of agnosticism followed until he became a Catholic at twenty-six. His conversion was a response to the demands of his spirit. As Richard Johnstone notes, "[Waugh's] need for an ideal, and his discovery of it in Catholicism, can be seen as part of the desire to recapture the order, security and happiness that in all his diaries is present only in the years covering his schooldays." In the strict sense of the word, his life was made meaningful for him by his conversion. Catholicism "asserted the significance of the individual by establishing his connection with certain constant values in his society, values which in turn lay beneath the level of observable reality."²⁹ The association of these factors in Waugh's religious attitude -- the recollected order and security of his Edwardian schooldays and the connection to constant values in society -- with his deep-seated nostalgia is obvious.

Waugh remained loyal to his adopted faith, but it was not easy. His temperament was not of a kind to which religion -- or anything else -- brought joy. "Sceptical, melancholic to the point of being suicidal,

inclined to malice," says Donat Gallagher, "[he] had no internal aptitude for Faith, Hope or Charity."³⁰ His religion was based on the will to believe that is the subject of Johnstone's study, a willed conviction which appears in retrospect as a primary source of the doctrinal orthodoxy and insistence on liturgical order that marked his career as a Catholic.

The aspects of Waugh's character which have just been surveyed can all be seen as strategies he adopted to alleviate the pain of existence. Dandyism, the myth of decline, romantic nostalgia, the will to believe all have major implications for order in his life and writing, and all testify to his struggle against an enemy who never rested. The enemy was melancholia, a part of Waugh which must be set beside his comic spirit as a fundamental aspect of his personality. Those who knew him well testify to its importance. Frances Donaldson says he "suffered from a melancholia of Johnsonian proportions . . . he was the only person I ever knew who seemed sincerely to long for death . . ." Douglas Woodruff speaks of him as "constantly suffering from ennui, which ought to be recognized as a major affliction more wearing and painful than most physical disabilities." For Anthony Powell, Waugh's "innate melancholy was never very far away."³¹

Waugh's characteristic attitudes in all the areas of experience noted in this dissertation -- religious, political, social, artistic -- were in the last analysis weapons in a battle against the accidie and temptation to despair which beset him. David Lodge points to the centrality of the struggle when, referring to the suicide attempt recorded at the end of

A Little Learning, he says: "There was always within Evelyn Waugh a bitter spring of negation and despair which experience was bound to expose, whatever his particular fortunes might be. His conversion to the Catholic faith ensured, perhaps, that this negative current in his character would never again be suicidal, but it grew stronger as the years passed, while the positive became weaker."³² In an essay on sloth, Waugh described the situation in theological terms. "The malice of Sloth," he wrote, "lies not merely in the neglect of duty . . . but in the refusal of joy. It is allied to despair."³³ Unhappily, the attainment of joy was beyond him; he had to engage instead in a struggle against its opposite, a struggle which involved all the resources at his disposal. Order was one of these, part of a strategy for survival, an instinctive response in every significant area of his life and art to the forces which assailed him.

NOTES

¹Letters, pp. 493-94.

²"Face to Face," BBC Television, 26 June 1960.

³Reported in Daily Telegraph (London), 20 July 1957. Noted in "New Discoveries in Waugh Bibliography III", Evelyn Waugh Newsletter, XVII, 1 (Spring 1983), p. 8.

⁴Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold and Other Stories (London: Chapman and Hall, 1973), p. 269. Subsequent references to this edition are indicated parenthetically in the text.

⁵Cf. "I have never voted in a Parliamentary election," Waugh in "Aspirations of a Mugwump," Spectator, 2 October, 1959; rptd. in The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, ed. Donat Gallagher (London: Methuen 1983), p. 537.

⁶Cf. "... and so on from intellectual conviction but with little emotion I was admitted into the Church," Waugh in "Come Inside," The Road to Damascus, ed. John A. O'Brien (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1949), p. 20.

⁷Cf. Letters, pp. 380, 592.

⁸See Chap. One, note 23, supra.

⁹The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 224.

¹⁰"Writer's World," New York Times Book Review, 16 October 1977, p. 49.

¹¹London Magazine, September 1957, "Foreword," p. 11.

¹²"What Was Wrong with Pinfold," New Statesman, 31 August 1957, p. 224.

¹³The Writings of Evelyn Waugh, pp. 226-27. Cf. "Waugh's novels are very largely the result of these confrontations with a barbarism and anarchy that is not simply outside and to be resisted; it is also within and to be shaped and organized" (Malcolm Bradbury, "America and the Comic Vision," Evelyn Waugh and His World, p. 171.)

¹⁴Portrait of a Country Neighbour (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. xv. Anthony Powell, almost alone, calls him "extraordinarily uncomplicated": To Keep the Ball Rolling (abridged and revised edition, Penguin Books, 1983), p. 129.

¹⁵Two recent studies -- Jeffrey Heath's The Picturesque Prison (1982) and Ian Littlewood's The Writings of Evelyn Waugh (1983) -- are based on variations of this argument.

¹⁶"Waugh and Orwell as Culture Critics," Transatlantic Patterns: Cultural Comparisons of England with America (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1977), p. 158.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁸Letters, p. 206.

¹⁹See pp. 13-15, supra. Cf. also Robert Murray Davis' description of him as temperamentally disposed to "'classify, analyze, separate and judge.'" "The Mind and Art of Evelyn Waugh," Papers on Language and Literature, 3 (1967), 275."

²⁰Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh, p. 245.

²¹Portrait of a Country Neighbour, pp. 20-21.

²²See pp. 71-72, supra.

²³Cf. Mr. Pinfold's plaintive question: "Why does everyone except me find it so easy to be nice?" (GP, 143).

²⁴"Mr. Betjeman Despairs," Essays, Articles and Reviews, p. 430.

²⁵A Little Learning, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1964), p. 33.

²⁶Cf. D. Paul Farr, "The Edwardian Golden Age and Nostalgic Truth," Dalhousie Review, 50 (Autumn 1970), 384. For a more astringent view see Claud Cockburn, "Evelyn Waugh's Lost Rabbit," Atlantic Monthly, 232/6 (December 1973), 58.

²⁷A Little Learning, p. 48.

²⁸Cf. Arthur Waugh, One Man's Road (London: Chapman and Hall, 1931), p. 367.

²⁹The Will to Believe: Novelists of the Nineteen-Thirties (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 15, 16.

³⁰Editor's comment in A Little Order (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 146.

³¹Donaldson, Portrait of a Country Neighbour, pp. xiii-xiv; Woodruff "Judge and Jury Must Decide," Evelyn Waugh and His World, ed. David Pryce-Jones (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 132; Powell, Infants of the Spring (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1976), p. 129.

32 "The Arrogance of Evelyn Waugh," The Critic, 30 (May-June 1972), 70.

33 "Sloth," The Seven Deadly Sins (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 reprint), p. 58.

CONCLUSION

The preoccupation with order which has been studied here in the work of a single author was characteristic of a generation. Though particularly prominent in Waugh, it can also be observed, individually nuanced, in all those contemporaries whose attitude to experience was fixed by the First World War and the conditions which followed it. The political, social and cultural tensions of the inter-war years were part of a historical continuum, but the Great War violently accentuated the process of change, establishing in the popular consciousness, especially the consciousness of the young, an acute awareness of the gap between past and present. The inability of conventional pre-1914 values to explain and, still more, to justify the devastation and suffering of the war years caused a whole generation to question these values and the way of life erected on them. For many of the most sensitive and thoughtful of those who survived the conflict or who came to maturity just after it, the Victorian-Edwardian-Georgian tradition was bankrupt. The prevailing disillusionment was intensified by the social and political disruption that followed 1918. An increasingly urbanized, mechanized and standardized society, shaped by the spread of the scientific spirit, the advent of Freudian psychology, and the influence of new artistic philosophies, continued to undermine traditional beliefs, codes and conventions, a process accompanied at the political level by the collapse of the economic system, the spread of totalitarianism, and, as the thirties advanced, the threat of another war.

In England, the general response of writers to this environment was one of opposition. In varying ways, they were all distinguished by a lack of sympathy with the dominant culture. Typically, as Peter Widdowson points out, they were "product[s] of high bourgeois culture" from which they were "in some degree alienated." The alienation could result in "cultural despair or a commitment to socialism," but its common denominator was "a profound antipathy to present society."¹ This is the negative aspect of the situation; the values represented by their society were no longer meaningful to the young intellectuals of whom Widdowson speaks and, accordingly, it no longer commanded their assent. Both their despair and their commitment grew out of a spiritual void, so that their positive responses, whether political, as in the case of those who chose the Marxist option, or religious, as in the case of Waugh and others like him, were manifestations of a general need to fill the emptiness, evidence of a widespread search for order. As well, they were the expression of individual needs that both included and went beyond cultural alienation.

Such needs, with their links to order and disorder, are at work throughout Waugh's fiction, constantly influencing attitude and method. Thus, the element of dandyism in his novels can be seen, when traced to its source, as the expression of a fundamental attitude to disorder. It is, as has been noted,² a form of social criticism, a complex of reactions which serves both to keep the surrounding ugliness at a distance and to make an adverse judgement on the civilization which has produced it. Such an attitude, with its ever-present risk of frivolousness, has obvious implications for Waugh's position as a writer. These can be most clearly

seen in Brideshead Revisited, where his manifest dislike for 'Hooperism' and all its works and his sympathy for the Flytes and what they represent are both rooted in dandyism, and where, at the same time, his announced theme, the operation of Divine Grace, could hardly be more serious. The restricted human sympathies inherent in the dandy perspective are basically at odds with such a theme, and the novel is flawed as a result. For Waugh's fiction as a whole, the answer would seem to be that his native dandyism sharpens the focus of his comedy, and especially his satire, but that it is a negative influence in non-comic situations where his convictions are engaged. Vile Bodies and Brideshead Revisited represent the two polar positions.

The factor of prejudice, the refusal to be unbiased, is another aspect of the narrowed sympathies that accompany the dandy perspective. Although they add a cutting edge to his satire, Waugh's prejudices are so strong that the objects of his fictional satire sometimes emerge from the creative process as stereotypes rather than the figures of fantasy they should be. The treatment of Americans and their culture in The Loved One shows the process in action. The story is a vigorous satire, but there are times (the account of Mr. Joyboy's background, with its implied criticism of the American educational system, is an example) when the people and things it satirizes, grotesque though they are, seem to be more the actual objects of Waugh's everyday dislike than creations of his imagination. The gap between the token fantasy demanded by satire and the analogous objective reality has been almost eliminated, and the result comes close to mere scoffing. The strength of his convictions was part of Waugh's

endowment as a satirist, but it also limited his treatment of the human condition. What he could achieve when the limitations of his prejudices were set aside is best observed in Unconditional Surrender.

"Every writer, especially every novelist, has a 'message'," wrote George Orwell, "and the minutest details of his work are influenced by it."³ The qualities of Waugh's fiction which have just been noted -- his flight from disorder, his restricted sympathies, his prejudices -- all serve to illustrate Orwell's dictum; they project one aspect of a particular view of experience. However, there are other, more positive, elements in the novels which are equally part of what Waugh has to say.

Chief among these is the shaping urge for order which conditions Waugh's view of life at every level, collective and individual. It seems to have been this more than native spirituality which led to his conversion. Kurt F. Reinhardt makes the point in a comparison of Graham Greene and Waugh. Greene, he says, "was preoccupied with the dialectic of good and evil, sin and grace," while "Waugh was intrigued by a dialectic of order and disorder."⁴ This goes to the heart of the matter. Quite aside from doctrinal and spiritual considerations, the Catholic Church offered an explanation of the human condition which Waugh found intellectually and emotionally congenial. The order which it proclaimed was a counterbalance to the confusion and uncertainty he saw in himself and the world around him. Moreover, he believed, it was an unchanging institution. The belief was subsequently shaken, but the dislike of change remained. At the social

level it consistently expressed itself in his devotion to tradition and to established customs, usages and rituals. His attitude to art and design, and especially his fondness for traditional domestic architecture, was part of the same orientation.

The comedy and satire which first established Waugh's reputation are also identified with the order principle. Rooted, albeit differently, in the awareness of incongruity, they reflect his instinctive recognition of and tendency to exploit the gap between the actual and the ideal. His acute sensitivity to the currents of cultural change in the society he knew and his ability to capture the details that unnervingly reflect them are also part of the pattern. The observation of minute but telling differences in the appearance, manners and conduct of his characters and in their physical surroundings which enabled him to do this was a vital element in his equipment for this exploration of the borderland between social order and disorder.

The subtlety of Waugh's satiric insight is mediated through the subtlety of his language. The "elegance and variety of contrivance" that distinguish his writing are integrally associated with his other talents as a writer, as well as being a constant reminder of the virtue of order which engrossed him. Together with these, they are one of the corner-stones of his achievement as a novelist. He worked on a limited social canvas and he was not a stylistic innovator, but within these bounds his assured use of the resources of his art enabled him to create a brilliant and penetrating picture of the world he knew from the decade that followed the First World War to the decade that followed the Second.

NOTES

¹"Between the Acts? English Fiction in the Thirties," Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties, ed. Jon Clark et al. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), p. 135.

²Cf. p. 31, *supra*.

³"Charles Dickens," The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), Vol. 1, p. 448. Cf. also Waugh's statement (p. 6, *supra*) that "There is no abstract writing."

⁴"Evelyn Waugh: Christian Gentleman," The Theological Novel of Modern Europe (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1969), p. 203.

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation argues that the idea of order is a major influence in the work of Evelyn Waugh, affecting both the style and substance of his writing. It also argues that the part which order plays in the novels is directly related to Waugh's view of the human condition. The parallel importance of disorder, whether implied where order is present or acknowledged where this is absent, is fundamental to the argument.

The thesis is developed through a study of the successive novels showing how the order principle functions in Waugh's choice of subject matter and in the fictional techniques he brings to bear upon it. Chapters Three through Seven, the bulk of the dissertation, are devoted to this investigation of the fiction. The second chapter considers the literary background and associations of Waugh's kind of writing and points to other writers whose work has similarities to his. Its conclusion is that Waugh's novels are clearly identified with the tradition of artistic dandyism.

In the first and last chapters the focus is on the author rather than the work. Their purpose is to survey Waugh's metaphysic, the basic attitude to experience which shaped his writing. The first chapter examines Waugh's non-fiction to show how the idea of order is reflected in his miscellaneous prose writings, while the final one uses the most personal of his novels, together with the record of his life and the testimony of those who knew him, to complement the evidence offered by the non-fiction. The autobiographical character of The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, together

with the revealing nature of its subject matter -- mental derangement -- makes this novel a document of special importance for the understanding of the place of order in Waugh's life and work.