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Satirical Methods in Eight Novels of Evelyn Waugh

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SATIRICAL METHODS IN EIGHT NOVELS OF
EVELYN WAUGH

by
Joseph Thomas McIntyre

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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June
1951
LIFE

Joseph Thomas Mc Intyre was born in Cleveland, Ohio. He was graduated from St. Ignatius High School, Cleveland, Ohio, June, 1940, and from Xavier University, June, 1945, with the degree of Bachelor of Literature.

He began his graduate studies at Loyola University in September, 1945. In 1947 and 1948 he taught English at John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio.
PREFACE

The original plan for this thesis called for some knowledge of the influences exerted on Evelyn Waugh. In response to a letter written to him the following answer was received.

"After adolescence writers aren't much affected by other writers.

"Most useful books are dictionary & encyclopedias.

"Should advise some writer dead at least a hundred years for your thesis. There can be no real scholarship in studying your contemporaries.

E.W."

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CHAPTER I

SATIRE: ITS NATURE AND METHODS IN FOUR CONTEMPORARIES OF WAUGH

The folly of man has exhibited itself in so many forms in so many ages that it is difficult to decide which age presents an author with the maximum amount of material for satire. It would be a new folly, perhaps, to rule that the period between World War I and World War II is richest in such material, but few would deny to those twenty hectic years a pre-eminent position among the eras of folly.

A not unworthy example of the pursuit of the unusual, so characteristic of this era, was the sensational opening of the New Burlington Galleries. The earnest and the curious, jamming the room almost to the point of suffocation, saw in addition to the art exhibits a Surrealist Spectre, bandaged from head to foot, stuck with roses and carrying a leg of mutton, roaming about; a woman with her face smothered in red roses; and the artist Dali lecturing from inside a diver's helmet until, nearly swooning, he was removed. Such a period was the perfect subject for the satirical pens of a number of writers.
Before attempting to classify the various satirical methods of Evelyn Waugh and other representative satirists of this period, it is necessary to accept some definitions regarding the nature of satire itself. Practically every writer who takes up the subject of satire as such admits at the start that no definitions are universally accepted. Edgar Johnson succinctly sums up the situation: "There wouldn't be much exaggeration in saying that everybody recognizes satire and that nobody knows what it is." Yet even this pessimistic view is overly optimistic. Apparently all do not recognize the same things as satire. One, for instance, holds that a novel cannot be satirical because a novelist, though he may emphasize weaknesses, must not judge or condemn, the object, he says, of the satirist. Even more devastating, perhaps, is the answer of Evelyn Waugh himself to the question, "Are your books meant to be satirical?"

No. Satire is a matter of Period. It flourishes in a stable society and presupposes homogeneous moral standards—the early Roman Empire and 18th Century Europe. It is aimed at inconsistency and hypocrisy. It exposes polite cruelty and folly by exaggerating them. It seeks to produce shame. All this has no place in the Century of the Common Man where

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vice no longer pays lip service to virtue. Fortunately, one is not forced to accept the verdict of a writer about his own work as an objectively true statement. Indeed, in this very answer we may detect irony, and a strong argument could be built up that Waugh is here describing the object of his writing. It goes without saying, then, that some of the fundamental ideas on the nature of the satire accepted in this thesis from certain critics will be disputed by others. The sole defense is to repeat that no universal rules have been accepted.

One of the few books to deal with satire as a whole is David Worcester's *The Art of Satire*. This book is particularly valuable to the present writer since it deals not only with verse satire, but also with prose; not only with novelists in general but also with Huxley and Waugh. Yet, though he writes of the art of satire, Worcester does not attempt to sum up the word with a succinct definition, except to call it the Proteus of literature, a sufficient excuse, perhaps, for omitting a definition. Worcester does, however, define the various methods of satire and it may be well to list his definitions, together with some by other critics.

3 Evelyn Waugh, "Fan-Fare," *Life*, XX, April 8, 1946, 60.

The main divisions of satire, as Worcester gives them are invective, burlesque, and irony.\(^5\) Obviously, all types of invective are not satirical. Gross invective or abuse differs from satiric invective by "direct, intense sincerity of expression. Satiric invective shows detachment, indirection, and complexity in the author's attitude."\(^6\) Johnson rightly remarks that invective is the simplest weapon of direct satire.\(^7\)

Professor Bond lays down the dictum that "a series of terms, clear, logical, and consistent be adopted,"\(^8\) so that no confusion may result in treating burlesque. The definition he then gives for burlesque is the following: "The essence of humor lies in incongruity, and when imitation is added, burlesque is the result. Burlesque consists, then, in the use or imitation of serious matter or manner, made amusing by the creation of an incongruity between style and subject."\(^9\) Making various distinctions in burlesque, Bond speaks first of high burlesque as treating a trivial subject in an elevated manner. Parody and mock-heroic he places in this class. Low burlesque, he says, treats

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5 Ibid., 49.
6 Ibid., 19.
7 Johnson, A Treasury of Satire, 14.
9 Ibid.
an elevated subject in a trivial manner. Travesty and the Hudibrastic poem are in this class.\(^{10}\) Worcester cites Bond's ideas on burlesque with full approval.\(^{11}\)

Not all the critics treat irony as merely a division of satire. Thompson claims that it is a device "generally but not always employed for satirical ends."\(^{12}\) Worcester, however, classifies it as one of the three divisions of satire. As with the word satire, the critics are wary in giving definitions to irony, contenting themselves with a history of the word or a description. George Saintsbury confesses that he would fear to define it, but he adds,

To mean something different from or additional to, what you ostensibly say is perhaps the very simplest, most universal, and most accurate description, if not definition, of what, in the European literature of the last two millenniums and a half or thereabouts, has been meant by Irony.\(^{13}\)

Thompson, though employing somewhat unusual terminology, defines the divisions of irony well. Irony of speech or verbal irony is irony in which "the implication of what is said

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10 Ibid., 3-17.
12 Alan Reynolds Thompson, The Dry Mock, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1948, 10.
13 George Saintsbury, "Irony," The Dial, LXXXII, March, 1927, 182.
is in painfully comic contrast to its literal meaning."\textsuperscript{14} It is also called irony of inversion. \textsuperscript{15} Irony of character or, as it is more usually called, irony of manner, is irony whereby "A person's true character is shown to be in painfully comic contrast to his appearance or manner."\textsuperscript{16} These two varieties of irony Worcester discusses as allies of comedy,\textsuperscript{17} two other varieties as allies of tragedy, dramatic and cosmic irony.\textsuperscript{18} Thompson defines dramatic irony thus: "Chance or fate in real life, the author in fiction, makes the outcome incongruous to the expectation, with painfully comic effect."\textsuperscript{19} In defining dramatic irony he differs with Worcester, who says that it is best to regard dramatic irony, tragic irony, and Sophoclean irony as interchangeable terms.\textsuperscript{20} Thompson limits Sophoclean irony to the "verbal device that gives the audience the wink and thus calls sharp attention to a

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14 & Thompson, \textit{The Dry Mock}, 5. \\
15 & Worcester, \textit{The Art Of Satire}, 79. \\
16 & Thompson, \textit{The Dry Mock}, 5. \\
17 & Worcester, \textit{The Art of Satire}, 71-108. \\
18 & \textit{Ibid.}, 109-144. \\
19 & Thompson, \textit{The Dry Mock}, 9. \\
20 & Worcester, \textit{The Art of Satire}, 118. \\
\end{tabular}
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discrepancy in the situation of the speaker. The discrepancy, however, may be ironical itself in a different sense, without specific verbal emphasis. By itself, it constitutes an irony of events, or what is usually called dramatic irony.  

Thompson also distinguishes between tragic irony and dramatic irony, saying that dramatic irony may include comic irony. To him dramatic irony is the term for irony of events when seen on the stage.  

Before examining the satirical methods Waugh uses in his novels, it is now necessary to make some test to determine whether or not he is writing satire or pure comedy. Again, it is difficult to lay down absolute rules which mark sharp dividing lines. To Thompson, the real criterion is that of amusement and pain. Pure comedy, with its sudden contracts, does not hurt the feelings; rather it gratifies them, but "irony results from a comic situation when we are also pained." In this connection Thompson criticizes Johnson's view that actual pain and laughter cannot be present together. Taking Johnson's examples, the irony of Swift on the Yahoos and Aldous Huxley on the Fifth Earl of Gonester, Thompson shows that the humor may be wry, but it is

21 Thompson, The Dry Mock, 29.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 19.
humor and it is present. 24 Worcester sets down two general principles which are useful for distinguishing satire from pure comedy. The one principle includes the closeness with which the author pursues the object of satire. Casual and promiscuous use of devices argues for comedy, and the concentrated application of comic devices to a single object or group of related objects argues for satire. The second principle resembles Thompson's single criterion: the degree of virulence in the comic devices; intense condemnation denotes satire rather than comedy. 25 Johnson agrees with this second point in writing that the one ingredient common to all satire is criticism. 26

With these definitions in mind, it is useful to show that Evelyn Waugh was not alone in satirizing the period between the two World Wars, nor was his method entirely different from that of other novelists. Ronald Firbank, Aldous Huxley, Norman Douglas, and Nancy Mitford, among others, afford interesting comparisons with and contrasts to Waugh. Is Firbank nothing but a butterfly in his airy treatment of this period, and is he satirizing or lovingly chronicling the affairs of his favorites,

26 Johnson, A Treasury of Satire, 7.
the same people Waugh excoriates? Huxley leaves us with no doubts that he detests both the people and the period, but does he become too personal and peevish, and does Waugh, like him, lecture his readers and introduce intellectuals to explain how society is damned? Is Waugh's light manner the same as Douglas' cavalier attitude toward the problems of the period? What of Nancy Mitford, who shows both malice and affection in the presentation of her characters? Interesting indeed are the problems that arise when one examines the works of writers whose very resemblances succeed in obscuring their differences.

If a catchword, repeated over and over again to describe the work of an author, could always be accepted as reliable, then there would be little difficulty in determining the outstanding trait of Ronald Firbank. The word most critics have hit upon to describe this writer is "butterfly." Some use it to praise, other to damn. Sir Osbert Sitwell says he must "attempt to pin down upon a sheet of paper that unrivalled butterfly...."27 Another writes, "Doubtless we will be accused of breaking a butterfly on the wheel of criticism."28 Still


28 Hugh I'A. Fausset, "Valmouth and Other Stories," The Bookman, London, LXXVIII, April, 1930, 42.
another says, "His personal legend is slender, and on its score he might only have fallen into the ranks of the minor eccentrics, something between a wit and a dandy, a butterfly whose life need not be further inquired into once it had flown past." Finally, E. M. Forster makes this butterfly quality of Firbank the theme of an essay. "To break a butterfly or even a beetle, upon a wheel is a delicate task," he begins, and throughout the essay he retains this figure as representative of Firbank.

In the face of such criticism, it would be dangerous to deny this lepidopterous quality of Firbank's writing. Yet such a view has proved unfortunate, and as a consequence many critics have urged against him a frivolity and pointlessness. Other critics, re-evaluating him today are, however, more willing to admit that his novels have a significance not readily perceived, but not all critics have changed their opinions:

I have never in the past been able to read him with any very great pleasure, since his fanciful and impudent triviality seemed to me to have not merely too little reference to human affairs but too little formal or stylistic virtue.


Professor Tindall is even more withering, relegating Firbank to a footnote with, "Both before the war and after Ronald Firbank, a corrupt dandy, composed arabesques in the most decadent style of the nineties." 32

In a remarkably penetrating and prescient review of Prancing Nigger, Edmund Wilson takes issue with Carl Van Vechten, chief exponent of Firbank's "frivolous approach." 33 Admitting Firbank's light touch, Wilson argues that though the novels are not realistic they are in a sense very close to life.

They are too actual to have the lightness of fantasy. They are really not woven of moonbeams like, say, the novels of Mr. Cabell, but stitched together with great pains from the precious scraps of experience. 34

Van Vechten had written that Firbank's touch was so light that in comparison "Beerbohm seems a trifle studied and Huxley an earnest fellow." 35 Not so, says Wilson. Firbank's

33 "Mr. Firbank's Light Touch," The New Republic, XXXVIII, May 21, 1924, 342.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
... landscapes seem inspired by real landscapes; his social atmosphere studied from real people; and his dialogue a shimmering off of a certain film of raciness and drollness from actual conversation. ... Thus it is not by reason of a lighter touch that Firbank surpasses Aldous Huxley and Max Beerbohm but through his superior artistic seriousness. 36

Twenty-five years later, Mr. Wilson is even more convinced in his opinion, and he defends the coyness and little cries that spatter the pages of Firbank's novels on the grounds that they are always calculated and are really a part of his subject, "mannerisms connected with the manners of his special group and time." 37 (The same criticism can be applied to the diction of Evelyn Waugh's characters, the "sick-making", "too, too bogus" Bright Young People.) Wilson adds that "Ronald Firbank is dealing with a later and less lusty phase of the same society as Congreve," 38 a comparison made also by Cyril Connolly, who says that being no less serious than Congreve or Horace Walpole, Firbank "recognized frivolity as the most insolent refinement of satire." 39 Still another compares the society

36 Ibid.


38 Ibid.

39 Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, London, 1938,
he portrays, elegant, flippant, and heartless, to the society Ovid presents, not trying to convince us of anything but casually taking the superficiality and selfishness of that society for granted. This is the same society that plays the vital role in the novels of Evelyn Waugh, though some may prefer to call the savage and fashionable world of the twenties the same type of English high society Waugh rebuked in Edmund Campion.

In satirizing the people of his time, it must be conceded that Ronald Firbank used most frequently the method of the light touch, mannerisms, "incessant titterings," and "flickering inanities" to some, and an apparent aimlessness. Waugh comments at length on this last named quality of Firbank's writing.

His art is purely selective. From the fashionable chatter of his period, vapid and interminable, he has plucked, like tiny brilliant feathers from the breast of a bird, the particles of his design. . . . 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 inflexion of phrase on another until there emerges a plot; usually a plot so outrageous that he distrusts his own inferences. The case of the Ritz Hotel v. Lady Something in The Flower Beneath the Foot is typical of the Firbank method. The King at a dinner-party employs the expression: "I could not be more astonished if you told me there were

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41 Fausset, "Valmouth and Other Stories," The Bookman, LXXVIII, 42.
fleas at the Ritz," a part of which assertion Lady Something, who was blandly listening, imperfectly chanced to hear. "Who would credit it. . . . It is too appalling. . . . Fleas have been found at the Ritz." Nothing more is said for forty pages and then: "Had I known, Lady Something, I was going to be ill, I would have gone to the Ritz!" the Hon. "Eddy" gasped. "And you would have been bitten all over," Lady Something replied.42

Just how much Waugh borrowed from this method of Firbank's may be gauged by comparing the remark about fleas with the remark about Madame Ballon and General Connolly in Black Mischief. This will be more appropriately shown in Chapter Two of the thesis.

While, then, Firbank employs the frivolous and the apparently aimless, there is a seriousness, indeed a sadness, in most of his novels. Disappointed love and distressing humiliations are his chief themes. Wilson says that "when he illustrates these themes--along with his extravagant repertory of vices--with characters which are burlesque without taking actual body," what emerges is unimaginative nonsense and the ugliness of a joke. Wilson explains this, again with much insight, when we remember that he wrote in 1924, as some queer maladjustment, "a deficiency of imagination," something which, though he is the most suggestive living writer, makes him too often succeed "in suggesting nothing beyond abstract indecent ideas: one would

prefer him to be a little more sensual and a little less ingenious." He finds something rankling in Ronald Firbank, a discordant melancholy, and he concludes that Firbank has been thinking and this has made him unhappy.

Taking into account this serious attitude in Firbank, the Times reviewer says, "His characters are unaware of the meshes ambition has prepared for them, and their epicurean tastes slip them easily from innocence to subterfuge and fatality." Like Wilson, the reviewer feels that Firbank's stories are more than entertainments, more than the equivalent in literature of the block of solidified eau de Cologne that Firbank carried to relieve his forehead on train journeys, but the reviewer feels that the moment of sorrow which creeps into his works might have undone him, for though he was moving "toward a subdued tragic feeling . . . his was not the genius to bear the full interpretation of the human tragedy."

Of the recent critics, W. H. Auden is one of the few who fail to remark upon the underlying sadness in Firbank's novels. In a sentence the thought of which is almost as discon-

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
certing as its excessive number of commas he says,

Firbank's extraordinary achievement was to draw a picture, the finest, I believe, ever drawn by anyone, of the Earthly Paradise, not, of course, as it really is, but as, in our fallen state, we imagine it to be, as the place, that is, where, without having to change our desires and behavior in any way, we suffer neither frustration nor guilt. . . . Everyone is welcome to this Eden but on one condition, that they are not in earnest; thus when Laura de Nazianzi falls seriously in love with his Weariness the Prince, she ceases to belong and must leave. 47

We are back again to the confusion that Firbank's method is also his matter. If what Auden says is true, the Eden of Firbank excluded the greater number of his characters, for not only does Laura cease to belong, but neither can Miami Mouth, Thetis Tooke, Cardinal Pirelli, Mrs. Shamefoot, and Miss Sinquier remain. Laura, a girl who has learned to read swiftly on the screens at the cinema, 48 becomes a nun and a saint because she flees from Prince Yousef, who has lightly given his favors to three others, including a negress. Yet even in the convent Laura has not found a perfect refuge. The other nuns, distracted by the coming royal wedding which might have been Laura's, in their excitement neglect their religious duties. 49

48 Ronald Firbank, The Flower Beneath the Foot, Five Novels, New Directions, 1949, 128.
49 Ibid., 251-256.
in Prancing Nigger escapes from this Eden by becoming a pious pilgrim after her family, notably her sister Edna, lose all self-respect. Wilson remarks that Firbank is much like Mr. Mouth in this book, a man who "sits morosely by and, as if in prophetic vision of his family's disaster, says merely, 'Lemme alone. Ah'm thinkin'.' The genuine frivolity of the unregenerate Edna is illustrated in the last lines of the story, uttered immediately after she has been described as weeping because Miami has announced her renunciation of the family by passing in the procession without looking up at Edna. "Dair's a new dancer at de Apollo tonight. Suppose we go?" The approach here is again the frivolous, but the implied criticism behind it is devastating.

This use of the frivolous approach to castigate the vices of the bourgeoisie is the outstanding satirical method of Firbank. Elaborating on Firbank's use of the frivolous, Connolly says, "The things Firbank hated were the moral vices of the bourgeoisie, stupidity, hypocrisy, pretentiousness, greed, and the eye on the main chance." See how he uses it at the death

50 Edmund Wilson, "Mr. Firbank's Light Touch," The New Republic, XXXVIII, May 21, 1924, 342.
51 Ronald Firbank, Prancing Nigger, Five Novels, 329.
52 Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, London, 1938, 43.
bed scene of the Archduchess in The Flower Beneath the Foot. Her Dreaminess the Queen is present. "I'm nothing but nerves, doctor," she says. "Ultra feminine, she disliked that another—even in extremis—should absorb all the limelight." The Countess of Tolga and the Queen then carry on an extraordinary conversation, chatting about their apparel during the mourning period still to come, the guests at the Ritz, and the most correct way of announcing the death of the Archduchess. The telegram the Queen finally decides upon (she has reprimanded the Archduchess for interrupting her while she tries to concentrate) is, "Poor Lizzie has ceased articulating." It would be hazardous to say that Firbank is constantly censuring this frivolity, but it is obvious that his method is to censure frivolity by frivolity. The frivolous lives these people lead have far reaching effects, effects which they may not be cognizant of, but their ignorance does not save them. It is not a pretty picture, that of Laura, the Flower, beating her hands streaming with blood against the broken glass of the convent wall.

53 Firbank, The Flower Beneath the Foot, 189-90.
54 Ibid., 188.
55 Ibid., 256.
Among the less important but more obvious devices Firbank uses is that of strange names to achieve satirical effects. Since he constantly used this old device, mention of a few names should suffice to illustrate this point. In Valmouth appear Mrs. Thoroughfare, Lady Parvula de Panzoust, the Hon. Gilda Vintage, Mr. ffines, Mrs. Q. Comedy, née Le Giddy. Another device, nearly as arch as the use of his own name in several novels, is the use of the dash at crucial moments and of other typographical marks, such as crosses + + + in place of exclamation points when a nun expresses shock. These, of course, hark back to Laurence Sterne, whom Firbank also resembles in his not-so-veiled indecencies.

Illustrative of the essentially serious intent beneath the surface frivolity of many of Firbank's bon mots are the following from Vainglory:

"Mrs. Henedge lived in a small house with killing stairs just off Chesham Place. "'If I were to die here,' she had often said, 'they would never be able to twist the coffin outside my door; they would have to cremate me in my room.'"

56 Ronald Firbank, Valmouth, Five Novels, 3-123.
57 Firbank, The Flower Beneath the Foot, 174.
"I consider it a regular doctor's town!" Mrs. Pontypool exclaimed; 'the funeral horses are always on the go.'

"Mrs. Pontypool looked humane.
"Poor animals!' she said." 59

Concerning the martyrdom of Mrs. Cresswell: "Her last spoken words were, 'I've had such a busy morning!'" 60

The martyrdom itself was as it should be: "... no squeezing, fainting, crushing or trampling. No prodding. . . .
The spectators, provided, each, with a couch and a cup of chocolate, were there by invitation alone." 61

"'When we were first married,' she said, 'I was very, very wretched. I would weep, weep, weep at night! And in the morning, often, my maid would have to put my pillowcase out upon the window-ledge to dry. Fortunately, it was in Sicily, so it never took long.'" 62

Consider also Lady Barrow, who devises a means, ridiculous in itself, to escape periodically from her terrible husband. When she can endure no more she pretends to hear the Raven portending death and so she flees to London. 63 Another notable instance of this use of the frivolous to conceal depths

59 Ibid., 66.
60 Ibid., 129.
61 Ibid., 129.
62 Ibid., 169.
63 Ibid., 60.
of evil or pain is Mrs. Calvally's ability to indulge in small talk just after she has discovered that her husband is having a love affair with Mira Thumberl, who has sent him a door knocker representing an Amour. (Note again the use of a ridiculous object.) By accident, Mrs. Calvally discovers the meaning of the door knob, and when a friend, Mrs. Asp, sees the carpenter on the steps and remarks that she hopes nothing is wrong, Mrs. Calvally is able to "ripple": "I conclude it's only the carpenter who has come to pass a screw through Miss Mira's charming consumptive Amour." After Calvally has left his wife, Mrs. Henedge goes to comfort her and finds her "propped up by a pink pillow, shelling peas."

Few would press the charge of frivolity against Aldous Huxley and yet in his novels he uses some of the same wild devices as Firbank. For instance, in Antic Hay he has Gumbril first invent pneumatic trousers and later change his personality simply by wearing a beard. Connolly in writing about Firbank says, "He and the early Eliot seem to me the pure artists of the 'twenties, Lawrence and Huxley the philosopher-artists, the explainers."  

64 Ibid., 159.  
65 Ibid., 196.  
This perhaps marks the difference between the two. Firbank may expose men's vices but he does not stop to explain them. Huxley will expatiate on them at length; he will assemble various types in the manner of Thomas Love Peacock and have them sit around at a country house symposium and in almost interminable conversation reveal the ideas they represent. Few are the vices these characters do not personify as well as discuss, and innumerable are the forms Huxley uses to illustrate and attack them. Hatred with the violence of Swift permeates his novels. This emotional hatred may take the form of fantasy, wit, burlesque, irony, or blasphemy, but always it is violent. It may assume the form of farce, "bitter, obscene, and terrible,"67 as in Antic Hay, or this violence may emerge in an imagery "often derived from diseased states of the body, worms, beetles, and the lower forms of life, slime and filth, dunghills and sewage, the excreta of bladder and bowels."68 Huxley, intent on exposing his characters rather than comprehending them, sees them only as disgusting. The puppets he creates, Gumbril, Lypiatt,


Mercaptan, and Rose in *Antic Hay*, for instance, have activity but it is a purposeless activity; they dance the dance of futility. It is such an attitude which so limits the art of Huxley. As Savage points out, "When human life is seen as intrinsically meaningless and evil, then the work of the novelist, whose task is to present a picture of that life in terms of its significance and value, is deprived of all justification." Here we may note the subtle differences in the purposelessness of Huxley, Waugh, and Firbank. Huxley in his early novels presents life itself as intrinsically meaningless. Waugh presents people living meaningless lives but always with the declaration or implication that this is contrary to right order. Firbank presents people living meaningless lives, but he hesitates to say whether or not there is such a thing as right order.

Among other methods of Huxley's satire is his use, like Waugh's and Firbank's, of odd but suitable burlesque names for his characters. Gumbril, Bojanus, Boldero are examples. Mercaptan, grossly promiscuous in *Antic Hay*, illustrates this well and also indicates Huxley's interest in science, since a mercaptan in chemistry is one of a class of compounds with an exceptionally foul smell.

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One critic, David Worcester, claims that of all present day satirists Huxley stands the best chance of survival.\textsuperscript{70} The outstanding trait of his satire according to Worcester is his use of irony. Illustrating the devices of "the most ingenious ironist of modern times,"\textsuperscript{71} he says,

\begin{quote}
Biological determination is impressed on us by descriptions of the involuntary workings of cells, kidneys, spermatazoa; the emotional content of music is contrasted with the mechanics of sound waves and the auditory system; conventional sentimentalism and behaviorism jostle each other on the same page, the small actions of the present are projected against the historical past, of which the actors are unaware; the dignity of man as a rational animal is undermined by appalling revelations of the preponderance of irrationality in conduct and memory.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

A critic who would take exception to Worcester's lavish praise is Edmund Wilson. To him Huxley is neither complete nor self-sufficient as a satirist, nor does he feel that Huxley has even a real love of writing. Looking upon Huxley as


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 122.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. Mention of the musical motif used so extensively by Huxley is interesting because it marks a difference between Huxley and Firbank and Waugh. Firbank haunted the concert hall, attending the ballet and listening to Russian opera, as Sir Osbert Sitwell tells in \textit{Noble Essences}, 69. Waugh surprisingly enough "has no ear for music and can barely tell one tune from another." Harold Acton, \textit{Memoirs of an Aesthete}, London, 1948, 127.
a preacher rather than a writer, Wilson gives both Waugh and Firbank better chances of survival. Very tellingly he points out that Huxley rejects the world because he doesn't know what is in it. 73

Previously W. H. Auden was quoted as calling Firbank's world an Eden. Such a description was questioned, but true or not in the case of Firbank, no one would use this term to designate the world of Aldous Huxley. His cosmos is nothing short of a madhouse.

God's in His Heaven! He never issues (Wise Man!) to visit this world of ours. 74 Man inhabits a Zoo where the "gorgeous buttocks of the ape" may remind us of "Autumn sunsets exquisitely dying." 75 In so hateful a world a tedium vitae seizes man, a species of cosmic irony, the satire of frustration. 76 The cosmic dismay of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is seen in the intellectual irony of Huxley. Early in Brave New World two Alphas are

75 Ibid.
described flying over the Crematorium when suddenly their plane shoots upwards on the column of hot air rising from the chimneys, only to fall again when it passes beyond into chill air.

"'What a marvellous switchback!' Lenina laughed delightedly.
"But Henry's tone was almost, for a moment, melancholy. 'Do you know what that switchback was?' he said, 'It was some human being finally and definitely disappearing. Going up in a squirt of hot gas. It would be curious to know who it was--a man or a woman, an Alpha or an Epsilon. . . . ' He sighed."77

"And with it go up," adds Alan Reynolds Thompson, "by implication the Christian belief in the soul of man ascending to heaven, all human longing for immortality, and even the dignity with which we try to invest death. The symbolism has that grotesque and cruel aptness for which the author has a positive genius."78

The pitch of this tedium vitæ can be seen at the conclusion of Antic Hay, when Mrs. Viveash visits Shearwater in his laboratory, where he is madly pedalling for the sake of a mad science that transposes beetles' heads and chickens' sexes.79 Hideous in its mixture of tragedy and farce is the last ride of Mrs. Viveash and Gumbriil trying to find someone somewhere to call upon.80 In something like a Pippa Passes failure, suicide, and rape surround them as they keep passing by untouched and

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77 Aldous Huxley, Brave New World, New York, 1932, 89.
78 Alan Reynolds Thompson, "Brave New World," The Bookman, New York, LXXIV, March, 1932, 691.
hopelessly bored. Mrs. Viveash's heartbreaking iteration is, "I should like to see the lights again. They give one temporarily the illusion of being cheerful." Throughout this scene the motif of purposeless speed is sounded again and again. "Drive, drive," cries Mrs. Viveash, and we are reminded of Agatha Runcible in her delirium crying, "Faster, faster." At the conclusion of the book Mrs. Viveash and Gumbril depart in their cab still seeking but never finding.

This purposeless speed can be found earlier in Huxley's poetry, where he uses a variation of this cosmic irony, revolt against God, a God whom he blasphemously calls a slobbering cretin running an irrational universe.

Moving, moving . . . so with a roar and and rush round we go and round! forever whirling on a ceaseless Bank Holiday of drunken life and speed.

But I happened to look inwards among the machinery of our roundabout, and there I saw a slobbering cretin grinding at a wheel and sweating as he ground, and grinding eternally. And when I perceived that he was the author of all our speed and that the music was of his making, that everything depended on his grinding wheel, I thought I would like to get off. But we were going too fast.


83 Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies, New York, 1944, 165.

The method Huxley uses to satirize his characters in their mad, whirling universe is not an uncommon one. His novels may not follow a *roman à clef* technique; yet he does satirize from real life as he makes a type rather than an individual the object of his mockery. Thus Shearwater is the stock "physiologue," Lypiatt any of a hundred second-rate London artists, Mercaptan, a literary poseur.85

So far as the method of his novels is concerned, Huxley is greatly dependent upon Norman Douglas, who himself is dependent upon Thomas Love Peacock. All but plotless in the manner of Peacock and filled with asides and digressions in the manner of Sterne, *South Wind*86 is really a symposium, and those who speak are eccentrics, some innocent but all odd. In general the critics credit this novel with being the book that begot a genre. The initial praise, however, that greeted this novel has considerably subsided, so much so that a reconsideration of Douglas has been deemed necessary to place him in what is considered his proper sphere as a literary giant.87 Apparently this reconsidering is nothing new, as another article written

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in 1932 laments the fact that Norman Douglas had already been forgotten. 88 After setting Douglas among the immortals the author speaks of influences upon him, but she finds only one whom Douglas has followed, perhaps unconsciously, Nietzsche. 89 This is not an unreasonable judgment, and it fits in well with Johnson's criticism of Douglas, namely, that his stature as a satirist is diminished by his desire to impress the reader with the "delicate and civilized superiority of Norman Douglas." 90 Above all else Douglas's method of satire relies upon his sophisticated superiority. His manner is perhaps too severely criticized by Johnson; yet there is some truth in the assertion that Douglas "has no loyalty to truth, but only to his intellectual dandyism; he would reverse himself for a witticism." 91

Adopting a superior manner toward his characters and his readers, Douglas too often sets up straw men to be knocked down with expected ease. The case of Bishop Heard in South Wind comes to mind. As with Voltaire, the clergy are Douglas's bête noir. There is some hope, however, of reforming Bishop

89 Ibid., 56-7.
91 Ibid.
Heard, reforming him by a Pilgrim's Progress in reverse so that he will forget all the silly ideas he has about morality. Now if Douglas presented us with a real bishop he would undoubtedly have difficulty in accomplishing his end, but Bishop Heard is more ingenuous than Candide himself. We are supposed to believe that something quite wonderful has been wrought when the Bishop comes to forgive and forget his cousin's murder of her husband. What is so startling about this? The Bishop has been such a child in the hands of any and all of the characters in the book that one wonders with what theologates the intellectually snobbish Douglas has had contact. Besides, when one considers the matter, it is no very startling thing for a bishop to forgive sins; rather it is his office.

Paradox is a favorite device of Douglas in his novel, and it is Keith who especially illustrates this in his dealings with the Bishop. We may not be as easily persuaded as the Bishop to believe all that Keith says, but the paradoxes are present.

"'What can a person of that kind have in common with a mother of any kind?'

"'Everything,' said Mr. Heard enthusiastically.

"'Nothing at all,'" answers Keith."

92 Douglas, South Wind, 220.
Perhaps Miss Wilberforce should be put away so that she can't offend people by removing her clothes in public? Absolutely not, says Keith. What harm is there in her habits as compared with the fanatics who want her confined.?93 The whole secret of Nepenthe and of South Wind is learning to accept everything at a different value than it receives in the rest of the world.

A rather unlovely side of Douglas's satire is his use of what may be called invective, though he is too urbane to descend strictly to this. Except in the case of Calaveglia, who has from the start the gift of grandiose lying, Douglas exercises a malicious desire for defamation and detraction of his characters. By the conclusion of the book all of them are contemptible, not the least Keith, who has been used to "transform" the Bishop. On first glance Douglas would seem to agree with the rank and file of satirists who present unlovely characters so that in some way the world may become better. Yet from the general tone of the book it is very difficult to say that this was Douglas's purpose. The only philosophy one can learn from South Wind is to love the sin but hate the sinner. Tomlinson?94 says that Douglas does not hate enough to destroy what he hates.

93 Ibid.
or perhaps he sees that Folly is invulnerable. There is present in Douglas an approximation of the Greek in his approach, nothing too much. One would wish that he were even a bit more restrained, refraining from the use of blasphemy in his preposterous lives of the saints, since such tales can be genuinely amusing and even a religious can say without scruple, "He lies like a second nocturne."

Another novelist who as a satirist hates not enough is Nancy Mitford, to whom Waugh dedicated The Loved One. Miss Mitford is included in this paper not for any reasons of great importance as a novelist, though she has written two interesting books, but partly because she deals with the same general period and class as Waugh and the three novelists discussed here, and partly because she represents a new development in satirists; she is one who goes to Waugh for imitation. By reading her one not only sees points of similarity to Waugh but also the road Waugh might have taken.

Of course he would never have written exactly like her. To do so it would have been necessary for him to be a woman. This brings us to the outstanding characteristic of Miss Mitford's satire: she is primarily a gossip and a gossip

who can at times be malicious. Even a cursory sketch of the Mitford family gives an indication that her two novels present much promise of a roman à clef approach. Since, however, no libel suits were instituted we may assume that the public looked upon the books as not necessarily narrating the affairs of any specific celebrities (though the London Times speaks of some recognizable figures), but rather an exposure of exceedingly well-bred people who behave exceedingly badly, and what, asks a reviewer, could be better than to hear the good news that our supposed betters are at least as wicked as we, and perhaps a good deal more wicked?

From this we may be inclined to accept the pronouncement of the dust jacket that the Pursuit of Love is in the manner of Waugh's early novels. The matter is there but hardly the spirit. Very English and very funny, Miss Mitford deals with

96 "The Honorable Nancy Freeman-Mitford is eldest (42) and perhaps least strange of the six daughters of David Bertram Ogilvy Freeman-Mitford, second Baron Redesdale. . . . Nancy, who now lives in Paris writing the English version of Anglo-French movies, is politically pinkish, and takes a dim view of her sisters, who include: 1) Unity, famed Hitler-loving Wagnerian blonde; 2) Diana, wife of Fascist Leader Sir Oswald Mosley (she spent most of World War II in jail); 3) Jessica, who eloped to Spain, married Winston Churchill's nephew, the late Esmond Romilly (missing in action since 1941), and is now married to a left-wing San Francisco lawyer; 4) Pamela, wife of Derek Ainslie Jackson, a British physicist who has ridden as a jockey in the Grand National Steeplechase." Time, June 17, 1946, 102.
the same venomous characters as Waugh, people of charm, eccentricity, and savagery. Waugh pillories his aristocracy, especially in his early novels. The condemnation in the later novels may be less savage but it is sadder. Miss Mitford's aristocrats are not a whit less wicked but there is an excusing of vice, a false "to know all is to forgive all" attitude. In what is an extraordinarily "happy" ending to a novel (one reviewer calls it about as happy an ending as that of Hamlet), in Love in a Cold Climate Lord Montdore, the renowned ex-governor of India, slips into senility; Polly, his daughter, whose unwillingness to marry constitutes the plot of the story, elopes with her mother's aging lover, a sickly widower who tried to corrupt Polly when she was a girl, only to tire of him and take a neighboring Duke as a lover; and Lady Montdore accepts as a suitable substitute her husband's homosexual cousin, Cedric, who transforms her from a stout, red-cheeked woman of sixty into the sort of thin, shrill old lady of whom people whisper, "Isn't she marvellous? They say she's over seventy." Lady Montdore, Cedric, and Boy, his lover, go off to France. It is difficult

98 Brendan Gill, "Ice," The New Yorker, XXV, July 23, 1949, 70.
99 Ibid., 72.
to know whether or not Miss Mitford intends all this as reward or retribution, but the tone of the ending is one of gaiety and happiness and a good time for all. Yet, it can justly be argued that the Leftist Miss Mitford has portrayed a truly gruesome finish to the old aristocracy, which has not only lost its function as a governing class but is, as well, biologically sterile and decadent.

As Waugh does in his early novels, Miss Mitford assembles a conglomeration of light-headed characters who act in totally unpredictable ways. An example furnishes us with a good idea of Miss Mitford's humor. Lord Alconleigh, Uncle Matthew, (most of the characters like Waugh's appear in both novels) is an irascible old man who never dines out because the food at home is perfectly good. He starts the day at five a.m. by playing his favorite phonograph records ("Drake is Sailing West, Lads," the "mad" scene from Lucia, or "Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark," sung by Galli-Curci). Once awake he roams about cracking a whip and after breakfast, giving his daughters a head start, he hunts them with four bloodhounds, to the scandal of strangers. It is a tried and true method to tag characters with eccentricities, the odder the better, as in South Wind. The characters of Miss Mitford are the eccentrics of Huxley and Waugh, but she wavers between extremes. Unable to ignore their charm, she
cannot hate them as Huxley and Douglas do, but neither can she be unmindful of their wickedness. In the end she presents a parody of English high life, very amusing in the manner of the light novel, but also very repellent.

Having seen that the twenties and the thirties are a rich period of various types of satire, we must now examine the method of Evelyn Waugh. It will become obvious that, though he deals with the same group of people as the four preceding novelists, his method differs from theirs, not entirely, but still in enough instances for us to call his method his own.
CHAPTER II

SATIRICAL METHODS IN THE EARLY NOVELS OF WAUGH

In the preceding chapter were listed definitions of the various divisions of satire agreed upon by the critics. That the novels of Evelyn Waugh meet such criteria the remainder of this thesis will attempt to prove. Strengthening the argument are the opinions expressed by Waugh's reviewers and critics. Some may dissent and call Decline and Fall "a good nonsense novel"¹ or "pure foolery from beginning to end."² Another (much later it must be admitted, and at a time when critics knew what they were expected to think about Waugh's novels) saw it as a "savagely comic masterpiece."³ Other reviewers called Waugh a writer of "savage satire,"⁴ one who made a "strange blending of

¹ T. S. Matthews, "Decline and Fall," The New Republic, LVIII, April 17, 1929, 259.
² "Decline and Fall," Times Literary Supplement, Sept. 27, 1928, 685.
⁴ V. S. Pritchett, "Vile Bodies," The Spectator, CXLIV, Jan. 18, 1930, 94.
the comic and sickening,"\(^5\) one who wrote comedies "toward the end of which a grim-mouthed Savonarola seemed to emerge from behind the entertainer's mask."\(^6\) That Waugh was not engaged in writing pure comedy Rose Macauley shows by contrasting his work with "Firbank's butterfly irresponsibility; he is never silly; he knows what he is about."\(^7\) Peter Quennell is even stronger when he writes, "I rise from Mr. Waugh's new novel \(\textit{A Handful of Dust}\) as from a reading of one of the sterner and more un-comprising Fathers, convinced that human life is a chaos of inclinations and appetites, and that few appetites are strong enough to be worth gratifying."\(^8\)

These few quotations should assure us that Waugh is not merely a comic writer but one with a serious purpose in mind. It is true that in his novels, particularly \textit{Decline and Fall}, \textit{Vile Bodies}, \textit{Scoop}, and \textit{Put Out More Flags}, the comic plays an important part, but this is not unusual in the works of the


satirical novelist, whose tendency is to progress from burlesque to irony. In a limited sense Waugh seems to follow this course, passing indeed through two such stages. The first stage includes his first four novels, Decline and Fall and Vile Bodies illustrating the burlesque period, Black Mischief and A Handful of Dust illustrating the ironical. In the second period Scoop and Put Out More Flags illustrate a second burlesque period. Brideshead Revisited, his next novel, stresses especially irony of character, and The Loved One probably represents his best irony so far.

An examination of the characters in Decline and Fall illustrates the richness of its burlesque, a burlesque largely consisting of travesty. Captain Grimes, the outstanding character in the book, is a travesty of both the returned soldier and the public school man. Journey's End, by Sheriff, which was presented to England shortly before, is a drama packed with emotionalism and a worship of infantilism. What a travesty on this is the account Grimes gives of his war experiences, how he was so often "in the soup" that finally he was given a revolver in place of a court martial. "'Luckily,'" Grimes says, "'they

had left a decanter of whiskey in there with me.'"10 Even luckier, Grimes was a public school man. "Some one always turns up and says, "I can't see a public-school man down and out. Let me put you on your feet again." I should think,' said Grimes, 'I've been put on my feet more often than any living man.'"11

Symbolical of the travesty on the hero-worship of the returned soldier is Grimes' wooden leg. He is respected by the boys only because of his amputated leg, lost, they believe, in the war. "'Actually,' said the Captain, 'and strictly between ourselves, mind, I was run over by a tram in Stoke-on-Trent when I was one-over-the-light.'"12 This wooden leg also serves as a "tag" for Grimes.

Passing from Grimes the rogue to Prendergast, the ex-clergyman, we see a travesty of all clergymen of the Church of England who have had "Doubts." Especially since the days of Newman many of the Church of England have had doubts, whether

10 Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall, Boston, 1946, 32. The dates of this and of Waugh's other earlier novels are not those of the first publications but of the editions issued in the United States during the past few years. These editions rather than the earlier ones are referred to because they are more generally available. All quotations from Waugh's novels will henceforth be taken from these editions.

11 Ibid., 33.

12 Ibid., 28.
about the case of the bishops or evolution or the Incarnation. All such doubts as these Mr. Prendergast has been able to settle, but he, the perfect travesty of all such earnest men, has an insuperable doubt. "I couldn't understand why God had made the world at all." To make matters worse, his bishop didn't think the point had much to do with his practical duties as a parish priest. His resignation came as a great blow to his mother, he adds, especially "after she had bought the chintz" for the rectory. The incongruity of this last statement, though predominantly comic, is also painful.

Philbrick is a pure comic rather than a burlesque character, though he may have some elements of what Worcester calls "grotesque satire." After listing various examples of grotesque descriptions of the human body and its parts and functions as illustrative of grotesque satire, Worcester adds, "Contemplation of a bizarre way of life yields the same kind of sensations as a distorted view of physiological features." Certainly Philbrick can manufacture bizarre explanations of his past life, whether as Sir Solomon Philbrick the shipowner, or as the novelist or the retired burgler.

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13 Ibid., 38.
14 Ibid., 39.
16 Ibid.
Dr. Fagan is the travesty to end all travesties on English headmasters. He has been in the scholastic profession long enough to know that nobody enters it unless he has some very good reasons which he is anxious to conceal. Burlesque rather than invective dominates the book, but Dr. Fagan tellingly illustrates how annihilating this method of satire can be when he lectures Paul on the character of the Welsh. One writer takes Waugh seriously and accuses him of giving "a charged and lop-sided idea of the Welsh character." From the earliest times," said Dr. Fagan, "the Welsh have been looked upon as an unclean people. It is thus that they have preserved their racial integrity." They are "the only nation in the world that has produced no graphic or plastic art, no architecture, no drama. They just sing," he said with disgust, "sing and blow down wind instruments.... They are deceitful...depraved...."

17 Waugh, Decline and Fall, 15.
19 Ibid., 46.
20 Waugh, Decline and Fall, 82.
21 Ibid., 83.
Another example of invective, cited by a critic 22 as particularly vicious, is the treatment of Chokey, Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde's negro friend who is, "just crazy about culture."23 Yet, reading Chokey's final speech today one cannot help thinking that this was directed at an individual (probably Paul Robeson) rather than at the negro race.

"You folks all think the coloured man hasn't got a soul. Anything's good enough for the poor coloured man. Beat him; put him in chains; load him with burdens. . . ." Here Paul observed a responsive glitter in Lady Circumference's eye. . . . 'Oh, say, white folks, why don't you stretch out a helping hand to the poor coloured man, that's as good as you are, if you'll only let him be?'

'My sweet,' said Mrs. Beste-Chetwynde; 'you mustn't get discouraged. They're all friends here.'

'Is that so?' said Chokey. 'Should I sing them a song?'24

It is, of course, ridiculous to say as Voorhees does that this illustrates Waugh's snobbishness in drawing a "definite line between the English and other peoples."25 The revolting character of Margot Beste-Chetwynde, who makes her fortune from brothels, negates such a charge.


23 Waugh, Decline and Fall, 100.

24 Ibid., 104-5.

Events and institutions as well as characters are treated in burlesque style. Especially notable in this respect are the Sports. As the blurb on the dust jacket states, Waugh lays waste the heathen idol of British sportsmanship. Paul Pennyfeather, completely ignorant of sports, is put in charge of them with instructions from Dr. Fagan to distribute the prizes fairly evenly. "It doesn't do to let any boy win more than two events." 26 Incidental to the races is the offhand shooting of Lord Tangent by the drunken Prendergast.

At the outset of the book Waugh levels his guns at the English Universities. Paul Pennyfeather, the serious theological student, returns at night to the university while a drunken brawl is in full progress in the quadrangle. That Waugh's account here approaches closer to actuality than burlesque can be shown by a story which appeared shortly before the publication of Decline and Fall and is almost a paraphrase of its opening.

All through the streets of Oxford town, late one night last week, loud voiced roisterers lurched and reeled in gold-buttoned blue dinner jackets. It was the Bullingdon Club, in high fettle after an annual dinner, its first in a new hall on the outskirts of town. Before the members reached their beds they had run up a score of 500 broken windows

26 Waugh, Decline and Fall, 61.
(by hasty count of righteous newsgatherers). Oxford proctors frowned ominously and went into conference.27

Another event rich in burlesque is Paul's confinement to prison though confinement is hardly the word. Through the influence of Margot he receives the latest books from a Piccadilly bookseller, pâté de foie gras, pigeon pie, caviare, and other delicacies. The methods used in rehabilitating the prisoners are burlesque of modern sociology. For example, Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery likes to let "the prisoners carry on with their avocations in civilized life."

"'White Slave traffic, sir.'"29 The case histories Sir Wilfred keeps are a travesty of all such histories found in sociology textbooks.

Modern architecture, particularly that of Gropius and the Bauhaus school, is thoroughly burlesqued in the person of Otto Silenus, who believes that the problem of all art is the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form.30 The house he designs for Margot is "modern," a style

28 Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, 225.
29 *Ibid*.
30 *Ibid*., 159.
which Waugh deprecates in almost all his novels as symbolic of the old destroyed by the new. The house is chromium-yellow, its drawing-room embellished with octopuses, its conservatory with India-rubber fungi, and its floor green glass. *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, and *A Handful of Dust* tell us what Waugh thinks of the people who tear down country homes with the same insouciance with which they tear down all that was good and noble in the past. That these homes are merely symbols, however, Waugh insists upon, and the terrible fate that befell Tony, who put too much faith in them alone, serves as a warning in *A Handful of Dust*.

The diatribe Silenus delivers against man is probably a burlesque of Huxley's sentiments as quoted in the first chapter of this thesis.

'Swhat an immature, self-destructive, antiquated mischief is man! How obscene and gross his prancing and chattering on his little stage of evolution. How loathsome and beyond words boring all the thoughts and self-approval of this biological by-product! This half-formed, ill-conditioned body! This erratic, maladjusted mechanism of his soul. . . . '31

Silenus's definition of life is strikingly like Huxley's "Merry-Go-Round." Silenus says life is like the big wheel at Luna Park.

31 Ibid., 160
'You pay five francs and go into a room with tiers of seats all round, and in the center the floor is made of a great disc of polished wood that revolves quickly. At first you sit down and watch the others. They are all trying to sit in the wheel, and they keep getting flung off, and that makes them laugh, and you laugh, too. It's great fun.'

'I don't think that sounds very much like life,' said Paul rather sadly.

'Oh, but it is, though. You see, the nearer you get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on... Of course at the very centre there's a point completely at rest, if one could only find it.' 32

Paul Pennyfeather, the central character of the book, represents what Worcester calls "ingenu' irony." 33 Paul, Theodore Gumbril of Antic Hay, and Adam Fenwick-Symes of Vile Bodies follow a common pattern.

They are gray, subdued observers in a world of startling events and startling people. Mild and passive, they are carried along by life's current—sucked into whirlpools, dizzied in rapids, dropped in backwaters. Things happen to them; in so unequal a contest what is the use of making an effort? Through their wondering eyes we have a kaleidoscopic vision of a violent, chaotic, and purposeless, civilization. 34

32 Ibid., 282-3.
34 Ibid., 106.
These characters are like Candide, innocent, willing to learn, the victims of harrowing experiences, and somewhat stupid. Much more than Candide, however, they are conscious literary descendants of the "hero" of the eighteenth century picaresque novels. It is necessary in *Decline and Fall* for the sake of plot to have Paul remain in ignorance about Margot's profession, but that all the verbal irony of Margot's interviews with prospective prostitutes should pass completely over his head is difficult to believe. Eventually, like Candide, Paul learns to cultivate his garden by returning to study theology.

The real scorn of Waugh's satire is reserved for Margot Beste-Chetwynde, Margot Metroland of the later novels. Irony is used to delineate her character, since neither invective nor burlesque is a strong enough weapon. She is presented as a brisk and efficient woman, a product peculiar to our times, beautiful, wealthy, and, above all else, respected. It is here that irony of character plays so important a role. Hints are given that she is not so self-sufficient as she would like to appear. For the first few days of her party she is incommunicado having "her little bout of veronal" but, ironically, she reappears "fresh and exquisite as a seventeenth-century lyric."  

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35 Ibid., 192-4  
36 Ibid., 177.  
37 Ibid.
Whether her guests, Sir Humphrey Maltravers, the Hon. Miles Mal-
practice, Alastair Trumpington, and others know the source of
Margot's income is not very important. The reader knows and he
sees it as a symptom of the rottenness of the society Waugh por-
trays.

Many of the characters of Decline and Fall reappear in
Vile Bodies,³⁸ where again the burlesque element predominates.
In this book, however, more serious notes enter: the very title
implies a less tolerant attitude toward the foibles and vices of
the Bright Young People. Grimes is gone, never to return,
though another and more heartless rogue, Basil Seal, will re-
place him in Black Mischief. Again there is travesty of recogn-
izable types and even recognizable individuals. Chief among
such is Mrs. Ape and her angels, a thinly disguised Aimee Semple
MacPherson with a mixture of Father Divine. Reading reports of
Mrs. MacPherson's affairs one is tempted to believe that this is
a parody rather than a travesty.³⁹ That the England of this per-
iod was quite ready to be taken in by someone peddling a diluted,
even perverted, Christianity has been forcibly demonstrated by

³⁸ Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies, Boston, 1946.

³⁹ Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal
Father Ronald Knox.40 If Rebecca West and Arnold Bennett are fatuous in explaining what they believe, what can be expected of Lady Circumference or Agatha Runcible? Bennett contradicts himself so often in writing of his religious beliefs that Father Knox says, "Is it too much to ask that Mr. Bennett should keep his religious convictions filed somewhere on a card-index, so that his secretary may have easy access to them when occasion arises?" 41

Excellent as is the satire on the American revivalist it dims into insignificance when compared with the travesty on the Jesuit Father Rothschild. Waugh shows his skill here by adding little touches which may at first escape unnoticed. The very opening of the book burlesques the Jesuits in a half dozen ways. First comes the burlesque of the Jesuit habit of traveling. Father Rothschild, we may assume, is on the boat because, as the Jesuit Constitutions enjoin, it is the vocation of the members of the Order to travel to diverse countries where there is hope of making converts.

With Asiatic resignation Father Rothschild, S.J. put down his suitcase, in the corner of the bar and went on deck. 42

40 Ronald Knox, Caliban in Grub Street, London, 1931.
41 Ibid., 145.
42 Waugh, Vile Bodies, 1.
To Father Rothschild no passage was worse than any other. He thought of the sufferings of the saints, the mutability of human nature, the Four Last Things, and between whiles repeated snatches of the penitential psalms. 43

In these two passages we sense a burlesque of the most famous principle of St. Ignatius as set down in the Spiritual Exercises, that of indifference.

It was a small suitcase of imitation crocodile hide. The initials stamped on it in Gothic characters were not Father Rothschild's for he had borrowed it that morning from the valet-de-chambre of his hotel. 44

Here Waugh trips up the reader who may be judging too quickly. How fitting, the reader thinks, is the suitcase of crocodile hide. Crocodile hide, crocodile tears, hypocrisy, a Jesuit. And who but a religious would have initials stamped in Gothic characters? Why, a valet-de-chambre, answers Waugh. Taken from another angle, this bit of burlesque would better suit the simple Franciscan with his emphasis on poverty rather than the Jesuit. Reconsidering, the reader realizes that the typical Franciscan would not be in a hotel nor would he be attended by a valet-de-chambre. Even the Jewish name is satirical, perhaps ironical rather than burlesque when one considers the stipulations in the Jesuit rules about the admission of Jews into the

43 Ibid., 10.
44 Ibid., 1.
Order since the Spanish difficulties. Implied, too, is the cosmopolitan character of the Jesuit Order and its reputed attachment to the rich and wealthy in its apostolate.

It contained some rudimentary underclothes, six important new books in six languages, a false beard and a school atlas and gazetteer heavily annotated. 45

By any reckoning it is remarkable how much Waugh can imply in such economical terms. The significance, if any, of the underclothes is obscure (though St. Benedict in his rule enjoins: "Femoralia hi, qui in via diriguntur, de vestiario accipiant, quae revertentes lota ibi restituant.") 46 but the six important books delightfully travesty the learnedness of the Jesuits, the false beard, their fictional wiliness, and the atlas and gazetteer their constant journeys, on none of which are they supposed to be up to any good. A few pages later two more qualities, indispensable to the Jesuit of fiction, are ascribed to Father Rothschild, omniscience and omnipresence. 47 Later still, we hear that Doge, Lottie Crump's head waiter, was once a Rothschild butler and had often dandled Father Rothschild on his knees as a child and found him "endowed with a penetrating

46 Sanctus Benedictus, Regula, Typis Archiabbatial S. Vincentii, 1909, 30.
47 Waugh, Vile Bodies, 7-8.
acumen in the detection of falsehood and exaggeration," the implication being that such a quality would later prove invaluable to him in his use of casuistry.

That Father Rothschild is no mere clown we learn from his conversation with Mr. Outrage, sometimes last week's Prime Minister but at the moment in office. "'I don't think people ever want to lose their faith either in religion or anything else. I know very few young people, but it seems to me that they are all possessed with an almost fatal hunger for permanence.'" If one looks for a message in Waugh's novels this is probably it. The tragedy of the Bright Young People is that they fight that hunger for permanence, symbolized most often by Waugh in the old order, the old permanent house, the old permanent titles.

A few moments after this speech Father Rothschild rides off, not as Grimes on a horse, for that would be too medieval and prosaic, but on a motorcycle and into just as certain an immortality.

Not very important to the book, but interesting since they are so reminiscent of Firbank's characters are the two ladies crossing on the same ship as Father Rothschild. Talking

48 Ibid., 42.
49 Ibid., 183.
in snatches rather than in full sentences that the reader can immediately grasp, hinting rather than explaining, and uttering numerous little cries, they are a direct borrowing of Firbank's burlesque style.

At Shepheard's Hotel, run but hardly managed by Lottie Crump, are assembled a group of characters not unfamiliar. Purely comical or farcical are Lottie herself, Judge Skimp, and the drunken Major, but the poor deposed King of Ruritania has elements that raise him above the merely comic. In a scene very similar to Saki's cruel turns the King tells how the Queen Maria Cristina went mad when her maid told her the cook "'has had lessons from the French cook and he has made one big bomb as a surprise for your dinner-party tonight for the Swedish Minister.'" 50 Surely this should satisfy Thompson when he calls for a mixture of the comic and the painful; almost too painful to be comic is the description of Maria Cristina "'skipping about all the time, she did, dodging. Thought they were throwing things at her.'" 51

The heart of the story is concerned with the wild affairs of the Bright Young People; Adam, Nina, Agatha Runcible, Simon Balcairn, Ginger, Peter Pastmaster, and Miles Malpractice.

50 Ibid., 45.
51 Ibid., 44-5.
Their silly antics are matched only by their silly talk.

'Well,' they said. 'Well! how too, too shaming, Agatha, darling,' they said. 'How devastating, how unpolicemanlike, how goat-like, how sick-making, how too, too awful.' 52

When they give a party is must be in a dirigible because it is something new and different. It is all very amusing and on the surface it is burlesque, but at the core Waugh is ironical.

"'What a lot of parties,'" someone says, and in parentheses Waugh adds:

(Masked parties, Savage parties, Victorian parties, Greek parties, Wild West parties, Russian parties, Circus parties... 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... ) 53

That this was all true can be seen by consulting Cecil Beaton's Time Exposure 54 with its photographs of the Bright Young People at Wild West parties, Ruritanian parties, and in carriages off to party balls. "Party-going and dressing-up were at one time among Mr. Beaton's preferred amusements. He remembers a period when for eight or ten days at a stretch he did not ever confront

52 Ibid., 29.
53 Ibid., 170-1.
the world in ordinary costume, but having removed his fancy-dress to go to bed stepped straight into a new disguise as soon as he emerged from slumber."

Already we see signs of a moral earnestness which in *Brideshead Revisited* will come as a shock to some critics, but which is present in embryo here. While the one party progresses another is held at Anchorage House for

... a great concourse of pious and honourable people (many of whom made the Anchorage House reception the one outing of the year), ... 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, uncultivated, unaffected, unembarassed, unassuming, unambitious people, of independent judgment 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. ... 56

The manner Waugh uses to describe the antics of the Bright Young People may appear to be merely burlesque, but when a passage such as this follows immediately upon the dirigible party, some irony must be assumed.

Adam demonstrates again Waugh's use of ingenuiry, but he does not escape as easily as Paul Pennyfeather, probably because he is not as innocent. One critic points out that

55 Ibid., 43.

56 Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, 175.
"Adam and Nina \[it is somewhat difficult to see this true of her\] clearly perceive the wretchedness of their lives and the deplorable end to which they are tending. . . . The chief reason why these young people lead such lamentable lives is that they do not have any religious faith."57

Adam reveals himself best in a conversation with Nina (Rebecca West speaks of their monosyllabic conversation as being "brief as canary cheeps.")58

'Adam, darling, what's the matter?'

'I don't know . . . Nina do you ever feel that things simply can't go on any longer?'

'What d'you mean by things--us or everything?'

'Everything.'

'No--I wish I did. . . .'

Later he said: 'I'd give anything in the world for something different.'

'Different from me or different from everything?'

'Different from everything . . . only I've got nothing . . . what's the good of talking?' 59

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59 Waugh, Vile Bodies, 273.
Adam also is cultivating his garden at the end of the book but it is a garden singularly unproductive. In the last chapter, ironically called "Happy Ending," he is alone on the battlefield of the next World War holding a Huxdane-Halley bomb for the dissemination of leprosy germs. It is only when passages such as these are isolated that one sees the grimmer side to Waugh's muse. Burlesque of the films and newspapers fills the pages of this novel. Earlier, the customs officials are burlesqued when they seize Adam's autobiography as pornographic. (This incidentally is practically the only instance in which any of Waugh's Bright Young People exhibits any capacity for anything intellectual. The arts are totally alien to them.) Among Adam's books is a copy of Dante's Purgatorio. The customs officer seize it.

'French, eh?' he said. 'I guessed as much, and pretty dirty too, I shouldn't wonder. Now just you wait while I look up these here books' how he said it! 'in my list. Particularly against books the Home Secretary is. If we can't stamp out literature in the country, we can at least stop its being brought in from outside. That's what he said the other day in Parliament. . . .' 62

60 Ibid., 287
61 Ibid., 21-25.
62 Ibid., 23.
Perhaps this attack on censors resulted from Waugh's own tangle with them. Harold Acton, to whom Waugh dedicated Decline and Fall "in homage and affection," writes that Duckworth's dared not publish that book without numerous bowdlerizations, but at his insistence Waugh held firm against any changes. Undoubtedly more dispiriting to Waugh was the banning of a dramatization of Vile Bodies, forbidden perhaps because of this satire on Customs Officers. It is of interest to note that in this version of the book a Greek chorus appears reciting laments between acts.

The movies and their rabid fans are burlesqued with wonderful finesse in the persons of Nina's father, Colonel Blount, Mr. Isaacs, the movie producer, Effie La Touche, the actress, and in the film "A Brand from the Burning." The Colonel is representative of the old order which has encouraged the young to forget the noble past. When Adam first rides to see him he drives past the "village in which every house seemed to be a garage and a filling station." Yet the Colonel, who

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63 Harold Acton, Memoirs of an Aesthete, 202-3.
66 Waugh, Vile Bodies, 87.
should be like the people in Anchorage House, tells Adam: "I don't think I shall live here another winter. Too big for an old man. I was looking at some of the houses they're putting up outside Aylesbury. Did you see them coming along? Nice little red houses. Bathroom and everything. Quite cheap, too, and near the cinematographs. 67 Note the verbal irony of "too big" and the qualities which the Colonel singles out as making the houses attractive.

When Mr. Isaacs describes his film purportedly based on the life of John Wesley, he sound like an advertisement for any "historical" film.

It has been directed throughout regardless of difficulty and expense, and supervised by a staff of expert historians and theologians. Nothing has been omitted that would contribute to the meticulous accuracy of every detail. The life of that great social and religious reformer John Wesley is for the first time portrayed to a British public in all its humanity and tragedy. . . . 68

Needless to say, the movie is so completely false historically that the Rector, viewing it, remarks, "I had no idea Wesley's life was so full of adventure. I see I must read up my Lecky."69

67 Ibid., 91.
68 Ibid., 202-3.
69 Ibid., 301.
A further institution satirized in the novel is the newspaper world, especially gossip writers on the *Daily Excess*. (Waugh himself worked for a time on the *Daily Express*, and the correspondent in his divorce case, Sir John Heygate, was a gossip writer. It is reserved for a later book of Waugh's (*Scoop*) to satirize the newspaper world as a whole, but in this early novel he contents himself with satirizing an institution peculiar to English-speaking nations. In an essay, Huxley remarks that in no European paper would a reader find space devoted to the antics of the merely wealthy. A headline such as "Peer's Cousin in Auto Smash" would be unthinkable, he says, except in an English newspaper.

Ironically, then, noble lords, the fifteenth Marquess of Vanburgh and the eighth Earl of Balcairn, after elaborate introductions with a great series of titles, reveal themselves and their trade, gossip writers for the daily papers. Their copy consists wholly of describing the hell-raising antics of the Bright Young People, the clothes they are or are not wearing, their amours of the moment, the photographers who are so boring

70 *Time*, LII, July 12, 1948, 89.
(though they try desperately to be "snapped,"). One of the gayest parties ends up at No. 10 Downing Street, and in an extremely funny scene the Prime Minister discovers that Agatha Runcible, in Hawaiian costume, is a breakfast guest of his daughter's.74

Just as Agatha is doomed to a fate horrible as anything devised in a Renaissance drama, so Simon, the last Earl of Balcairn, goes to his fathers, "(who had fallen in many lands and for many causes, as the eccentricities of British Foreign Policy and their own wandering natures had directed them; at Acre and Agincourt and Killiecrankie, in Egypt and America)."75 Simon goes cruelly and senselessly and ironically to his death. ("That's a great lad. . . . I'll raise him tomorrow first thing.")76 Why suicide? Because he is a failure; he was thrown out from Margot Metroland's party without copy for his gossip column.

A further institution or practice is satirized, at first in burlesque style but eventually as irony with all its cruel implications. This is the motor races. Indescribably

74 Ibid., 70-76.
75 Ibid., 146.
76 Ibid., 147.
funny are the early scenes when the principals of the story are mainly concerned with drinking and tossing cigarettes near gasoline tanks. Once Agatha Runcible, very drunk, actively enters the race, the burlesque starts losing its gay aspects, and the final result is the hideous hospital scene in which the climax of all gay parties is held in Agatha's room, where her skyrocketing temperature arouses great interest until finally she dies.77

That the story should take on tragic aspects is not a complete surprise, since Waugh by means of ironical twists has prepared the reader for some visitations of retribution. Why Simon and Agatha should be the immediate victims involves lengthy discussions of the problems of evil and of poetic justice, nor is it at all clear that these would answer all difficulties. Implied at the end of the book is a total annihilation because men will continue to sin, not pausing to consider that the punishment of the few has perhaps been permitted as a warning to the many. That Lady Metroland of all people, Margot the brothel-keeper, should have a party in honor of the revivalist Mrs. Ape is an ironical pairing of characters. Yet it is not a clashing of characters, since both are primarily opportunists and both make their money from the exploitation of young girls. Here then is a real presage of ruin. The Bright Young People

77 Ibid., 215-72.
are in attendance though religion means nothing to them, not even this debased form. When Mrs. Ape commands, "Just you look at yourselves,"78 Agatha Runcible whispers, "Darling is my nose awful?"79 The failure of Simon to get an invitation to the revival-party proves to be his ruin, not that he felt any spiritual necessity for attending; rather it was to get copy for his gossip column.

Hidden beneath the veneer of burlesque and tomfoolery are depths of evil:—young Peter Pastmaster who at fourteen was mixing cocktails, and now is on the drunken road to ruin;80 Lady Ursula, forced by her despotic mother into a marriage which terrorizes her;81 Ginger and Adam bargaining for Nina, and Adam selling his share for seventy-eight pounds, sixteen and two-pence.82 It should come as no great surprise when Adam Fenwick-Symes, like his first progenitor, stands alone on the battlefield of this world prepared to spread evil broadcast.

Waugh's next novel, Black Mischief,83 continues his savage attacks on Mayfair, but this time he effects his end by means of comparison with a land which every loyal Briton would

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78 Ibid., 137.
79 Ibid.
80-82 Ibid., 186-7, 188-90, 279-80.
83 Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief, Boston, 1946.
admit was uncivilized. Waugh does not say that Azania is better than Mayfair but he does say that it is no worse, and though it knows cruelty instinctively it can be taught new and more reprehensible vices. In condemning Azania the modern Englishman is placed in the same position as his eighteenth-century counterpart who condemned the Yahoos. Burlesque abounds here since Seth in his effort to modernize his kingdom succeeds only in establishing a vivid replica of Western civilization. Another simpleton like Paul and Adam, he is fated to destruction. Though his lineage is not especially noble, he departs from the ways of his fathers and even as the Bright Young People are destroyed so is this brooding black king.

Much of the background material of Black Mischief is taken directly from Waugh's account of his journeys to Abyssinia as given in When the Going Was Good. One of the important events of Black Mischief is the liberation of the real King of Azania, who has been kept in chains in a monastery. In his book of travels Waugh relates that many rumors surrounded the


royal family, including one "that the real heir to the throne was hidden in the mountains, fettered with chains of solid gold.

... 86

**Black Mischief** is the first of two novels dealing with jungle life and leaving the reader with the conviction that the savages of modern London society are every bit as dangerous as those of Azania or Brazil. The pictures of modern civilization in London and contemporary barbarism in Africa inspire in the reader the shocked admission that here indeed is irony, that all of us have gloriied in a progress which makes us more primitive than the savage. Yet Waugh tells us this with such seeming insouciance that the reader may be deceived and tempted only to laugh. Certainly laughter is not absent but it is the painful laughter of irony. Waugh will make game of his characters, a distinctive quality of irony, and in making game of them he sets up warnings for the reader. That most readers apparently have not heeded the warnings is unfortunate, but such is the common lot of the satirist.

Early in the book, before the real influence of Western civilization in the person of Basil Seal is felt, burlesque satire predominates. To achieve his satirical effects Waugh here

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87 Thompson, *The Dry Mock*, 34.
makes extensive use of the juxtaposing of disparates. To the pretentious-sounding titles of "Emperor of Azania, Chief of the Chiefs of Sakuyu, Lord of Wanda and Tyrant of the Seas" 88 is added, as a device of anti-climax, "Bachelor of the Arts of Oxford University." 89

When Seth is told that his people are in rebellion he calls them fools.

'I have been in Europe. I know. We have the Tank. This is not a war of Seth against Seyid but of Progress against Barbarism. And Progress must prevail. I have seen the great tattoo of Aldershot, the Paris Exposition, the Oxford Union. I have read modern books—Shaw, Arlen, Priestley. What do the gossips in the bazars know of all this? The whole might of Evolution rides behind him; at my stirrups run woman suffrage, vaccination, and vivisection. 90

In designing the Victory Medal, Seth requests that the obverse side be copied from his photograph at Oxford in top hat, spectacles, evening dress, collar and tie. "'Inscription Seth Imperator Immortalis. The whole to be simple and in good taste. Many of my grandfather's medals were florid." 91 The reverse side contains the figure of Progress holding an aeroplane in one hand and some symbol of improved education, "'a telephone might do.'" 92

88 - 90 Waugh, Black Mischief, 9, 22.
91 - 92 Ibid., 23-4, 24.
When Seth's army returns victorious, the soldiers are led by a brass band in uniform playing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." The General of the black troops is an Irishman, Connolly. Other tribesmen follow, including one chief whose slave carries a machine gun under a velvet veil.93

Descriptions of the diplomatic representatives of the three powers at Debra-Dowa in Azania would seem to be taken from life in representing any number of career diplomats. The American, Mr. Shonbaum, very insignificant in the story, had subscribed a large sum of money to a successful Presidential campaign and is now perfectly happy with the esteem the natives show him.94 Sir Samson Courtenay, the British Minister, is a Wodehouse-like bungler who has skipped from one country to the next, never quite hurriedly enough, and he is known throughout the service as the "Envoy Extraordinary."95

Sandwiched in between the long descriptions of the idiosyncracies of the American and the Englishman is the single sentence, "The French Minister, M. Ballon, was a Freemason."96 Here is understatement which, as events prove, explains all.

95 - 96 Ibid., 63-64, 63.
Information is given him that the Anglican Bishop has visited the British Legation and M. Ballon cries "clericalism." As a matter of fact the Bishop went to learn the latest gossip and play croquet. Sir Samson receives the code "K to QR3CH", which the French steal, M. Ballon instructing his aide to stay up all night decoding it, never realizing that it is a move in chess.

The juxtaposing of the English and the French attitudes toward diplomatic life is one of the highlights of satire in the book. M. Ballon persists in believing that Sir Samson is a clever fox constantly engaged in clever intriguing. Immediately after Ballon ascribes some triumph to Sir Samson the scene shifts and shows how commonplace are the Englishman's interests, as when he talks of asparagus or peas. Perhaps the most amusing misunderstanding in the book involves Mme. Ballon and General Connolly, later Duke of Ukaka, an incident so similar to the one Waugh admired in *The Flower Beneath the Foot* that it must have consciously been patterned on Firbank's device.

The English party began to play consequences on the menu cards. They were of the simplest sort: 'The amorous Duke of Ukaka

met the intoxicated Mme. Ballon in the Palace. He said to her 'Floreat Azania'. . . .

The second French secretary reads this and tells the first French secretary that Mme. Ballon when affected by wine, made an assignation with the Duke. 102

Six weeks later the whole town knows that Connolly seduced Mme. Ballon when drunk. 103

When fortunes of war put Connolly on the side of the French, M. Ballon says, "'Here is a thing Sir Samson did not foresee. Where is his fine web now, eh? Gossamer in the wind. Connolly is our man.'"

"'Alas, blind, trusting husband, if he only knew,' murmured the first to the second secretary." 104

Though this is an old device, used, for instance, in the School for Scandal, the fact that Waugh singles it out as characteristic of Firbank shows that he himself admired and imitated it.

Other examples of the massing together and juxtaposing of incongruities may be seen in the dozen different reactions to the newspaper account of the revolution in Azania. They range from no interest whatsoever and the comment, "Only niggers," to Basil's decision to leave for Africa. 105 Burlesque continues throughout the book, as can be seen in the parody of a grand

101-105 Ibid., 142, 144, 161, 175, 86-89.
"civilized" banquet where the vitamins are represented from A to H. 106 Burlesque, too, are all the episodes dealing with Dame Mildred Porch and Miss Sarah Tin, two ladies who have come to Azania to teach the natives not to be cruel to animals. Needless to say, their message is misunderstood, and they are assured that the Azanians will try to imitate the West in its cruelty, a twisting of burlesque into irony. 107 Verbal irony is employed at times by Dame Mildred, as when she writes, "Fed doggies in market place, Children tried to take food from doggies. Greedy little wretches." 108 This particular treatment of "two humane ladies" particularly offended the London Tablet, which from January 7 to March 18, 1933 carried on a controversy over the morality of Black Mischief and questioned the good faith of Waugh's conversion and the competence of his instructor (Fr. D'Arcy). 110 Perhaps one reason for their defense of Dame Mildred is the fact that at the time the Tablet was conducting a campaign against cruelty to animals. Among other remedies

106-108 Ibid., 219, 225, 207.
110 Ibid., Jan. 7, 1933, 10; Feb. 18, 1933, 213-15; March 18, 1933, 348.
which it recommended was reading a pamphlet, "The Slave Trade in Birds", by Lord Howard of Penrith, "First among the Catholic advocates of kindness to defenceless animals. . . . " 111

One of the amusing side issues of the Tablet controversy resulted in a letter from Marie C. Stopes, who rejoiced that Roman Catholics would deal with Waugh in such a trenchant manner. Mrs. Stopes remarked, "My name, much to my disgust, has been dragged by Mr. Evelyn Waugh quite needlessly throughout his unsavory tale." 112 Seth, it will be remembered, renames the site of the Anglican cathedral, "Place Marie Stopes." 113

Marie Stopes' methods of birth control and other modern advances are the heart of the irony in this book. Basil Seal, an intriguing picaresque hero, is responsible for some but not all of Seth's inspirations to modernize his country. Seth is willing to learn all the best features of Western culture, and ironically he goes to Basil, his former idol at Oxford, for instruction. 114 Basil, who stole his mother's jewels to get to Azania. 115 The choice of Basil is not haphazard; who else would be better to introduce the horrors that are to be Seth's undoing? Seth is harmless enough, or, perhaps better, innocent enough in his cruelty. He unconsciously shows his cruelty and

111 London Tablet, CLXI, March 11, 1933, 292.
112 Ibid., Feb. 4, 1933, 149.
his innocence when General Connolly questions him about his secretary, Ali. "'Ali? Yes, I had forgotten. He was murdered by Major Joab yesterday evening. And that reminds me of something else. I must order a new crown."116

Several times by means of verbal irony we are shown the cruelty of these people, a cruelty taken as much for granted by them as it is by the smart society of London.

"A minor gallows stood there which was used for such trivial, domestic executions as now and then become necessary within the royal household."117

"'And just you see, in less than no time the civilized nations will start a bombardment."118

Basil's use of verbal irony, the most famous in Waugh's novels, will be cited later. Here may be mentioned M. Ballon's reaction to a Solemn High Mass: "M. Ballon stirred uneasily, moved by tiny, uncontrollable shudders of shocked atheism.119 By such a reference Waugh succinctly sums up M. Ballon as a typical anti-clerical of the Third Republic.

The main plot of the book centers around the ironical situation of Seth, the Emperor, placing so much faith in modern inventions and practices that he is undone by them. He plans to

116 Waugh, Black Mischief, 58.
117-119 Ibid., 155, 289, 268.
build a tube railway, to make physical exercise compulsory for
the whole population, to learn more about mortgages and emigra-
tion, and Nackticultur, to name European style a street in honor
of Connolly, the general who eventually overthrows him. From
Youkoumian and Basil he gets the idea of boots for his soldiers,
but not understanding their purpose the soldiers eat them.\textsuperscript{120}

The grand climax of all his plans for modernization
(Basil is Minister of Modernization, and the completely venal
Youkoumian is Financial Secretary\textsuperscript{121}) is the Birth Control
Pageant. Proclaimed by Seth as a symbol of the liberation of
the nation, it ironically does become that when Seth's enemies
use it as the occasion for deposing him. The posters showing
the horrors of a large family and the advantage of a small one
are so misinterpreted by the peasantry that they think the
pageant will instruct them in virility and fecundity.\textsuperscript{122} In the
grand parade Fifi, the prostitute, holds a newspaper to symbol-
ize learning, and a group of girls with typewriters, tennis
rackets, and motorcycle goggles surround her.\textsuperscript{123} As matters
turn out the people are liberated by the birth control pageant,
liberated from the horrors which Seth and the Europeans tried

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, 169-181.

\textsuperscript{121-123} \textit{Ibid.}, 156, 193-193, 249.
to foist on them. The natives best their white instructors, and though they are minus a king, new kings are always on hand. Sir Samson learns to his lasting sorrow that daughters are not so easily replaced.

The fate of Prudence, his daughter, and her romance with Basil leans heavily upon the use of verbal irony. It is almost unbearably cruel to hear her mother planning gay times for her in London, and it is unfortunate that something not quite so dire as her eventual fate could jar the frivolous Sir Samson and Lady Courtney out of their worries about green peas and antirrhinums. When one knows that Prudence is to be killed by cannibals and eaten by them and Basil, Basil's conversation with her takes on a gruesome meaning.

'You're a grand girl, Prudence, and I'd like to eat you.'

'So you shall my sweet . . . anything you want.'

'Don't you worry, Prudence, everything'll be all right. We'll meet again. I promise you.'

'Basil, give up this absurd Emperor, darling, and come with us.'

'Can't do that.'

'Please.'

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124-126 Ibid., 183-184, 237, 275.
'No, Prudence, everything's going to be all right. Don't you worry. We'll meet again somewhere.' 127

The final irony of the book is Basil's return to England, a chastened man, who can't tell his tale of adventure and tragedy without being silenced as a bore. And what lasting influence have the civilized left on Azania? As the story ends a gramophone plays Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*: "Three little maids from school are we," and "Tit-willow: Is it weakness of intellect, birdie? I cried. . . . " 128

To complete the first period of Waugh's satirical writing it is necessary to take up the novel 129 which some critics 130 consider his masterpiece, and another, 131 an inferior work. Since Savage considers all of Waugh's works inferior, his judgment is not to be taken too seriously. Certain it is that this novel far more than the preceding three, deals with rounded characters rather than with the flat, though wonderful, ones of the early stories. Dealing with real life, or rather, a life

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that can be more easily believed in, the reader watches with growing horror the destruction of Tony Last (symbolically named), first by the savages of London, and later by the savages of the Brazilian jungle. As in Black Mischief Waugh is careful to show that the distinction between these savages is not fundamentally different; indeed, if either is worse it is the civilized jungle, where cruelty is more refined. Even Tony's ultimate fate in the jungle is made as cruel as it is only because of his civilized acquisitions: the abilities to write and to read.

It was not until the middle of Black Mischief that Waugh began to stress irony rather than burlesque. Not so in A Handful of Dust; the very title page quotes from The Waste Land.

'. . . I will show you something different from either Your shadow at morning striding behind you Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; I will show you fear in a handful of dust.'

Burlesque or merely comedy will be here plentifully present, but it will produce a desperate laughter. The very chapter titles excite smiles, but they are wry smiles once the plot is known. "À Côté de Chez Beaver" is one chapter and "À Côté de Chez Todd" is another, suggestive, probably, of Proust's "Du Côté de Chez Swann", and "Le Côté de Guermantes." The intimacy implied in the titles may make the reader smile;
the growing realization of the similarity between the people in these two places arouses pain and then horror. "English Gothic" and "In Search of a City": how ironic are these headings when we read:

A whole Gothic world had come to grief. . . . there was now no armour, glittering in the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the greensward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled. . . .132

The sensational impact of the irony in this book is reserved for the plot development; probably the denouement is too sensational. Once the initial shock is absorbed by the reader the force of the ending, intriguing as it may be to speculate upon, understandably ceases to be as powerful on re-reading. This is not true, however, as regards the character of Tony. That Waugh is on the side of Tony rather than Brenda goes without saying. Tony, however, has been made game of, a distinctive quality of irony, but how far does Waugh go here? Does he exculpate Tony completely or not?

It is perhaps indelicate to cite unhappy events in a living author's life to bolster up a literary argument, but since this thesis will be read by only a few people, in all probability less than irreparable harm will be done Mr. Waugh by mentioning the following public information. A few years before the publication of A Handful of Dust, Mr. Waugh was

132 Waugh, A Handful of Dust, 209.
placed in much the same position as Tony Last. His wife, the Hon. Evelyn Gardner Waugh, had committed adultery with a John Heygate, just as the Hon. Brenda Rex Last committed adultery with John Beaver. Waugh in his own personal life, seeing no necessity for assuming the role of guilty party, sued his wife, charging her with adultery.\textsuperscript{133} Tony did not. This, it would seem, was Tony's flaw and it is the cause of his failure and his punishment. Tony temporizes with evil and so he must pay more heavily than any of the other principals, mainly because he of all of them is most gifted with the capability of doing good.

Throughout the book, Waugh centers his irony around Tony's happy life, a life that collapses like a house of cards and with dire effects because it is a whole Gothic world. The despicable interior decorator, Mrs. Beaver,\textsuperscript{134} who succeeded in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The \textit{London Times}, January 18, 1930, 4.
\item Mrs. Beaver may well be modelled after Mrs. Somerset Maugham. Cf. \textit{Time Exposure}, by Cecil Beaton and Peter Quennell, page 77: "Mrs. Somerset Maugham must be held responsible. She it was who started the vogue of 'off-white' interiors, in which the same deathly and negative colour-scheme extended to walls, carpets, sofas, chairs. . . . With 'off-white' upholstery went pickled-oak side-tables and baroque accessories denuded of the paintwork they demanded and deserved. Such an interior was smart, chilly, entirely unpractical and for many reasons, including the gullibility of the rich and the ingenuity of fashionable interior decorators, extraordinarily expensive."
\end{enumerate}
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beginning to modernize Hetton, Tony's ancestral home, by chrom-ium plating the drawing-room walls, cynically hints that all is not well. Speaking to her son John, she says of Brenda, "'I should say it was time she began to be bored. They've been married five or six years.'" 135 It is not that she knows Brenda's private life, but she does know Brenda's society. This, however, is the only hint we have that Beaver may succeed with Brenda.

Elsewhere Jock Grant-Menzies speaks to Beaver of Brenda and Tony. "'You'll like her, she's a grand girl. I often think Tony Last's one of the happiest men I know. He's got just enough money, loves the place, one son he's crazy about, devoted wife, not a worry in the world.'" 136 In one sentence Jock ironically includes everything that Tony will lose.

Ben, the stableman, daydreams about events never to be, the stables full of horses for John Andrew when he grows up and Ben himself in charge. 137 The author's asides speak too of the Last's happiness. "What with Brenda's pretty ways and Tony's good sense, it was not surprising that their friends pointed to them as a fair who were pre-eminently successful in solving the problem of getting along well together." 138

135 Waugh, A Handful of Dust, 7.
136-138 Ibid., 11, 21, 28.
as a matter of fact is charming but a sham and Tony is immature and stupid, not as stupid as Paul or Adam or Seth, but still stupid.

It is assumed that Tony is leading a happy life, but the question arises, is it an integrated life, and is it strong enough to resist the assaults of the London savages? The answer is no. The life Tony lives is bogus, and the world he seeks to defend is a bogus world. Here is one of the most interesting aspects of Waugh’s irony, missed by most of the critics who take for granted that Waugh is wholly a defender of Tony’s standards and consequently a snob who wants to retain the status quo of the old order. The old order of Tony’s world goes back only a generation or two, and it is one founded mainly on sham, presence, respectability.

Brenda teased him whenever she caught him posing as an upright, Godfearing gentleman of the old school and Tony saw the joke, but this did not at all diminish the pleasure he derived from his weekly routine, or his annoyance when the presence of guests suspended it.139

His practice of religion is purely formal; church is "jolly" and "most agreeable."140 During the services he is occasionally struck by a phrase of the liturgy, but for the most part he is preoccupied with plans for installing bathrooms and lavatories.

139 - 140 Ibid., 36, 43.
at Hetton. John Andrew's death proves conclusively just what a thin veneer religion has been on Tony. The rector comes to the house and after he leaves Tony says, "I only wanted to see him about arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful. . . . after all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion." Tony and Mrs. Rattery can distract themselves only by playing animal snap, "a heartbreaking game," she says. Ironically Tony worries most about the news on Brenda.

In reprimanding John Andrew for calling Nanny a tart Tony tells him that people of his age and class, gentlemen, don't use such words; only poor people use such expressions. John must learn to talk like a person who is going to own Hetton and a lot of other things. What Tony wants to hang on to are the non-essentials of culture, the hideous Victorian-Gothic mansion, Christmas in all its secular aspects, boutonnieres after Sunday services.

Rather stupidly Tony never suspects Brenda's infidelity. "He had got into the habit of loving and trusting Brenda." When once he is confronted with the issue of divorce he commits his fatal error, he temporizes with evil, agreeing to allow

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141-146 Ibid., 38, 158, 151, 152, 25, 172.
Brenda to charge him with adultery.\textsuperscript{147} On the surface it appears he is the noble-minded English gentleman who is doing the only decent thing by his lady. What makes him change his mind is not the question of right or wrong (the morality of the issue is never mentioned; he is later taken aback when a Catholic girl whom he meets on a boat is shocked to learn he is divorced),\textsuperscript{148} but ironically enough it is a sort of nineteenth-century bugbear that causes him to halt the divorce proceedings: Brenda asks for too much money.\textsuperscript{149}

The evils Tony suffers in the Brazilian jungle are anti-climactic after the jungle of London, but they are none the less real. Is it an unconscious parallelism and pun, a sort of verbal irony Waugh uses in making an apparently harmless Beaver the agent of his ruin in England and an apparently harmless toy mouse the agent of his ruin in Brazil?\textsuperscript{150} Certainly not unconscious is the irony of the final tour-de-force, Tony's fate, that of the romantic whose Gothic world lies in ruins reading the works of the chronicler of the Industrial Revolution to a madman.

The character of Brenda is also ambiguous, but there can be no question of Waugh's sympathizing with her. A key to her character is given in an early conversation between her and Beaver. Hetton to her is ugly and, what is worse, expensive.

\textsuperscript{147 - 150} Ibid., 176, 230-231, 208-209, 262-263.
She would gladly give up Hetton, not that she sees it as pre-tense and hypocrisy, but because it is ugly, inconvenient, and too expensive. Once Beaver with his fashionable gossip has instilled discontent in her she is a lost soul.

"'I've been carrying on madly with young men and I've spent heaps of money and I've enjoyed it very much indeed.'" 

Needless to say, Tony takes this for frivolous talk, never suspecting that the affair with Beaver has begun. Tony, questioning her about the course in economics she is supposed to be taking, asks how much longer classes will run, and she answers that she doesn't know.

'But you must have some idea?'

'Oh it's surprising what a lot there is to learn ... I was so backward when I started ...' 

More amusing is her remark during the unsavory business of trying to find someone to amuse Tony while she is in London. Polly Cockpurse says,

'There's always old Sybil.'

'Darling he's known her all his life.'

'Or Souki de Fourcauld-Esterhazy.'

'He isn't his best with Americans.'

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151-154 Ibid., 45, 71, 107, 110.
Polly tries to comfort her over the failure of Princess Abdul Akbar to amuse him by saying,

'You've done far more than most wives would do to cheer the old boy up.'

'Yes, that's certainly true,' said Brenda.155

A dramatic peak of verbal irony is achieved later in the book when Jock goes to London to tell Brenda of her son John's death. The news stuns her. She sits down on a little chair and says,

'Tell me what happened. Why do you know it first?'

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

'Hetton?'

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

She frowned, not at once taking in what he was saying. 'John . . . John Andrew . . . I . . . Oh thank God . . . ' Then she burst into tears.156

She had confused John Andrew with John Beaver.

The fact that Brenda should fall in love with John Beaver is one of the major ironies of the plot. Cleverly Waugh does not dwell on the emotional aspects of their love affair, if there are any emotional aspects and if this can be called a love affair, but by little hints we learn how despicable Beaver

155 - 156 Ibid., 125, 162.
is. He buys a drink only when forced to do so; Brenda considers him pathetic; he hesitates about taking Brenda to a party because of the expense. Brenda herself sums him up as second-rate, a snob, and cold as a fish. Why then does she fancy him? For one thing she doesn't see very many young men, and for another such conduct is part and parcel of the utter emptiness of the society to which she belongs. Infidelities are to be expected, not usually with such dim characters as Beaver, but almost automatically they make his stock rise. Completely selfish, she talks about the monstrous way Tony behaved by going off, leaving her without money. A moment before she asked Jock about Tony's expedition to Brazil.

'Is it absolutely safe?'

'Oh, I imagine so. The whole world is civilized now isn't it--charabancs and Cook's offices everywhere.'

The word is relative so long as Brendas live, who feel that handsome divorce settlements are proof of a nation's advance, and so long as Beavers and Sally Cockpurses and those of their menage control the social scene, and as long as Mrs. Beavers can make business deals at funerals, posing as best friends of the deceased.

157-159 Ibid., 11-66, 76, 238.
Scarcely mentioned in this analysis of A Handful of Dust have been the burlesque elements so plentifully sprinkled throughout the novel. Space permits a citation of only a few: the visit of Tony and Jock to the cheap night-club; the sermons of Mr. Tendril, the Anglican rector who lives not only in a vivid past but also in a distant clime, so that he will preach a Christmas sermon at Hetton with allusions to Queen Victoria and the burning sun of India. Funny though horrible is Tony's assignment with Milly in order to allow Brenda to get evidence for a divorce. Ironically enough, Milly, tart though she is, is a more loving mother to her daughter than Brenda is to her son.

In four novels examples have been cited to show the methods Waugh used in his satire. In the first two novels travesty burlesque predominated, and the objects of Waugh's satire were individuals representative of a group, as Grimes, the returned soldier and public school man; Prendergast, the doubting clergyman; Fagan, the headmaster, and Silenus, the modern architect. It is to be noted that in Vile Bodies the individual emerges more clearly distinct from the group, as, for instance, Mrs. Ape who is clearly modelled after one revivalist. From this point on Waugh's characters will seldom be types; rather, they will have stamped upon them the mark of individuality.

Two other methods of satire employed, but not to any great extent, are grotesque satire and invective. Probably the
reason that Waugh uses these devices so rarely is that his method is primarily one of detachment, and these direct methods of satire leave little room for such an approach.

In *Vile Bodies* another satirical method, exploited more fully in *Black Mischief* and *A Handful of Dust*, is used extensively if unobtrusively. This is the juxtaposing of disparates: the way of life of the Bright Young People and of the Anchorages. Later in *Black Mischief* and *A Handful of Dust* whole "civilizations" will be contrasted. Some burlesque is still present in this device, but eventually it deepens into ironic contrasts which reveal themselves as not contrasts at all but closely-allied comparisons.

In addition to the use of irony of character in some instances and dramatic irony in others, Waugh gives a prominent place in his third and fourth novels to the device of verbal irony. At times an important episode may hinge on the use of a word, as was cited in the analyses of *Black Mischief* and *A Handful of Dust*. This then has been Waugh's method of satire in the early novels. How that method recedes for a space and then proceeds even stronger will be shown in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

SATIRICAL METHODS IN FOUR LATER NOVELS OF WAUGH

It is demanding too much of an author to expect that in each succeeding work he become progressively better or that he continuously reveal new facets to his genius. In his first two novels Waugh wrote masterpieces of burlesque so hilarious as to drive one critic laughing out of his room. That happy spirit is gone, probably forever, for it was essentially part of a mood which could survive a few years past the college age but which must disappear with the assumption of responsibilities. In his next novels Waugh, though losing much of the happy madness of burlesque, added irony to his situations and characters, and consequently they took on a more dimensional quality.

After the publication of A Handful of Dust four years elapsed before another novel by Waugh appeared. Rather than showing progress in the ironic spirit Scoop parallels the mood


2 Evelyn Waugh, Scoop, Boston, 1946.
of the first two novels. The main object of satire in this novel is not a new one to Waugh. In all of his novels he had taken blows at the newspaper world, more especially in *Vile Bodies*, where gossip writers are the special object of his scorn. *Scoop* embraces the whole of the newspaper world, and Lord Copper, who obviously represents Lord Beaverbrook in England, could just as easily represent Colonel McCormick or William Randolph Hearst in America.

Before William Boot, again Candide, is involved in the insane antics of *The Beast* and its staff, he is presented in an atmosphere which, if not insane, is at least extravagant. The Boots of Magna Hall are in the best tradition of humorous eccentricities. Reduced to modest circumstances, they pool their resources apparently only with the result that the servants are given the best of care (tradition allows them five meat meals a day\(^3\)) and Nannie Bloggs, bedridden for thirty years, is the richest member of the household.\(^4\) As always there is a roué of the roving kind in such a household, and he is Uncle Theodore, whose every desire for complete freedom in London for one grand spree is eventually fulfilled.\(^5\)


William himself is one of those dim heroes to whom we have become accustomed in Waugh: mild, obliging, trustful, fairly virtuous but, above all else, simple. Somewhat more phlegmatic than the chief characters in the early books Boot has but one secret ambition, one that he has harbored for fifteen years, to go up in an airplane. Little does he realize that when his wish is finally fulfilled he will become involved in adventures surpassed only by those of Basil Seal. By now the pattern of this type of hero is wearing a trifle thin, and one of the few times when genuine interest in Boot himself is aroused involves his refusal to leave Jacksonburg at the request of Dr. Benito, the director of the Press Bureau. With unexpected force Boot says, "'You're being a bore. I'm not going.'"

Amusing rather than satirical is the interview of Boot by Salter, the foreign editor, who feels that since Boot is from the country, roots and hunting must be his favorite topics of conversation and cider his favorite drink. Taken as a whole, however, William Boot is interesting only for his gullibility and simple-mindedness, his inability to understand the requirements of the newspaper world, his ill success in winning Katchen, who manages to fleece him royally, and his total lack of compre-

6 Ibid., 62.
7 Ibid., 215.
hension of the revolution taking place right under his nose.

Much more amusing is Mrs. Stitch, a character who makes her one and only appearance in this book though she is mentioned again in Put Out More Flags and Work Suspended. Burlesque of the thoroughly efficient woman who can succeed in involving herself and others in the most impossible predicaments is the key to her character. A woman of boundless activity, she simultaneously receives visitors, gets a beauty treatment, converses with her secretary, signs checks, dictates over the telephone details of the costumes for a charity ballet, instructs an artist how to paint ruined castles on the walls of her bedroom, works a crossword puzzle, and gives her eight year old daughter hints on construing Virgil ("Munera, darling, like tuntiddy, always a short a in neuter plurals")—all the while lying in bed.

Unfortunately she appears only briefly in the book, racing in her car along the sidewalk, usually to avoid traffic, but once to pursue a man down the gentleman's lavatory only to find the car stuck and the supposed acquaintance a stranger. The name Stitch is another example of Waugh's use of the odd as also Lord Copper, Lord Zinc, The Beast and The Brute, Silas Shock, Mrs. Hogbaum and Prudence Blank. The main function of Mrs. Stitch,

8 Ibid., 6.
9 Ibid., 51.
besides providing humor by such incidents as chasing the baboon escaped from the Kensington Gardens, is getting the two Boots mixed so that William goes as the war correspondent.

Other individuals who are sharply satirized are the Ishmaelites in London, the orator who ironically mouths the claptrap propaganda always used against negroes ("'Who built the Pyramids?' cried the Ishmaelite orator, 'A negro. Who invented the circulation of the blood? A negro.'"\(^{10}\); and his rival passport officer at the other Ishmaelite legation.\(^{11}\) Voorhees feels that in these portraits Waugh demonstrates again his essential snobbery.\(^{12}\)

Descriptions of the foreign correspondents probably approximate the men with whom Waugh associated as a special correspondent covering the Abyssinian War. Corker, the realist of the group, seems less fantastic than some of the others, for instance, Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, who left Lord Copper's services because of an argument over the date of the Battle of Hastings, though such an incident may have been grimly true. Most of the correspondents are petty men, but they are victims of their newspaper publishers whom Waugh blasts. Like their American

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 69-71.

\(^{12}\) Voorhees, "Evelyn Waugh Revisited," South Atlantic Quarterly, XLVIII, April, 1949, 272.
counterparts, the publishers in the book consider themselves authorities on all matters, especially matters of international importance. When Boot does not cable news of victories in Ishmaelia, Copper's confidential secretary cables demands for them. Anyone who has listened to a Saturday night broadcast on MBS from Chicago will sympathize with Lord Copper's banquet guests who listen to him "speak at whatever length he liked and on whatever subject, without fear of rivalry or interruption." In the final pages of the book Waugh gives us a satirical portrait of the Great Man, one who can reshuffle dictatorships or issue new stocks, one who can dream of Caesar and Napoleon and Shakespeare and place himself among them.

The modern newspaper, like the movies, is symptomatic to Waugh of all that is vulgar in modern life, and it is remarkable that he can keep so calm and detached in his attack on Lord Copper and his publication, The Beast. It is a tribute to Waugh's art that he never preaches his satire, be the issues at stake ever so dear to his heart. Very occasionally he will write a line bordering on the sentimental as though to admit that the folly of men is too much even for him. Thus, after describing the very private and very trivial occupations of the various

13 Ibid., 312.
14 Ibid., 311-16.
newspaper reporters who control so much of the world's thinking, the chapter concludes with the pregnant line: "And the granite sky wept." Fortunately Waugh seldom sustains such lapses, and so the reader can delight in his cool, detached and annihilating satire.

In general irony does not exert much influence in this novel though the central plot, William Boot's going to war as a correspondent rather than John Boot's, may be considered irony on not a very high level, just as awarding the medal to the wrong man for getting a "scoop" may be called irony. Since William did not want the medal in the first place, no pain manifests itself.

Some few instances of verbal irony may be cited here to conclude the discussion of the least satisfying of Waugh's books written in this satirical genre. Corker in identifying the correspondents for Boot says,

"You see he's a Communist. Most of the staff at the Twopence are--they're University men, you see. Peppenhacker says that every time you are polite to a proletarian you are helping bolster up the capitalistic system." 16

Another example deals with Jakes, who started a revolution in order to have a story. "They gave Jakes the Nobel Peace Prize

15 Ibid., 116.
16 Ibid., 41.
for his harrowing description of the carnage—but that was colour stuff.\textsuperscript{17} This, it need not be said, is pretty tame after the irony of previous novels, but fortunately it was not a permanent indication of Waugh's future work.

Another four years elapsed before the Bright Young People with the most notorious of their number, Basil Seal leading the pack, reappeared for what is apparently their last testimonial, "the epitaph of this footless generation,"\textsuperscript{18} as one critic states. It took a war to arouse these ghosts whose follies provided Waugh with much food for thought.\textsuperscript{19} Previously Waugh had suffered rebukes from the pious, but this new novel heralded a new set of enemies who would prove just as raucous if not any more successful in impeding him.

Injured morality had aroused the first storm, and so, ironically enough, a group which could laugh at the pious Catholic's scruples about vulgarity reacted in anger when politics reared its ugly head in Waugh's novel in a way displeasing to them. It was well enough to burlesque last week's prime minister, but to mock today's political poets was no joke. Waugh was

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] Ibid., 93.
\end{footnotes}
a Tory, they discovered with horror, and if a Tory he was also a snob and an enemy of the masses, a charge which is taken as an undisputed fact by most of the critics today.

Character analysis counts more heavily in this than in any of Waugh's previous novels, and the net result is a devastating satire which takes its place with the best of his novels. For the first time a new group makes its appearance in his novels, the Left Wing writers of the 'thirties. Parsnip and Pimpernall, "friends and collaborators" who have "complementary qualities which, many believed, made them altogether equal to one poet," are patently Auden and Isherwood, even to the equality of syllables in their names. Naturally the admirers of these two men were aroused when Waugh struck home by taunting them with their departure from England to America when the war crisis arose though they had been vociferous during the Spanish War. "They were contemporary enough about Spain when no one threatened to come and bomb them." Such sentiments were not, of course, considered cricket,

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20 Evelyn Waugh's Work Suspended, London, 1949, written before World War II also describes them, but unfortunately this is only a beautifully written fragment rather than a novel.

and Waugh was chided for his obtuseness. Peter Quennell was not pleased. Kate O'Brien thought Waugh's timing was unlucky for "our hearts...are not lightened by witty reminder of recent inanities, either our own or our friends" and another called his satire "the happy cruelty of a slightly demented child."

Though Peter Quennell calls the creation of Ambrose Silk catty and claims that Waugh in his dislike for Ambrose neither enjoys nor understands him, the present writer feels that Ambrose is one of Waugh's triumphs. He embodies all the qualities that should mark him as wholly lost, but never does the reader fully despise him as, for instance, he may Anthony Blanche, so much like Ambrose. A Jew, a pervert, a coward, an aesthete sprung from the lower orders, Ambrose should be despised, but instead he is pitied. Essentially he is a tragic rather than a satiric figure. The artists in the book, Parsnip, Pimpernell and their coterie, are the objects of Waugh's satire, but Ambrose does not sympathize with them. "Aphrodite gazed back at him, blind, as though sculptured in butter; Parsnip, Pimpernell, Red Square and Brown House, thus the discussion raged. What had all this to do

with him?" 27 He had taken the primrose path and consorted with Diaghilev, Cocteau and Gertrude Stein, but when the time of decision came he had chosen the austere, "when Paul had tried to enter a monastery and David had succeeded in throwing himself under a train." 28 As a penance for past frivolity he began a grim, interminable book, and like Sebastian in Brideshead Revisited, assumed the responsibility of a German outcast. 29 When Basil leaves him at the railway station he is a desolate figure demanding the reader's sympathy, so much so that Waugh almost descends into the same sentimentality he showed in Scoop when he wrote a very similar sentence. "From the fishy freight below him water oozed slowly onto the pavement making a little pool, as though of tears." 30 Last mention of Ambrose, "Poor Ambrose," 31 places him in Ireland where he cannot remain among "happy, drab escapists," 32 but must be off like the Wandering Jew that he is.

This pathetic quality of Ambrose's extends to others in the book, and it reveals an essential sadness that has taken possession of the majority of Waugh's characters. Cedric Lyne, who spent most of his time putting around restored grottoes, dies a "hero's" death though he says to himself, "'I'm not the least brave, really; it's simply that the whole thing is so damned silly."' 33 This and Sonia's remark about Alastair may
offer some excuse for the otherwise unexplained wholesale conversion of all the Bright Young People. "'I believe he [Alastair] thought that perhaps if we hadn't had so much fun perhaps there wouldn't have been any war.'" Angela Lyne, aside from Ambrose the most pathetic character in the book, also recognizes the need of penance. "'I knew we needed a death. I never thought it was his,'" she says of Cedric.

But this is primarily the story of Basil Seal, Waugh's most callous creation and the last to come to any sort of penitence. In some ways he is like the main characters in the early works, certainly not innocent in their manner but naive in an adolescent way and stupid, at least where the interests of others are concerned. This stupidity may be a result of his selfishness, as when he tries to join the Bombardier Guards. Because he wants to get something with the least amount of effort, he is entirely unaware of the antagonism he has aroused in the Lieutenant-Colonel interviewing him. Ambrose in one of his reveries thinks of Basil as a Philistine and a bore and, on occasions, a monumental bore. On another occasion the remark is made that "Basil understood their difficulties with a keenness of perception that was rare to him."

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34-38 Ibid., 132; 280; 65-68; 70; 114.
The irony centering around Basil's character is that no one fully recognizes how callous and wicked he is. Thus, the three women in his life, those who should know him best, picture him as three separate personalities, but all are idealistic. To his sister he is Rupert Brooke; to his mother, Old Bill; and to Angela, the Unknown Soldier. Ambrose Silk knows him well but not well enough to escape the devilish snare Basil lays for him. The reader, then, can appreciate the irony of this portrayal though none of the other characters are fully aware of it. How cruel Basil can be and how callous that cruelty is shows itself in a myriad of forms, some so petty that they irritate the reader almost more than the serious ones. Basil always rejoices seeing women at a disadvantage, as when in the asparagus season a dribble of melted butter on a woman's chin mars her beauty as all unconscious of it she chats gaily.\(^{39}\) Undoubtedly funny but more serious is his treatment of the warden who spoke sharply to him. Basil leaves the poor man thinking that he and the whole city are breathing arsenical smoke.\(^{40}\) In Black Mischief he had no scruples about stealing his mother's jewels; in Put Out More Flags he sees the whole race as part of a mighty plan to serve only him: the lunatic in the Ministry of Information, Poppet Green, Ambrose Silk, Colonel Plum, the evacuee children. Ironically he

\(^{39-40}\) Ibid., 33; 34.
concludes his checkered career joining "a special corp d'élite that is being organized. They are going to do great things."\(^4\)

Comedy rather than satire characterizes the adventures of the Connolly children, the horrible Charles Addams evacuees who haunt Barbara, Basil's sister. Naturally the fact that they were "proletarian" children aroused criticism.\(^4\) Such an objection is beside the point since those who were supported by the government were poor, many endeared themselves to their hosts, and the people really satirized are the upper-middle classes upon whom Basil foists the terrible three—Doris, who leers; Micky, who lowers; and Marlene, who drools. The picturesque description of Mr. Harkness's home (flower prints on the walls, samplers, a grand piano and harp, secluded old world gardens)\(^4\) is ironical and the reader, like Basil, waits for the explosion bound to come when Mr. and Mrs. Harkness learn who their guests will be.

Other characters are treated in the burlesque manner of the early novels as, for instance, the foolish Sir Joseph Mainwaring, with whom Lady Seal constantly has little talks about Basil, as Lady Marchmain will have them about Sebastian. A simple-minded fool, Sir Joseph spends most of his time making

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 285.


predictions about the war, always a hazardous game but fatal for him.

Burlesque is used extensively in describing the conditions prevailing at the Ministry of Information. Ambrose, for instance, represents atheism in the Religious Department. Strange characters keep wandering through the doors much in the manner of the Marx Brothers: Basil’s lunatic frien who carries a bomb and eventually explodes it in the Religious Department wounding the Chaplain General; and Archimandrite Antonios, expelled from Bulgaria on the charge of fornication and as a consequence constantly spitting in the face of the Bulgar people.

Just as the Ministry is in a constant uproar, so the army is synonymous with chaos. Codes that no one understands are used freely, contradictory orders are issued, strenuous efforts are exerted on completely foolish projects, colonels will board their men on the wrong ships, and through it all a "single, unvarying obscenity punctuates all their speech like a hiccup." The confusion usually speaks for itself. In an earlier novel Waugh would probably have treated this confusion as farce; here it becomes so mad that tragedy alone can resolve it, and one of its effects is Cedric’s death, told with the same matter-of-factness that Thackeray used to tell of George Osborne’s death.

44-46 Ibid., 191; 80-84; 131.
Irony thinly covers the antics of all these people engaged in such petty affairs, frittering away their time and their energy long after the hour for action has struck. Ambrose, musing to himself as Basil Seal and the rest of the crowd sit around arguing about what kind of a war faces them, admits that all war is nonsense and that this particular war has nothing to do with him. But "'Gawd strike me pink,' thought Ambrose, 'I wouldn't sit around discussing what kind of war it was going to be. I'd make it my kind of war.'" In a queer sort of way Ambrose may be called a protagonist—or at least a mouthpiece—in *Put Out More Flags*.

What senseless activities these people waste their efforts upon. It is true that Basil is very amusing in exploiting the Connollys. It is true that a mother must keep a sharp eye open for a son-in-law with "all the Victorian excellencies of an old title, a new fortune and a shapely leg in blue overalls." It is also true that Lady Seal is quite guileless in thinking that Basil can make up for lost time since "'Promotion is very quick in war-time because so many people get killed.'" But all forget the prophetic figure of Adam in *Vile Bodies* standing on the battlefield of what is now this war, and Waugh, though he allows his characters to forget this figure for the moment be-

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47-49 Ibid., 87; 170; 182.
cause "'there's a new spirit abroad,'" keeps it always in mind from his detached point of view where he sees clearly the combination of humor and pain in the final antics of the Bright Young People.

Put Out More Flags may have alienated some of Waugh's readers, but it was Brideshead Revisited which succeeded not only in winning a huge new audience for Waugh, but also in losing some of his old admirers amid a chorus of shock, vilification, and renunciation. Edmund Wilson, though not an admirer of long standing, had made up for lost time by writing of Waugh's earlier novels in most enthusiastic terms. Brideshead Revisited changed all that as he himself admits, and Waugh somewhat sadly says that he can understand why Wilson was outraged to find God introduced into the story, Wilson's standards being what they are. That other critics reacted so shrilly comes then as no great shock after the very able Wilson shakes him off. In general the

50 Ibid., 286.
51 Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, Boston, 1945.
54 Evelyn Waugh, "Fan-Fare," Life, XX, April 8, 1946.
attitude they took was one of betrayal, the old charge of snobbery was reconsidered and accepted without question, and alleged new faults: outworn cliches and lush romanticism were discovered to strengthen the verdict that Waugh had indeed failed.

With most of these charges the present thesis is not concerned since satire in Waugh is its prime interest, but these charges should be noted because they are largely responsible for a blunting of the appreciation which is due Waugh's satire, especially his irony, in Brideshead Revisited. For a person who does not acknowledge the doctrine of grace the plot is quite incomprehensible and as a consequence the tirades of Wilson, Diana Trilling55 and Rose Macaulay56 are not unexpected. For a person who does accept the doctrine the plot may be understandable enough, but its ironical elements may be completely overlooked.

In discussing irony note was taken of the fact that incongruities are the stuff of which irony is made; contrast between a reality and an appearance. Thus examples of verbal irony were cited to show that a speaker may say one thing but his words will carry meanings of which he himself may be ignorant. Examples of this device are easily found in Brideshead Revisited as, for


instance, Charles's words when Julia says that something must be done to prevent a repetition of the dinner scene at which Sebastian appeared drunk.

'Someone has. I spoke. I think it will be all right.'
'Thank God for that.' 57

Charles has done something to prevent Sebastian's appearance at the table; he has given him two pounds with which to get drunk.

Another example is Rex Mottram's remark to Charles after they have finished eating an extremely good dinner at an obscure French restaurant, a favorite spot for Charles. "'You know, the food here isn't half bad; someone ought to take this place and make something of it.'" 58 Here we find more than verbal irony. Charles in taking Rex to the restaurant had imagined to himself the very things Rex would say to his friends once he got back to England: "'...interesting fellow I know; an art student living in Paris. Took me to a funny little restaurant--sort of place you'd pass by without looking at--where there was some of the best food I ever ate.'" 59 More than verbal irony, then, is present. Rather we are given a glimpse of Rex's whole character: a man with his eye on the main chance, a braggart.

57 Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, 161.
58 Ibid., 174.
59 Ibid., 172.
a snob and as vulgar as is possible; in short, a victim of self-deception. His self-deception, like that of most of the characters in the book, will be due to ignorance or to wilful blindness, but in its perception by the reader, by the informed spectator, who sees a contrast between the reality and the false appearance lies the irony. 60

The character of Lady Marchmain offers an interesting study in the use of irony. Anthony Blanche 61 is the first to describe her in the book, and the tenor of his description may be summed up in his words, "And she meanwhile keeps a small gang of enslaved and emaciated prisoners for her exclusive enjoyment. She sucks their blood." 62 Charles, upon questioning Sebastian, learns that Anthony has told him probably not a word of truth. 63 Consequently Lady Marchmain remains an enigma. Cara, Lord Marchmain's mistress, next describes her to Charles as the object Lord Marchmain has seized upon to express the hate that he really has for himself, hating innocence, God, and hope as he does. 64 That

60 Haakon M. Chevalier, The Ironic Temper, Anatole France and His Time, New York, 1932, 42.

61 It may be noted here that Harold Acton takes up the point in his book, Memoirs of an Aesthete, whether or not he is the prototype of Anthony Blanche in real life. Acton dismisses the charge as gossip of "malicious mutual acquaintances who insist on identifying me with the more grotesque of his characters." 127.

62-64 Brideshead Revisited, 56; 61; 102-3.
Cara differs radically from Anthony in her opinion of Lady Marchmain's character is shown by her words: "'Poor Lady Marchmain had to bear all that.'" Charles on first meeting Lady Marchmain finds her charming and he has only a single reproach against her: she sought to make him her friend. Only later does he, like the others, turn against her when the question of Sebastian's drinking arises.

The irony of her character lies in this: to some she is the devil incarnate and to others she is a saint. The truth of the matter lies between these extremes. Cara hinted at it and Cordelia expresses it.

'I sometimes think when people wanted to hate God they hated Mummy.'
'What do you mean by that, Cordelia?'
'Well, you see, she was saintly but she wasn't a saint. No one could really hate a saint, could they? They can't really hate God either.'

Lady Marchmain in the greater portion of the book is not what she seems to be precisely because those who describe her, Blanche, Cara, Charles, fail to understand her. Waugh himself was quoted by John Lehmann on a BBC Broadcast as saying that Lady Marchmain was a good woman whose character he admired. This is saying much for a writer who on another occasion speaks of some "good people who are just blank-minded and boring. They're going to heaven

65-67 Ibid., 103; 168-69; 211.
but they aren't agreeable in life." 68

Primarily the irony of the book is irony of character. A full analysis of each of the characters will not be attempted here, but some general principles will be named which can be applied to all of them. Above all else the reader must bear in mind that point of view plays a major role in the novel. Charles, an agnostic during the time interval of the story, is the narrator and consequently his interpretations of the principals in the story will be colored by his prejudice and his ignorance. Sebastian will say, "Oh dear, it's very difficult being a Catholic," and Charles will answer, "You don't seem much more virtuous than me," only to receive an answer which confuses him: "I'm very, very much wickeder," said Sebastian indignantly. 69 George Orwell deprecated this attitude of contemporary Catholic writers, claiming that they make Hell out to be a very swank night club which only Catholics are allowed to enter. 70 Certainly Orwell over-simplifies the theology of Greene and of Waugh in this particular instance. The general impression one gets from Brideshead Revisited is rather a wholesale redemption of all the great


69 Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, 36.

sinners, something which the reader may object to on logical grounds. William Grace even goes so far as to say that it would be as easy to believe in the redemption of all of Faulkner's or Farrell's characters. 71

Provided one bears in mind that Charles can give only an imperfect picture of the family the irony of the book can be easily seen. Mr. Grace compares the remarks of the characters to those of Milton's Satan, claiming that one is never certain how much to accept on its face value. 72

This point involves a second principle to be borne in mind when reading the book. Practically all the principal characters are self-deceived, some wilfully like Sebastian and Julia, others ignorantly like Lady Marchmain and Brideshead. The reader, seeing the contrast between the reality and the false appearance, detects the irony in the character portrayal. Interestingly enough, one character can see the other's problems but not his own. Sebastian says of Brideshead, "'If you only knew, he's much the craziest of us, only it doesn't come out at all. He's all twisted inside. He wanted to be a priest, you know.'" 73 Cordelia, on the other hand, speaks to Charles and suggests an ex-


72 Ibid., 36

73 Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, 88.
planation for Sebastian's difficulties: he had a vocation but he hated it. Brideshead has a "characteristic ruthlessness" and a "mad certainty" so that he can detect with logical certainty the flaws in his family; yet he is completely taken in by Beryl Muspratt, a common woman who plays up the religious angle in order to impress him.

In the end most of the characters realize themselves, Julia giving up the one thing she wants so much so that God won't quite despair of her in the end; Sebastian living in a monastery, "not such a bad way of getting through one's life," but "not what one would have foretold," mark enough of irony; Brideshead undeceiving himself about his vocation and marrying Beryl; Charles finding a measure of the only happiness possible for him in reciting "a prayer, an ancient, newly learned form of words."

The final novel by Waugh to be discussed in this thesis does not treat the period or the people dealt with in the previous seven. The period is contemporaneous with the publication date and the people are the inhabitants of California, particularly the region of Los Angeles. Short in comparison with his other novels (Wilson, who never recovered from the shock of

74-81 Ibid., 222; 195; 217; 298; 340; 309; 309; 350.

82 Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, Boston, 1948.
Brideshead Revisited, calls The Loved One a short story and dismisses it as unimportant\(^{83}\), this work marks some changes in Waugh's satirical approach though the fundamentals are still present, used at times with variations. In place of a male Candide a woman is substituted, Aimée Thanatogenos whose eyes have "a rich glint of lunacy."\(^{84}\) Even stupider than the heroes of the other novels, she is headed for double destruction, first suicide and then combustion. As in the early novels Waugh makes use of ridiculous and symbolic names, and the fact that Aimée has been named in honor of the revivalist recalls again Mrs. Ape of Vile Bodies. Even more significant is the literal translation of the name Aimée Thanatogenos from the French and Greek: "The Beloved or Loved One of the People of Death." Apparent again is the mastery Waugh shows for massing together incongruities. Aimée, in explaining the curriculum she followed at college, says that Art, Psychology and Chinese were her minors and Beauticraft was her major. Her thesis subject was "Hairstyling in the Orient," an unsuccessful attempt to correlate her subjects.\(^{85}\)

The first woman to dominate a novel by Waugh, Aimée is a marvelous study in irony of character, a study in which her true character is shown to be in painfully comic contrast to her

\(^{83}\) Wilson, "Splendors and Miseries of Evelyn Waugh," Classics and Commercial, 304.

\(^{84}-85\) Waugh, The Loved One, 55; 90-91.
appearance or manner. "'I've always been Artistic,'" she said, and as a proof she cites her college courses and her profession. She says she is progressive and therefore has no religion, but she lives in superstitious awe of Mr. Joyboy, who is "'kinda holy," and in horror of the Happier Hunting Grounds, which is "'kinda blasphemous" since it buries animals with rites similar to those used at Whispering Glades. One of her main concerns over Dennis, the principal male character, is his lack of culture, proved in her mind because he is unfamiliar with the poetry of Sophie Dalmeyer Krump, who is buried in the Poets' Corner at Whispering Glades. Ironically Dennis woos and wins Aimee by passing off standard poetry, mostly taken from the Oxford Book of English Verse, as his own.

When Aimee, the girl who admires beautiful death and all the niceties that surround it at Whispering Glades, is driven to suicide, Waugh ironically has Attic voices, voices of a distant and alien culture, prompting poor little Aimee, the intellectual bankrupt, to a higher destiny: the Minotaur, the Boeotian waterfront, Agamemnon, Alcestis and proud Antigone. With the ingenuity for twists that we have noted in Black Mischief and A Handful of Dust, Waugh applies the final turn of the screw to the ironic career of Aimee. As the book ends, Dennis is sitting

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86-93 Ibid., 90; 90-94; 128; 95; 95; 103; 105; 149.
before the oven at the Happier Hunting Grounds crematorium wait-
ing for the final combustion of his loved one, Aimée.

Aimée may be the heroine of the story, but the cemetary
Whispering Glades is the novel's raison d'etre. Fascinated and
appalled by his visit to Forest Lawn, Waugh made use of this ex-
perience to write The Loved One.94 Dennis, the so-called hero of
the book, is an English poet imported to Hollywood to write for
the films, but finding his work unappreciated he takes a job at
the Happier Hunting Grounds, a crematorium for pets. Visiting
Whispering Glades to make arrangements for the funeral of a
friend, he is ironically described as "a missionary priest making
his first visit to the Vatican, as a paramount chief of equator-
ial Africa mounting the Eiffel Tower."95 An open book in marble
tells in letters a foot high the glories of Whispering Glades.96
Wandering without a guide throughout the grounds, Dennis discov-
ers such incongruities as a sun-dial, a bird-bath, and the all
pervading sound of the "Hindoo Love-song" relayed from an organ
through concealed amplifiers.97 Speaking to an attendant, he
hears with a feeling of nausea the requirements for entrance to
Whispering Glades and the preparations for the leave-taking of the

95-97 Waugh, The Loved One, 38; 39; 40.
loved one. Here, where all is supposedly peace and beauty, the
girl attendant can tell with perfect calm how a hideous face, con-
torted by hanging, can be restored so that the corpse will look
as though this were its wedding day. 98

In a second passage the methods for embalming used at
Whispering Glades are described. Mr. Joyboy, the chief embalm-
er, is described in burlesque fashion as one who had taken his
baccalaureate in embalming in the Middle West and had for a time
been on the Undertaking Faculty of an historic Eastern Univer-
sity. 99 He is so in love with Aimée that he shows his affection
publicly by putting larger smiles on the faces of the corpses he
sends to her. 100

It was simple enough in the earlier novels to cite ex-
amples of irony to prove that irony was the purpose of the books,
but in The Loved One almost every statement made is so charged
that selections are inadequate. Only occasionally does Waugh
assume his note of burlesque, and even in these moments there is
so much pain present that the reader fears the ominous and the
macabre may have been carried too far. "Nightmarish and grue-
some" Waugh called the story in his preface, and the reviewer in
the London Times likens him to the Ancient Mariner, who has been

98-100 Ibid., 47; 65-72; 69.
sent to warn and frighten the wedding guests. The festering sores of modern society he ruthlessly exposes, an ugly, base, materialistic society that ironically glorifies a false beauty and pins its faith and hope on rolling lawns, crerubs, the Wee Kirk o’Auld Lang Syne with its tartan carpet, and the help of Guru Brahmin if problems become too involved.

To please the English colony of actors, the Cricket Club which sent a fine trophy in the shape of cross bats and wickets, Dennis writes a burlesque poem in honor of Sir Francis which is a marvel of cruel travesty. Yet Dennis is the only one of the colony who will face the fact that Sir Francis was found with protruding eye-balls, black tongue, and now lies pickled in formaldehyde.

That there was and still is a necessity to cut away at the cancer eating at modern society Waugh knew full well, and the proof of how unwilling men are to learn can be seen in Edmund Wilson’s brief reference to The Loved One in which he concludes: "To the non-religious reader, however, the patrons and proprietors of Whispering Glades seem more sensible and less absurd than the priest-guided Evelyn Waugh." Those of Whispering

102 Waugh, The Loved One, 85.
Glades are merely glossing over physical death, continues Mr. Wilson, "but for the Catholic, the fact of death is not to be faced at all." Such criticism would be amusing if it were not so frightening to think that a man like Wilson can accept the characters of Whispering Glades as Waugh presents them and still contend that they are more sensible than the priest-guided Catholic. No answer is really necessary; one has only to refer Wilson to the many who criticize Catholics because "You are always talking about death in sermons, retreats and even daily conversations." Apparently Mr. Wilson has never heard of the Four Last Things.

It is just as well, then, that Waugh writes no longer in a style which merely titillates his readers. The burlesque of the movies in *Vile Bodies* was very amusing, but Waugh had not yet had first hand experience with Hollywood. Once he did, he saw how hopeless the task was to draw any good from it; indeed, if it produces anything it is the horror of Sir Francis's suicide. In an article on his brief sojourn in California Waugh states that he sincerely believes the disabilities under which Hollywood works are insuperable. "The great danger is that the European climate is becoming inclement for artists; they are notoriously comfort-loving people. The allurements of the mod-

104 Ibid.
est luxury of Hollywood are strong. Will they be seduced there to their own extinction? All but Dennis succumbed in The Loved One. Whether he escaped unscathed is problematical.

The character portrayals in The Loved One and in three other novels have enabled us to discover the methods of Waugh's satire in his later novels. As in the early novels some invective has been used, especially against the Left Wing writers of the thirties, but it is rare for Waugh to be satisfied with the obvious method of satire. Scoop was a disappointment, primarily because the reader is no longer content with mere burlesque of eccentrics. Even the satirical names Waugh uses in this novel, Lord Copper, Lord Zinc, The Beast, The Brute, are feeble when compared with the significance of a name like Aimée Thanatogenos.

Burlesque is still employed by Waugh in these later novels, but it is no longer a burlesque that partakes of the farce of the earlier books. To relate the effects of the careless and irresponsible actions of Adam and the Bright Young People Waugh had, in a sense, to assume the guise of the prophet. With a full-blown war in progress when Put Out More Flags

was written the carelessness and irresponsibility are clearly perceived.

In *Brideshead Revisited* there is some burlesque in the Oxford episodes, but what is humor in this novel is photographic realism as, for instance, the behavior of Rex Mottram as he undergoes instructions in preparation for a Catholic marriage.

Primarily however irony, especially irony of character, predominates these last three novels. It is ironical that the rogue Basil Seal should be the hero of *Put Out More Flags* and eventually a hero for his country as a bombardier. Running like a theme throughout the whole of *Brideshead Revisited* is the ironic contrast between the reality and the false appearance. More than the characters in any other of Waugh's books, those in *Brideshead Revisited* have the means to shake off self-deception, and Waugh allows them a measure of happiness only when they have done so.

Finally, *The Loved One* is a concerted effort to show by means of irony of character what dreadful effects can result from an ill-formed character. Aimée is the main character in the book, but Whispering Glades and all those who make it what it is are a monster. Just as Aimée deceives herself into believing that she can attain happiness by means of the patently materialistic, so the proprietors and clientele of Whispering Glades deceive themselves into believing that pretty objects can bring
happiness and obscure, if not erase, the horrors of death. With fine irony Waugh shows how Mr. Joyboy is the logical end-product of Whispering Glades: a frightened man who is persuaded that the furnace of a pet cemetery is the only possible means to dispose of his loved one.
CHAPTER IV

RECAPITULATION

A few concluding remarks may be added here in the form of a summary to show briefly what conclusions have been reached about the methods of satire which Evelyn Waugh has used in his novels. First it was necessary to establish that he was a satirist and, this done, it was next desirable to show that his satire had affinities to standard types but also distinctive features which separated it from the work of others.

Primarily his appeared to be a comic spirit, and in the early novels especially he resembled Firbank in his freaks, fantastic turns and apparent frivolity. Firbank's genius, however, as was noted, was not one to interpret fully the human tragedy. Waugh, concentrating on a certain milieu, did approximate this in one of his novels, A Handful of Dust, wherein he perceived rather created incongruities.

Partly because he began more and more to concentrate upon one stratum of society he was accused of snobbery, but he himself had the best answer for this.
Class consciousness, particularly in England, has been so much inflamed nowadays that to mention a nobleman is like mentioning a prostitute 60 years ago. The new prudes say, 'No doubt such people do exist but we would sooner not hear about them.' I reserve the right to deal with the kind of people I know best.1

In a similar fashion he might answer the charge of J. F. Powers that he is too cruel when he seems to forget that Christ died for Mr. Joyboy too.2 There is no denial in Waugh that Christ died for Mr. Joyboy or Agatha Runcible or Prudence Courteney. Rather Waugh becomes savage because society is such today that none of these people ever think for a moment that the Blood of Christ was shed for them.

A pitch of hatred was reached in A Handful of Dust which had a inevitable result. The horror of Tony's two calamities apparently was too much and the old mood of the comic spirit, never a bantering one, however, was reestablished in Scoop. With the publication of Put Out More Flags Waugh's true genius seemed to be established, that of looking at the antics of a godless or a superstitious generation in a detached way, noting the irony of all their fruitless activity. Never, how-

1 Evelyn Waugh, "Fan-Fare," Life, XX, April 8, 1946, 60.

ever, does he totally despair of the race as Huxley and Douglas do, but rather he stresses in practically all his novels the fact that the absence of a religious referent causes most of the misfortunes these victims find themselves faced with. In Brideshead Revisited he shows how salvation can come only if superstition and ignorance are abandoned and a true faith accepted, along with all the hardships consequent on such an action. In The Loved One he shows how spiritual frivolity can bring only death and destruction. A chronicler of our age, he ranks with the best of the technically excellent contemporary satirists. In addition he has a referent which gives a positive quality to his artistry and leaves far behind those whose approach without such a referent can be nothing but negative.
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The thesis submitted by Joseph Thomas McIntyre has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

31 May 1981

Date

Signature of Adviser