THE TORMENTED HERO
IN THE NOVELS OF
EVELYN WAUGH

by

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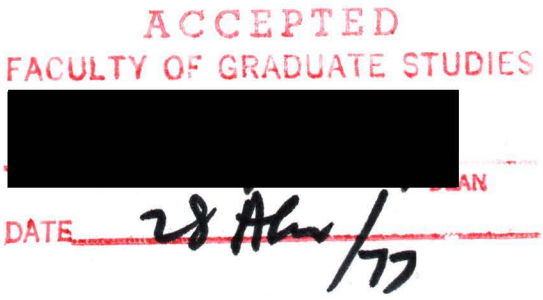

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ABSTRACT

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In all of his novels, Evelyn Waugh satirized the world in which he lived--a world which, he believed, was slowly but inexorably falling apart. An arch-conservative and a rigid Roman Catholic, Waugh cited the breakdown of the class system and the decay of institutions, especially the Church, as the principal causes for the decline and fall of Western Civilization.

At the center of Waugh's novels is the problem of how the sensitive and intelligent individual survives in this world of change and decay.

Most of Waugh's heroes survive by isolating themselves from the world around them. When circumstances force them to take an active role in society, they tend to become victims of the injustice and corruption endemic to the Waugh world, until the end of the novel when they return, unchanged, to the security of their former isolation.

But three of Waugh's heroes, Tony Last in A Handful of Dust, Charles Ryder in Brideshead Revisited, and Guy Crouchback in the war trilogy collectively entitled Sword of Honour, refuse to allow themselves to be victimized

by their society, they refuse to accept the injustice so prevalent in the world in which they live. They are tormented by this society and they try to find something which will allow them to live meaningful lives.

Tony Last travels to the jungles of South America in search of an alternative to the Wasteland which is modern England, but, because his quest is not a religious one, Tony is ultimately unsuccessful. Charles Ryder, profoundly influenced by a Roman Catholic family with which he has a close relationship, attempts to cope with his world by embracing Roman Catholicism. But Ryder learns, at the end of the book, that even the Catholic Church cannot provide all the answers to the individual trapped within a world of change and decay.

With his last hero, Guy Crouchback, Waugh makes his final statement about the individual's relationship to the modern world. Experiencing first-hand the ultimate manifestation of a civilization on the verge of collapse--the Second World War--Guy learns, at the end of Sword of Honour, that in order to live a meaningful life, man must isolate himself from public causes and be content with private causes of the soul.

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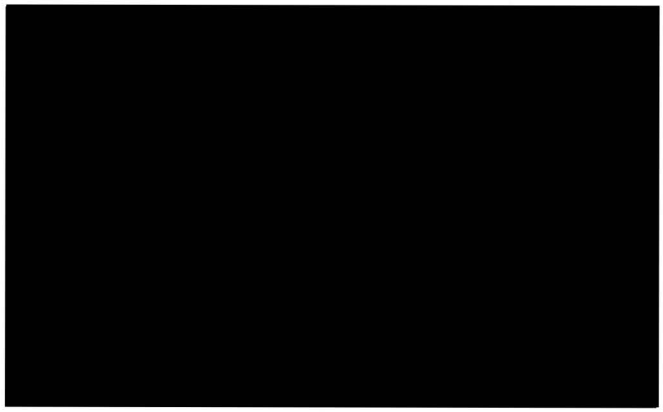

Defenseless under the night
Our world in a stupor lies
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

W. H. Auden

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CHAPTER I

THE WORLD OF EVELYN WAUGH

In the world depicted in the novels of Evelyn Waugh, anything can happen. An innocent schoolmaster is imprisoned for white slavery; an unsuccessful writer is paid to cremate his loved one at a pet cemetery where he works; an English gentleman unknowingly eats his mistress at a cannibal feast. The world Waugh creates is chaotic, bizarre, at times surrealistic, very often, of course, amusing. But, above all, it is a world obviously in the final stages of decline, floundering helplessly at the approach of a moral and spiritual wasteland which is rapidly and inexorably gaining full control. Uncle Theodore, in Scoop, captures the essence of the Waugh world. as he gazes from his window and chants, over and over again: "Change and decay in all around I see."[1]

This "change and decay" in the world of Waugh's novels is, in one sense, political. Waugh was a staunch conservative who believed that England needed a rigid class system as a manifestation of natural distinctions between people.

He explains in his travel book, Robbery Under Law:

> I believe that inequalities of wealth and position are inevitable and that it is therefore meaningless to discuss the advantages of their elimination; that men naturally arrange themselves in a system of classes; that such a system is necessary for any form of cooperative work, more particularly the work of keeping a nation together.[2]

In Waugh in Abyssinia, he praises Mussolini for attempting to bring the light of civilization into primitive Abyssinia, an opinion which prompted Rose Macaulay to label the book "a fascist tract."[3] He supported General Franco during the Spanish Civil War while most artists and intellectuals rallied to the side of the Loyalists. A resolute monarchist, Waugh claimed to have never voted in a parliamentary election because he would not presume to tell his king how to run the country.[4] Like his alter ego, Gilbert Pinfold, Waugh maintained "an idiosyncratic toryism which was quite unrepresented in the political parties of his time."[5]

Inevitably, Waugh was branded a snob, an epithet which he liked to encourage. "I think he is right in calling me a snob," he once said in reply to a critic; "that is I am happiest in the company of the European upper classes."[6] As an officer during World War II, Waugh apparently treated his troops with so much contempt that his superiors had

to make arrangements to protect him from his own men.[7] And after a number of critics panned Brideshead Revisited because of its idealized portrait of the English aristocracy, Waugh, with a characteristic lack of subtlety, chided them for "sucking up to the lower classes."[8]

Unfortunately, Waugh was not living in an age that would readily accept his intolerant attitude toward the lower classes. He was living in an age of rapid political change, marked by the rise of the political left and the subsequent breakdown of the English aristocracy, which, to Waugh, meant not the nouveau riche but the traditional, established aristocracy of lords, dukes, and earls.

Of course, England's political fabric had really begun to change toward the end of the nineteenth century. G. H. Bantock points to the third Reform Act of 1884 and the County Councils Act of 1888, along with the development of universal education and the rise of the grammar schools, as the main reason for the upward mobility of the lower classes.[9] But during the 1930's when Waugh wrote four of his novels, the movement against a structured class system gained tremendous momentum with the emergence and subsequent popularity of the left-wing political movements. Indeed, the 1930's are often called "the pink decade." Marx and Engels were in vogue and Russia's "classless" society was, for the moment at least, lauded as the New Civilization.[10]

"Socialism," wrote Arthur Koestler, "was the hope of the twentieth century."[11] "The twentieth century," proclaimed American Vice President Henry Wallace, "is the century of the Common Man."[12]

But Evelyn Waugh, in direct conflict, as he almost always was, with prevailing opinion, viewed the rise of the political left as a major factor in the disintegration of the modern world, and his novels reflect this view. Scoop, for example, is set in the fictitious African country of Ishmalia, where a civil war, between left and right wing forces, is in progress. When Ishmalia is taken over by communist forces, a sense of chaos and instability is immediate. A workers' manifesto is issued, replete with all of the ideological cliches: "development of mineral resources of the workers, by the workers, for the workers... Jackson to be speedily brought to trial...arraigned for high treason to the Revolution...Year One of the Soviet State of Ishmalia."[13] The capital city is re-named Marxville, the café becomes the Café Lenin. Red flags are distributed throughout the country and are greeted with excitement--but not because of any strong sense of Soviet loyalty. The flags, "ingeniously knotted or twisted... set a fashion in head dresses among the women of the market."[14] How does the hero of the book, William Boot, respond to

this sudden upheaval?

> 'Change and decay in all around I see,'
> he sang softly, almost unctuously. It
> was a favourite tune of his uncle Theodore.[15]

The political left also comes under attack for being the agent of the change and decay of civilization in Put Out More Flags. In this book Waugh describes a group of paranoid, fashionably left-wing young people, almost unable to communicate with each other because their ceaseless jargon about "the People's cause" stands in the way of genuine understanding. The rest of society, Waugh implies, is unable, or perhaps unwilling, to combat the destructive influences of the political left. When the hero of the book, Basil Seal, decides to expose these radical young people in the hope of securing his employment with the Ministry of Information, his superior nonchalantly explains:

> 'We aren't doing much about communists
> at the moment. The politicians are shy
> of them for some reason.'[16]

In Brideshead Revisited and the war trilogy, collectively entitled Sword of Honour, Waugh callously shows his contempt for the rise of the Common Man in the portraits of Hooper and Trimmer. He condemns Hooper, the young platoon commander of Brideshead Revisited, for his flat Midlands accent, his working-class background, and his

insufficient education. In school, Hooper learned nothing of real value, merely "a profusion of detail about humane legislation and recent industrial change."[17] In the figure of Trimmer in Sword of Honour, Waugh mocks the whole concept of World War II as a "people's war." Though he is actually weak and cowardly, Trimmer, a hairdresser on an ocean liner before being commissioned at the outbreak of the war, is made out to be "the people's hero" by army press agents who believe that a "people's hero" is necessary to boost civilian morale. But Waugh, with characteristic intolerance, makes clear his position that Trimmer, with his cockney accent and his complete unconcern about the corporate self-esteem of his regiment, had no business serving as an officer in the British army to begin with.

Waugh also describes in the war trilogy the military alliance England forms with Russia, and he clearly implies that the association destroys the principles his country is fighting for. A sword, England's gift to "the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad," is put on display at Westminister Abbey to commemorate the alliance. But significantly, the escutcheon of the sword has been put on upside down, a symbol of England's perverse relationship with the communists. Moreover, the members of England's Communist Party who appear as characters in the novel are

invariably depicted as representative of a corrupt and decadent political movement. Sir Ralph Brompton and Everand Spruce are homosexuals; Ludovic is obviously insane. The worst of them all, Gilpin, eventually becomes a Member of Parliament and an important under-secretary. And in the final volume of the trilogy, Unconditional Surrender, the sense of corruption and disintegration becomes all-embracing, as Waugh chronicles the sovietization of Yugoslavia, stressing the dishonour of his own country's participation in the formation of Tito's dictatorship.

Just as Waugh condemned the left-wing political movement, with its evangelical concern for the common man, for contributing to the decline and fall of civilization, he mourned the decline in the power of established English aristocrats, who, in his opinion, nature and tradition had deemed the rightful leaders of his country. In several novels, Waugh sadly and bitterly describes the steady decay of England's magnificent ancestral homes, vivid symbols of a crumbling social structure. The roof of Hetton Abbey, in A Handful of Dust, is beginning to leak, and the paint is beginning to peel. But Tony Last cannot afford repairs because of the exorbitant inheritance taxes he is paying.

Boot Magna Hall, in Scoop, is covered with dying ivy and surrounded by dying trees:

> Some were supported with trusses and crutches of iron, some were filled with cement; some, even now, in June, could show only a handful of green leaves at their extremities. Sap ran thin and slow; a gusty night always brought down a litter of dead timber.[18]

The richest member of the household is a bed-ridden servant, Nannie Bloggs, and she keeps her employers at her beck and call by secretly promising each one that he or she is her heir.

But even as he mourns the decline of the aristocracy, Waugh, paradoxically, makes them responsible, as much as he does those who champion the cause of the Common Man, for the disintegration of twentieth century society. While Waugh, the man, proudly admitted that he was a snob who preferred the company of the European upper classes, Waugh, the artist, was far more realistic. Perhaps he took special pleasure in satirizing those whose social and political affiliations defied his own. But his chief target is human weakness, and human weakness does not depend on class.

The vile bodies of Waugh's second novel are the sons and daughters of landed aristocrats, royalty, Prime Ministers. But if their breeding is superior to the

Trimmers and Hoopers of the world, their behavior is not. Full of the optimism of the roaring twenties, these "Bright Young People" have dedicated their lives solely to personal pleasure. Fast cars, casual sex, wild parties are the things for which they live. Waugh uses a montage technique in Vile Bodies which perfectly captures the vibrant and frenetic but socially meaningless activities of the Bright Young People. One scene takes place at a hotel bar where money in outrageous sums is borrowed and gambled; the next occurs at a race track where a drunk Agatha Runcible, behind the wheel of a Plunkett-Bowse, races to her death around and around a speedway; the next is set at a rowdy costume party at, of all places, No. 10, Downing Street. Certainly, there is something attractive about the carefree hedonism of these people, and Waugh does not attempt to hide it. But beneath this thin veil of insouciance lies a feeling that, however attractive the life style of the Bright Young People may appear, it is actually just another manifestation of the change and decay endemic to the Waugh world. The hero of the book, Adam Symes, seems somehow to sense this:

> 'Nina, do you ever get the feeling that
> things simply can't go on much longer?'
> 'What do you mean by things?'
> 'Everything.'[19]

And his premonition proves to be correct. Vile Bodies ends, surrealistically, amid a grotesquely terrifying world war on "the biggest battlefield in the history of the world,"[20] on the eve of the destruction of the entire world.

In other novels, as well, Waugh depicts the upper classes as the people most responsible for the change and decay of modern society. Margot Best-Chetwynde, in Decline and Fall, derives her substantial wealth from organized crime, specifically prostitution. Lady Julia Stitch, in Scoop, and later in the war trilogy, manipulates the puppet strings of the rich and influential, at the expense of justice, to help her many friends in need. Ivor Claire, in the war trilogy, deserts his troops at Crete and makes a cowardly, secret escape to Alexandria. Indeed, the sins of Waugh's "common men" seem petty in comparison to the corruption and degradation at the top of the social ladder.

Human weakness, at all social levels, then, is the principal cause in Waugh's books for the decline and fall of Western civilization. Another cause, closely related to the first, is the weakness of social institutions, especially the Church.

An Anglican by birth, Waugh became a Roman Catholic

in 1930, and his rigid devotion to his church was probably the single most important element in his life. The Church, he admitted to close friends, provided him with what stability and sense of purpose he had in his life. Christopher Sykes tells the story of the time Waugh met, at the home of Cyril Connolly, a drunk and rather obnoxious poet named Dylan Thomas. After Thomas had left, Waugh asked Connolly not to invite him to the house when the poet was there. Thomas upset him, he said, because: "He's exactly what I would have been if I had not become a Catholic."[21] The Earl of Birkenhead tells a similar story about an occasion during World War II, when fellow officer Randolph Churchill upbraided Waugh for his cruelty and for his vicious tongue. "But my dear Randolph," Waugh replied, "you have no idea what I should be like if I wasn't [a Catholic]."[22]

Just as his political philosophy was based on the stability of the past, Waugh's religious philosophy was based on the historical validity of Christianity. In Helena, a fictitious reconstruction of the life of St. Helena, culminating in her successful search for the cross upon which Christ was crucified, Waugh reveals the historical basis for his affiliation to the Church. Throughout the novel, Helena is surrounded by various religious teachers, but she is drawn to Christianity because only Christian

leaders can answer her persistent questions: When did it happen? Where did it happen? To secure absolute proof of the validity of Christianity, Helena sets out to find concrete evidence:

> 'Just at this moment when everyone is forgetting [the Cross] and chattering about hypostatic union, there's a solid chunk of wood waiting for them to have their silly heads knocked against. I'm going off to find it.'[23]

Guided by a Wandering Jew who appears to her in a dream, Helena finally unearths that solid chunk of wood, the true Cross which proves that Christianity is founded on definite historical evidence. The cross "states a fact;" it makes "one blunt assertion."[24] And it is this historical evidence, this "blunt assertion," which forms the cornerstone of Waugh's religious philosophy. As Christopher Sykes notes:

> There is no question, as there was in Brideshead Revisited of 'theological implication.' Helena contains a theological statement. Its message is this: that whereas other great religions refer their origins to strange cosmic confrontations, unidentifiable in space and time...the Christian religion...depended on historical facts...These facts were briefly that a man born in the time of Augustus, in the Eastern Mediterranean provinces, and after manifestations and utterances revealed him to those who knew him best as the Son of God, had been, during the reign of Tiberius Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato.[25]

Waugh was drawn away from the Church of England and to Catholicism, again because of the stronger historical tradition within the Church of Rome. He explains in an article included in John O'Brien's The Road to Damascus:

> England was Catholic for nine hundred years, then agnostic for a century. The Catholic structure still lies lightly buried beneath every phase of English life; history, topography, law, archaeology everywhere reveal Catholic origins.[26]

Waugh believed, then, that the Church should serve the same function in modern society that it did before Henry VIII began to liberalize religion with the founding of the Church of England in 1535. Any liberal trends within the church or new religious movements, Waugh scorned and ridiculed as further symptoms of a disintegrating world. Thus, in Decline and Fall he takes a shot at "a species of person called a 'Modern Churchman' who draws the full salary of a beneficed clergyman and need not commit himself to any religious belief."[27] And in Vile Bodies, he satirizes evangelism in the figure of Mrs. Melrose Ape, an obvious caricature of the famous American evangelist, Aimee Semple MacPherson.

In The Loved One, as well, Waugh associates the decay of the modern world with modern notions about the function of religion. In this book, inspired by his visit

to the famous California cemetery, Forest Lawn, Waugh satirizes the American funeral industry for trying to conceal the Christian meaning of death beneath a hideous veil of Hollywood glamour. Mr. Joyboy, the senior mortician at "Whispering Glades" (Waugh's fictional name for Forest Lawn), utilizes the latest cosmetic trends to beautify the corpses, and so give relatives and friends a pleasing final glimpse of their "loved one." Moreover, the church where funeral services are held, supposedly a replica of the Church of St. Peter-without-walls at Oxford, looks more like a stage set. A recorded message informs visitors.

> The church is a symbol of the soul of the Loved One who starts from here on the greatest success story of all time. The success that waits for all of us whatever the disappointments of our earthly lives.[28]

Christian notions of Heaven and Hell, salvation, the soul are forgotten or ignored, death becomes "the greatest success story of all time." The Loved One, as James Carens notes, "builds up a picture of an institution devoted to evading reality and to substituting decadent materialism for traditional moral concepts."[29]

But the Church is not the only institution in Waugh's books abandoning "traditional concepts." The British public school also shows symptoms of change and decay. The teachers at Llanabba Castle, in Decline and Fall,

are characterized by a distaste for teaching, a lack of concern for their students, and an incompetence in their subjects. Essay prizes are awarded for the longest essay, regardless of content. Sports events are rigged so the children of the rich and influential can win. "I wouldn't try to teach them anything," says the headmaster to new faculty members, "just keep them quiet."[30] Similarly, at Granchester in Scott-King's Modern Europe, the classics program is gradually being phased out. Explains the headmaster:

> Parents are not interested in producing the "complete man" any more. They want to qualify their boys for jobs in the modern world.[31]

In Black Mischief, Waugh again illustrates the poverty of modern ideas and institutions by describing the consequences of an attempt to impose these ideas onto a primitive African country. Oxford educated, the new Emperor of Azania is determined to bring his country into the twentieth century:

> 'I have been to Europe...Progress must prevail...I have read modern books--Shaw, Arlen, Priestly;... at my stirrups run woman's suffrage, vaccination and vivisection. I am the New Age.'[32]

But Seth's efforts are, to say the least, unsuccessful. He orders boots for his "modern" Azanian army but the

soldiers eat them. He attempts to encourage his people to practise birth control but the natives completely misunderstand the advertising slogans and posters which appear in the villages. Believing that birth control will, in fact, increase their virility, give them more children, and thereby earn them great respect, they march proudly throughout their villages bearing placards which read "Through Sterility to Culture."[33] The ultimate outcome of Seth's attempt to build a new and progressive society based on his experience in London is, appropriately enough, civil war--a final, ironic imitation of modern "civilized" society.

Indeed, war seems to be the inevitable end product of the disintegrating world Waugh creates. In ten out of the sixteen novels he wrote, war figures prominently. While Waugh may be, as Edmund Wilson claims, "the only first-rate comic genius that has appeared in England since Bernard Shaw,"[34] his vision of life in the twentieth century is not a comic one. Political forces are at work, throughout Waugh's novels, tearing apart the social system which, in the author's opinion, had served England well for centuries. The church, and other institutions are crumbling in the wake of modern, "progressive" trends. Waugh's ultimate view of modern

society, then, is, like Yeats' mere anarchy and Eliot's Wasteland, a despondent one: Change and decay in all around I see.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Evelyn Waugh, Scoop (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1972), p. 17.

[2]Evelyn Waugh, Robbery Under Law (London: Chapman and Hall, 1939), p. 83.

[3]Rose Macaulay, "The Best and the Worst, II. Evelyn Waugh," Horizon, December, 1949, p. 370.

[4]Frederick J. Stopp, Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 45.

[5]Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1957), p. 6.

[6]Sean O'Faolain, The Vanishing Hero (London: Eyre and Spotteswoode, 1956), p. 51.

[7]The Earl of Birkenhead, "Fiery Particles," Evelyn Waugh and His World, David Pryce-Jones, ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 51.

[8]Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh (London: William Collins and Sons Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 251.

[9]G. H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background," The Modern Age, Boris Ford, ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961), p. 28.

[10]Ibid., p. 33.

[11]Ibid., p. 31.

[12]Sykes, p. 251.

[13]Scoop, p. 165.

[14]Ibid., p. 169.

[15]Ibid., p. 166.

[16]Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p. 149.

[17]Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 15.

[18]Scoop, p. 17.

[19]Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1930), p. 192.

[20]Ibid., p. 220.

[21]Sykes, p. 190.

[22]The Earl of Birkenhead, p. 150.

[23]Evelyn Waugh, Helena (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 128.

[24]Ibid., p. 159.

[25]Sykes, p. 319.

[26]Evelyn Waugh, "Come Inside," The Road to Damascus, John A. O'Brien, ed., (London: W. H. Allen, 1949), p. 15.

[27]Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 141.

[28]Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), pp. 63-64.

[29]James Carens, The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 21.

[30]Decline and Fall, p. 36.

[31]Evelyn Waugh, Scott-King's Modern Europe (London: Chapman and Hall, 1947), p. 87.

[32]Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 17.

[33]Ibid., p. 190.

[34]Edmund Wilson, Classics and Commercials (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Co., 1950), p. 140.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WAUGH HERO: VICTIM AND VICTIMIZER

How does the individual survive in this Wasteland Waugh shows the modern world to be? Three of Waugh's heroes, Tony Last in A Handful of Dust, Charles Ryder in Brideshead Revisited, and Guy Crouchback in Sword of Honour refuse to accept the change and decay which surrounds them and make a concerted effort to find something which will allow them to counteract those destructive forces. They are Waugh's "tormented" heroes, and I will discuss them in detail in Chapter Three, Four, and Five respectively.

In this chapter I will examine Waugh's other heroes, who fall into two distinct groups. First are those heroes, Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes, William Boot, and Scott-King, who are the victims of their society, who accept without question the injustice and corruption to which they are subjected. The second group consists of two heroes, Basil Seal and Dennis Barlow. They are individuals who survive by exploiting and manipulating others,

by becoming not victims but victimizers.

Waugh's first hero, Paul Pennyfeather, is the archtypal hero as victim, a modern day Candide.[1] At the beginning of Decline and Fall he is de-panted by a group of rowdy and drunken undergraduates and is forced to "streak" across the quad to the safety of his room. While the vandals go unpunished, Paul is expelled from Oxford for "indecent ~~behavior~~ behaviour." As a result of this indecent ~~behavior~~ behaviour, he is forced to take a menial job, at a reduced salary, at a third-rate boys' school. Later, he is sent to jail for a crime he committed, unknowingly, for his fiancée, the rich and fashionable Margot Beste-Chetwynde. In the end, Paul, with Margot's help, fakes his own death and so escapes from prison. He returns, disguised, to Oxford (Margot has married someone else) to resume the studies he was engaged in at the beginning of the novel.

Like so many of Waugh's novels the plot of Decline and Fall is circular. The hero ends up exactly where he began. In between he has experienced the typical Waugh world of decadent aristocrats, crumbling institutions, rampant injustice--a world which the book's title aptly describes.

But Paul is never bothered by the injustice of which he is so often the victim. He passively accepts everything that happens to him as the normal course of events in a

world he does not understand. Indeed, he actually welcomes his prison sentence because, ironically, it "frees" him from the decisions and responsibilities of everyday life:

> It was so exhilarating, he found, never to have to make any decision on any subject, to be wholly relieved from the smallest consideration of time, meals or clothes, to have no anxiety whatever about the kind of impression he was making; in fact, to be free.[2]

If Paul learns anything from his experience it is, as Malcolm Bradbury says, "that it is better not to learn, better not to try to cope with life, for it is a very strange affair indeed."[3]

In his second novel, Vile Bodies, Waugh is concerned mainly with satirizing the Bright Young People, a group of upper class young adults, much like Hemingway's "lost generation," who are enjoying the freedom and the new morality of the "roaring 20's," at the expense of social responsibilities, family ties, and meaningful relationships. The hero of the book, Adam Fenwick-Symes, is more lightly drawn than any other Waugh hero. But in separating him from the rest of "those vile bodies," we soon realize that Adam is another of Waugh's victim-heroes.

When he first appears in the novel, Adam, returning to England after a stay in France, has his autobiography seized by custom officials:

> 'You can take these books on architecture and the dictionary, and I don't mind stretching a point for once and letting you have history books....But as for this autobiography, that's just downright dirt, and we burns that straight away, see.'[4]

Penniless, Adam is easy prey for his publisher who, like Paul's employer Dr. Fagan, takes advantage of Adam's desperate situation by offering him a contract (which Adam, of course, passively accepts), which promises to keep him poor the rest of his life:

> 'No royalty on the first two thousand, then a royalty of two and a half per cent, rising to five per cent on the tenth thousand. We retain serial, cinema, dramatic, American, Colonial and translation rights, of course. And, of course, an option on your next twelve books on the same terms.'[5]

Throughout the rest of the book Adam attempts to raise enough money, through begging, borrowing, and gambling, so he can marry his fiancée, Nina Blount. But caught as he is amid the mad swirl of Bright Young People, Adam, like Paul, is destined to be unsuccessful, the passive, innocent victim of a corrupt and chaotic world. The Waugh world victimizes Adam, for the last time, at the end of the novel when he finally finds the elusive Major who owes him thirty-five thousand pounds. Ironically, the pound is now worth "almost nothing."[6]

Like Paul and Adam, Basil Seal, in Black Mischief, is not disturbed by the change and decay of modern civil-

ization. Basil does, however, respond to this world entirely differently. Refusing to become a social victim, Basil, instead, becomes Waugh's first hero as victimizer. Basil is not adversely affected by the corruption endemic to the society in which he lives. He thrives in such a society because, like the Bright Young People, he is among the many agents promoting that corruption.

When he first appears in the novel, Basil is recovering from a four day drunk and is about to cash a bad cheque. Later he steals a precious jewel from his mother to finance his trip to Azania where, impressing his old Oxford chum, the Emperor Seth, who is trying to rebuild and modernize Azania along Western lines, Basil becomes Minister of Modernization. But the people of Azania, wisely, will have no part of the Waugh-Seth brand of Western progress. Civil war breaks out and Seth is killed. Basil arranges and partakes of a feast in Seth's honour only to discover when it is all over, that the main course was his mistress, Prudence, the daughter of the foolish and eccentric head of the British Legation in Azania, Sir Sampson Courteney. This act of cannibalism, while it shocked many readers and reviewers, is a gruesome but vivid symbol of the way in which Basil victimizes those people who are closest to him.

Basil is the typical picaresque hero, a rogue, certainly, but likeable in spite of his transgressions. Stephen Greenblatt describes him as both "innocent and corrupt."[7] Bradbury says he "lies somewhere between the reprobate gentleman hero...of the early part of the century and the lower-middle-class rebel hero of the nineteen-fifties."[8] A. A. DeVitis explains: "In presenting through Basil Seal the exuberant, impetuous activity of youth without direction, Waugh creates in effect the portrait of a bounder."[9]

William Cook argues that Basil Seal is actually the first of Waugh's heroes tormented by the hostility and emptiness of civilization and in search of meaning or identity. "Basil is not," says Cook, "like the earlier heroes impelled against his wishes into a hostile society, nor is he passively discontented with the condition of his surroundings; he is, rather, actively engaged in a search for something quite undefined even to himself."[10] But Cook, I think, misinterprets Basil's character. When Basil says he is fed up with London and English politics and wants to get away to Azania, he is not, as Cook asserts, yearning for spiritual values or a sense of identity. An inveterate nomad, Basil is really searching for a place where he can live in maximum comfort and do minimum work. One of Basil's

friends remarks, near the end of the book: "I've got a tiny fear that Basil is going to turn serious on us too,"[11] and Cook quotes the comment in support of his view that Basil "achieves some degree of moral awareness."[12] But "moral awareness" is something we simply do not associate Basil Seal with, any more than we would associate it with, say, a Duddy Kravits. Basil, at the end of the book has not turned serious; he has hardly changed at all. He admits that he still has no plans: "I might stay in London or Berlin or somewhere like that."[13]

Put Out More Flags provides further evidence of Basil's incorrigible nature. Indeed, in this book, Basil has an even better racket going than he did as Azania's Minister of Modernization. Helping his sister billet families who have been forced by the war to evacuate their homes, Basil is busy extorting money from his well-to-do neighbours by inflicting the insufferable Connolly children upon them and then forcing them to pay if they want the Connollys billeted elsewhere--as everybody does after the children have been in their homes longer than five minutes. If Basil's friend was worried, at the end of Black Mischief, that Basil was going to turn serious on her, those fears are quickly dispelled in Put Out More Flags:

> Four times in the last ten years Lady Seal had paid Basil's debts; once on condition of his living at home with her;

> anywhere, abroad; once on condition of his marrying; once on condition of refraining from his marriage. Twice he had been cut off with a penny; twice taken back to favor;...
>
> Basil had been leader writer on the Daily Beast, he had served in the personal entourage of Lord Monomark, he had sold champagne on commission, composed dialogue for the cinema and given the first of what was intended to be a series of talks for the B. B. C. Sinking lower in the social scale he had been press agent for a female contortionist and had once conducted a party of tourists to the Italian lakes...
>
> Basil was in the habit, as it were, of conducting his own campaigns, issuing his own ultimatums, disseminating his own propaganda, erecting about himself his own blackout; he was an obstreperous minority of one in a world of otiose civilians.[14]

Put Out More Flags also has a second hero, whose story is juxtaposed with Basil's, and who does, in a sense, foreshadow Waugh's tormented heroes. Although he, too, is isolated from the rest of society, Ambrose is, for the most part, different than the earlier Waugh heroes because he feels the full weight of an unjust society upon him. While Basil survives by becoming an agent of the unjust society and while Paul and Adam shrug-off or ignore the injustice which surrounds them, Ambrose Silk, Jewish, homosexual aesthete, roams the streets of London in an almost perpetual state of depression:

> Ambrose bade them goodbye and hurried away, with his absurd light step and his heavy heart.

> Two soldiers outside a public house made rude noises as he passed. 'I'll tell your sergeant-major of you,' he said gaily, almost gallantly, and flounced down the street. I should like to be one of them, he thought. I should like to go with them and drink beer and make rude noises at passing aesthetes. What does the world revolution hold in store for me? Will it make me nearer them? Shall I walk differently, speak differently, be less bored with Poppet Green and her friends? Here is the war offering a new deal for everyone; I alone bear the weight of my singularity.[15]

But, except for this common feeling of despair, Ambrose cannot really be likened to Tony Last, Charles Ryder, and Guy Crouchback. Ambrose is not, like the other three, a representative of the reasonably normal, sensitive individual, forced into isolation by a society bereft of moral and spiritual values. He is isolated because he is so radically different from the rest of society, and he is tormented not so much because of the nature of that society but because his "own singularity" prevents him from becoming a part of it. Moreover, Ambrose never has the opportunity to search for something better, as do Tony, Charles, and Guy. In order to advance his career with the Ministry of Information, Basil tricks Ambrose into writing a story which implies a sympathy with fascism. Exposed by Basil and about to be arrested, Ambrose, ironically enough with Basil's help, flees London, disguised as a priest, and heads for the safe shores of Ireland.

Between Black Mischief and Put Out More Flags, Waugh wrote Scoop, whose hero, William Boot, is a direct descendant of Waugh's first two heroes. Like Paul and Adam, William is the passive innocent victim of the change and decay of the modern world. At the beginning of the novel he lives in splendid isolation, in his crumbling family mansion, earning a meagre living by writing a maudlin newspaper column, "Lush Places," for Lord Copper's Daily Beast. But mistaken for his adventurous cousin, John, a successful novelist, William is sent to cover the civil war in Ishmalia, propelling him into the cutthroat world of modern journalism. That William is clearly an alien in this world is indicated by the series of hilarious cables he sends back to the paper:

> NO NEWS AT PRESENT THANKS WARNING ABOUT CABLING PRICES BUT IVE PLENTY MONEY LEFT AND ANYWAY WHEN I OFFERED TO PAY WIRELESS MAN SAID IT WAS ALL RIGHT PAID OTHER END RAINING HARD HOPE ALL WELL ENGLAND WILL CABLE AGAIN IF ANY NEWS.[16]

Through a series of accidents, William does uncover a genuine "scoop" about a communist takeover in Ishmalia:

> NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED EXCEPT TO THE PRESIDENT WHO HAS BEEN IMPRISONED IN HIS OWN PALACE BY REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA HEADED BY SUPERIOR BLACK CALLED BENITO AND RUSSIAN JEW WHO BANNISTER SAID IS UP TO NO GOOD THEY SAY HE IS DRUNK WHEN HIS CHILDREN TRY TO SEE HIM BUT GOVERNESS SAYS MOST UNUSUAL LOVELY SPRING WEATHER BUBONIC PLAGUE RAGING.[17]

William's success brings him lucrative job offers from London newspapers and prompts Lord Copper to arrange a special banquet in his honour. But William has had enough of the jungle of modern civilization. He refuses to attend the banquet (Uncle Theodore decides to take his place) and, at the earliest opportunity, he hurries back to the security of his former isolation at Boot Magna. Like Paul Pennyfeather, William learns that the best way to deal with the modern world is to stay away from it.

Scott-King, of Scott-King's Modern Europe, is another hero as victim, a man who prefers to deal with the change and decay of modern civilization simply by ignoring it. Like William Boot, Scott-King lives, isolated from the jungle of modern society, in his own secure and private world--not, in this case, in a decrepit family mansion, but at a private boys school, Granchester, where he teaches Classics. Unable to resist an invitation from the government of a fictitious European country to help honour an obscure Latin poet, about whom he has written an article, Scott-King suddenly finds himself propelled into one of Waugh's terrifying modern worlds, the dictatorship of Neutralia, a kind of European Ishmalia. Scott-King is soon anxious to return to the security of his school room but a sudden revolution puts him at the mercy of the

mindless bureaucrats who run Neutralia who prevent him from leaving. With the help of the Underground, however, he is able to make his way, disguised as an Ursuline Nun, to Palestine and, finally, home to England. Somewhat shaken by his experience Scott-King, at the end of the book, re-affirms his conviction that the only way man can deal with the modern world is to divorce himself from it. He decides, even, that this is the lesson he will try to teach his students. "I think it would be very wicked indeed," he tells his headmaster, "to do anything to fit a boy for the modern world."[18]

Dennis Barlow, in The Loved One, marks a return by Waugh to the Basil Seal type of rogue hero. Like Basil, Dennis is more a victimizer than a victim. But Dennis lacks the casual charm that makes Basil, in spite of everything, a likeable character. He seems to take special pleasure in being at the center of a society doomed to destruction.

After serving in the Royal Air Force, Dennis has come to Hollywood to write a screenplay on the life of Shelley, an endeavor he eventually abandons in favour of a job in a pet cemetery. When his landlord commits suicide, Dennis is forced to arrange a funeral at Whispering Glades, where he meets and falls in love with Aimee Thanatogenos, a cosmetician in the embalming room. Dennis has determined

competition from the chief embalmer, Mr. Joyboy, who tries to win Aimee's love by sending her radiantly smiling corpses. Not to be outdone, the unscrupulous Dennis sends Aimee love poems he claims to have authored himself, though they are actually the work of great Romantic poets. Unable to choose between the two, Aimee commits suicide in Mr. Joyboy's laboratory. Mr. Joyboy, afraid he will not be able to explain the extra corpse, tells Dennis he will finance his trip back to England if Dennis will dispose of the body at the pet cemetery where he works, a hideous proposal but one which Dennis readily accepts. As The Loved One closes, Dennis is actually congratulating himself for "adding his bit to the wreckage" which is modern civilization:

> On the last evening in Los Angeles Dennis knew he was a favourite of Fortune. Others, better men than he, had floundered here and perished. The strand was littered with their bones. He was leaving it not only unravished but enriched. He was adding his bit to the wreckage, something that had long irked him, his young heart, and was carrying back instead the artist's load, a great, shapeless chunk of experience; bearing it home to his ancient and comfortless shore; to work on it hard and long, for God knew how long. For that moment of vision a lifetime is too short.
>
> He picked up the novel...and settled back to await his loved one's final combustion.[19]

Waugh heroes,[20] then, tend to be, like Paul

Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes, William Boot, and Scott-King, the passive innocent victims of a decaying world; or, like Basil Seal and Dennis Barlow, they are victimizers--individuals who thrive in the world Waugh creates because of their penchant for exploiting and manipulating others. The victim-heroes learn nothing from their incredible experiences except, perhaps, the purely negative lesson that it is better not to learn, better to remain isolated and avoid all but the most superficial contact with the outside world. Of the four, three end up exactly where they were at the beginning of their stories, and one, Adam Symes, finds himself on a battlefield on the eve of destruction of the entire world. Similarly, the heroes who specialize in victimizing their fellows, feel no moral revulsion because of their actions and make no attempt to alter their ways. Dennis Barlow, awaiting his loved one's final combustion, does not dwell on the ethical implications of his responsibility in Aimee's suicide. He simply looks forward to returning to England with his "artist's load," the "great shapeless chunk of experience" he has acquired in California. Basil Seal, digesting the flesh of his mistress, chalks his ordeal in Azania up to experience and begins to look around for new adventure. Since you can't hope to change the world around you, Waugh seems to

tell his heroes, either contribute to its disintegration or stay away.

But to three of his heroes, Tony Last, Charles Ryder, and Guy Crouchback, Waugh offers a third, more positive choice: search for something better. A Handful of Dust, Brideshead Revisited, and Sword of Honour stand out from Waugh's other novels because, while the world described in them is still one of change and decay, the heroes' response to that world is quite different. Last, Ryder, and Crouchback are Waugh's tormented heroes. They refuse to remain passive and apathetic in the face of a disintegrating society. They are determined to find something--a sense of identity or spiritual fulfillment--which will allow them to survive.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Malcolm Bradbury, Evelyn Waugh (London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1964), p. 34.

[2]Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1971), p. 170.

[3]Bradbury, p. 34.

[4]Evelyn Waugh, Vile Bodies (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 25.

[5]Vile Bodies, p. 33.

[6]Ibid., p. 222.

[7]Stephen Greenblatt, Three Modern Satirists: Waugh, Orwell and Huxley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 19.

[8]Bradbury, p. 52.

[9]A. A. DeVitis, Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956), p. 29.

[10]William Cook, Masks, Modes, and Morals: The Art of Evelyn Waugh (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), p. 121.

[11]Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1971), p. 233.

[12]Cook, p. 122.

[13]Black Mischief, p. 232.

[14]Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), pp. 47-49.

[15]*Put Out More Flags*, p. 61.

[16]Evelyn Waugh, *Scoop* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1937), p. 121.

[17]*Scoop*, p. 146.

[18]Evelyn Waugh, *Scott-King's Modern Europe* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1947), p. 88.

[19]Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1972), p. 127.

[20]Not included in this chapter are the heroes of *Work Suspended*, *Helena*, and *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*. Because *Work Suspended* was never finished (Waugh abandonned the manuscript when World War II broke out), we, of course, cannot tell what John Plant's ultimate relationship to his society will be. *Helena* is a historical novel based on the life of St. Helena and, as such, cannot properly be compared to Waugh's other novels. *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* is autobiographical; Pinfold is a thinly disguised portrait of Waugh himself, and the hallucinogenic experience he describes--induced by drugs used to combat insomnia--are based on a genuine incident in Waugh's life.

CHAPTER THREE

TONY LAST. THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Like so many of Waugh's heroes, Tony Last is portrayed as the helpless individual trapped in a savage world. As Waugh admitted in an article he wrote for Life magazine:

> A Handful of Dust began at the end. I had written a short story about a man trapped in the jungle, ending his days reading Dickens aloud...Then, after this short story was written and published the idea kept working in my mind. I wanted to discover how the prisoner got there, and eventually the thing grew into a study of other sorts of savages at home and the civilized man's helpless plight among them.[1]

The chief representative of these "other...savages at home" is Mrs. Beaver--a woman who epitomizes the frivolity and greed endemic to the world of A Handful of Dust. The opening scene of the book tells us a lot about Mrs. Beaver's character:

> 'Was anyone hurt?'
>
> 'No one, I am thankful to say,' said Mrs. Beaver, 'except two housemaids who lost their heads and jumped through

> a glass roof into the paved court. They were in no danger. The fire never reached the bedrooms I am afraid. Still, they are bound to need doing up, everything black with smoke and drenched in water and luckily they had that old-fashioned sort of extinguisher that ruins everything. One really cannot complain. The chief rooms were completely gutted and everytning was insured. Sylvia Newport knows the people. I must get on to them this morning before that ghoul Mrs. Shutter snaps them up.'
>
> Mrs. Beaver stood with her back to the fire, eating her morning yoghourt. She held the carton close under her chin and gobbled with a spoon.
>
> (p. 7)[2]

A businesswoman who specializes in interior decoration, Mrs. Beaver thrives on housefires and other disasters because of the business they generate. The destruction of property, indeed the destruction of human life, is of secondary importance to her. She always hopes, of course, for complete devastation, but is satisfied so long as the chief rooms are "completely gutted." Waugh's description of her holding a carton of yogurt under her chin and "gobbling with a spoon" creates a perfect picture of Mrs. Beaver's greed and rapacity. She is clearly at home in the Waugh world of change and decay.

In addition to Mrs. Beaver, the world of A Handful of Dust is dominated again by the Bright Young People,

a little older than they were in Vile Bodies, but certainly no more responsible. On the fringe of the society of the Bright Young People, struggling hard to become an accepted member, is Mrs. Beaver's son, John"

> He was twenty-five years old. From leaving Oxford until the beginning of the slump he had worked in an advertising agency. Since then no one had been able to find anything for him to do. So he got up late and sat near his telephone most of the day, hoping to be rung up.
>
> (p. 8)

Most of John's invitations come at the last moment, when the Bright Young People need an extra male to balance one of their many parties.

The Bright Young People portrayed in A Handful of Dust--Polly Cockpurse, Jenny Abdul-Akbar, Jock Grant-Menzies, Mrs. Rattery--are, as usual, concerned about little more than money, social position, gossip and parties. Like the buildings Mrs. Beaver specializes in converting, they have, as Peter Firchow notes, "rotted down to mere facades":

> Or worse still have ceased to have any living connection with anything fixed and stable in their own pasts or in that of their culture. Mrs. Rattery and her airplane are only the most striking instances of this uprooted existence, where no one is attached to any place and, as the example of Polly Cockpurse proves, even the old marks of social

caste have become meaningless.[3]

To emphasize the essentially savage nature of London society, dominated as it is by the inane Bright Young People, Waugh draws an analogy between this jungle and the literal jungle of the Pie Wie country in the heart of South America, where Tony Last has gone on an exploring expedition. While the primitive Manchusis feast on roast pork and fermented cassava, the Bright Young People indulge themselves at one of their interminable parties. While the Manchusis leave their huts to hunt bush pigs, Jock Grant-Menzies, M. P. asks a question in the House of Commons:

> 'To ask the Minister of Agriculture whether in view of the dumping in this country of Japanese pork pies, the right honourable member is prepared to consider a modification of the eight-and-a-half score basic pig from two and a half inches of thickness round the belly as originally, specified, to two inches.'
>
> (p. 175)

Later, Brenda Last asks Jock if Tony will be safe living among the natives in the jungle of South America. Grant-Menzies replies, and Waugh's irony is obvious here:

> 'Oh, I imagine so. The whole world is civilized now, isn't it...?
>
> (p. 172)

At the beginning of A Handful of Dust Brenda and Tony Last live outside this circle of London "high" society in the rural isolation of the Lasts' ancestral home, Hetton Abbey. But the unexpected visit of John Beaver gives Brenda a brief glimpse of the primitive attractiveness of this society where only the superfluous matters. She drifts into an affair with John Beaver and soon becomes a regular at the lacklustre parties of Polly Cockpurse. Typically, "opinion was greatly in favour of Brenda's adventure"; far be it from London society to condemn adultery.

Brenda's reaction to the news that her son, John Andrew, has died, indicates how an association with the Bright Young People can pervert traditional human values and emotions. Initially, she thinks that her lover, John Beaver, is the one who has been killed:

> 'What is it, Jock? Tell me quickly, I'm scared. It's nothing awful, is it?'
>
> 'I'm afraid it is. There's been a very serious accident.'
>
> 'John?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'Dead?'
>
> He nodded.
>
> She sat down on a hard little Empire chair against the wall, perfectly still with her hands folded in her lap, like a small well-brought-up child introduced into a room full of grown-ups. She said, 'Tell me what happened. Why do you know about it first?'

> 'I've been down at Hetton since the week-end.'
>
> 'Hetton?'
>
> 'Don't you remember? John was going hunting to-day.'
>
> She frowned, not at once taking in what he was saying. 'John...John Andrew... I...oh, thank God...' Then she burst into tears.
>
> (p. 118)

Waugh prevents the scene from becoming overbearingly harsh by having Brenda, once she has realized her mistake, break down and cry. But her initial reaction, "Oh, thank God," suggests how far her new social circle has drawn her away from her proper role as wife and mother.

Brenda even attempts to draw Tony into London's social wasteland, by making an effort to interest him in other women. But Tony remains isolated from and confused by the people with whom his wife now associates:

> That evening Polly and Mrs. Beaver played backgammon. Brenda and Veronica sat together on the sofa sewing and talking about their needlework; occasionally there were bursts of general conversation between the women; they had the habit of lapsing into a jargon of their own which Tony did not understand; it was a thieve's slang, by which the syllables of each word were transposed. Tony sat just outside the circle reading under another lamp.
>
> (p. 80)

Like William Boot, safe and secure under the roof of Boot Magna Hall, until his newspaper sends him, by mistake, to Africa, Tony is perfectly content living in the Gothic home where his ancestors had lived. While the country Guide Book may claim that Hetton Abbey "is now devoid of interest" (p. 14), there is no part of the house, "no glazed brick or encaustic tile that was not dear to Tony's heart" (P. 14). He eagerly awaits the day when the death duties are paid off, giving him enough money to improve his home; he dreams of the day when present tastes and trends will change, reinstating Hetton in its proper place. Hetton Abbey represents to Tony, stability, the strength of the past, the integrity of marriage; it goes hand in hand with his responsibility to the tenantry, the village and the church. Visitors from the city, of course, see in Hetton little more than an archaic, rather ugly Gothic monolith. Typically, Mrs. Beaver is anxious to remodel some of the rooms with chromium plating. But for Tony, Hetton is, as Frederick Stopp notes, "something which one can love unreservedly with that trust which comes of an undisturbed belief in its stability."[4]

Unfortunately, Tony is, as his name implies, the "last" of an old, now rapidly disappearing order which places a high value on the integrity and stability of the

past which Hetton Abbey represents. Like all of Waugh's heroes he will be forced to come to terms with the change and decay of the modern world. The change and decay is symbolized, in A Handful of Dust, as it is in many of Waugh's books, by the gradual deterioration of the ancestral home:

> The ceiling [of Hetton Abbey]...was not in perfect repair. In order to make an appearance of coffered wood, moulded slats had been nailed in a chequer across the plaster...But damp had penetrated into one corner, leaving a large patch where the gilt had tarnished and the colour flaked away, in another place the wooden laths had become warped and separated from the plaster.
>
> (p. 15)

Tony hopes that, once he has paid all of his taxes, he will be able to restore Hetton to its former glory. But his dream is to prove futile. In another, more destructive way, the outside world is closing in upon him. After the Lasts' only son and heir is killed in a freak accident, while returning from a fox hunt, Brenda admits that she is in love with John Beaver and asks Tony for a divorce. Stunned though he is, Tony agrees, and even makes things as easy as possible for Brenda by taking a prostitute to a Brighton hotel, under the direction of his wife's private detectives. He also agrees to a settlement of five hundred pounds a year. But Beaver, coached no

doubt by his mother, demands two thousand a year. Brenda, in turn, demands that Tony sell Hetton Abbey so he can afford to pay the additional alimony.

As the victim of a similar kind of gross injustice, Paul Pennyfeather passively accepted a prison sentence, choosing to submit to an unfair world rather than stand up and fight. Similarly, William Boot accepted without question the Daily Beast's remarkable news that he was being sent on assignment to Africa. But Tony Last, exploited by people like the Beavers, cuckolded by his wife, threatened with the loss of his beloved Hetton Abbey, becomes the first Waugh hero to take decisive action against the world of change and decay:

> 'Brenda is not going to get her divorce. The evidence I provided at Brighton isn't worth anything. There happens to have been a child there all the time. She slept both nights in the room I am supposed to have occupied. If you care to bring the case I shall defend it and win, but I think when you have seen my evidence you will drop it. I am going away for six months or so. When I come back, if she wishes it, I shall divorce Brenda without settlements of any kind. Is that clear?'
>
> (pp. 151-52)

Tormented by the world in which he lives, Tony decides to go abroad for awhile to escape "the associations of Hetton [which] were for the time poisoned for him" (p. 157). By chance he meets Dr. Messenger, an explorer who is planning

an expedition to the heart of South America in search of a lost Peruvian city. Tony decides to accompany him on this expedition which he soon begins to visualize as a quest for a "transfigured Hetton":

> His mind was occupied with the City, the Shining, the Many Watered, the Bright Feathered, the Aromatic Jam. He had a clear picture of it in his mind. It was Gothic in character, all vanes and pinnacles, gargoyles, battlements, groining and tracery, pavilions and terraces, a transfigured Hetton.
>
> (p. 160)

Clearly, Tony is searching for an alternative to a disintegrating society, a Hetton Abbey transfigured in such a way that the forces of change and decay will be kept at bay permanently.

But his quest is to prove unsuccessful. Tony and Dr. Messenger become lost in the jungles of South America after they are abandoned by their native guides. Tony develops a serious fever and Messenger is drowned when his canoe tips over. Eventually Tony is found by a Mr. Todd, the son of an English missionary, and is brought back to health at the Pie Wie village over which Todd rules. It soon becomes apparent that the insane Mr. Todd is resolved to keep Tony a prisoner and to keep himself entertained by forcing Tony to read Dickens' novels to him, presumably until one of them dies.

The ending is unconventional even for one of Waugh's books. The hero is left reading novels to a madman. He has learned nothing from his experience, he has not changed or grown in any way. Back in England social values and ancestral homes continue to deteriorate. Inherited by Tony's cousins, Hetton Abbey is now run by a skeleton staff and more rooms including the dining hall and the library have been locked and shuttered. Brenda Last has married Jock Grant-Menzies. Ironically, Mrs. Beaver has convinced the new owners of Hetton to erect a monument to the memory of Tony Last:

> '...she said that as one of Tony's closest friends she knew he would wish to have some monument at Hetton. She was most considerate--even offering to arrange with contractors for it. Her own plans were more ambitious. She proposed that we should have the chapel redecorated as a chantry...'
>
> (p. 221)

A Handful of Dust, then, presents a pessimistic, almost hopeless view of the individual's plight in a savage world. Waugh's theme seems to be that the destructive forces endemic to London society are too powerful for anyone to counteract. For the first time in a Waugh novel the hero has actually tried to fight against the Wasteland which surrounds him, only to learn, after suffering even more than Paul Pennyfeather and William Boot, who passively accept their world for what

it is, that to search for order and meaning--"a transfigured Hetton"--is a hopeless endeavor.

But Waugh, I think, presents a more significant, religious theme in A Handful of Dust. Tony's quest is unsuccessful not because it is impossible to find something stable in an unstable world, but because it is misdirected. Instead of searching, in the jungles of South America, for a "transfigured Hetton", Tony should have sought the road which would lead him to the church, specifically to the Roman Catholic Church.

Tony regards churchgoing not as an act of piety but merely as a pleasant weekly ritual:

> Tony invariably wore a dark suit on Sundays and a stiff white collar. He went to church, where he sat in a large pitch-pine pew, put in by his great-grandfather at the time of rebuilding the house, furnished with very high crimson hassocks and a fireplace complete with iron grate and a little poker which his father used to rattle when any point in the sermon excited his disapproval...
>
> When service was over he stood for a few minutes at the porch chatting affably with the vicar's sister and the people from the village. Then he returned home across the fields which led to a side door in the walled garden; he visited the hothouses and picked himself a buttonhole, stopped by the gardener's cottage for a few words...and then, rather solemnly, drank a glass of sherry in the library. That was the simple, mildly ceremonious order of

> his Sunday morning, which had evolved, more or less spontaneously, from the more severe practices of his parents; he adhered to it with great satisfaction.
>
> (p. 30)

He enjoys his Sunday routine, but he is apathetic about the real purpose behind religion. Near the end of the novel, Mr. Todd asks Tony if he believes in God, and Tony replies. "I suppose so. I've never really thought about it much." (p. 208).

Through his use of Christian imagery and symbolism, Waugh implies that Tony's quest for some meaning and stability in life, which Hetton Abbey can no longer provide, can only be found by embracing Roman Catholicism. En route to South America, Tony meets a young Trinidadian girl, Thérèse de Vitré, and becomes involved in what, superficially, appears to be little more than a brief shipboard romance. But, significantly, Thérèse is a Roman Catholic. In his interesting article on A Handful of Dust, Richard Wasson suggests that the name, "de Vitré," means life;[7] that Thérèse offers Tony life but he rejects it, or at least fails to recognize the potential of embracing Catholicism, in favour of his romantic vision of a transfigured Hetton. This spiritual rebirth which Tony rejects, Wasson continues, is symbolized by the stuffed fish which he and Thérèse purchased while in Barbados. "The fish, of course, is

a Christian symbol associated with the rebirth of life..."[8] Later, however, the fish is somehow lost just as Tony's hopes for rebirth are lost by his failure to recognize that the salvation he quests for should be of a religious, not a romantic, nature. "Tony's journey," Wasson concludes, "is to Camelot, not Rome."[9]

Waugh makes this religious theme of A Handful of Dust more evident by drawing clear parallels between his novel and T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." "The Waste Land" expresses the need for some sort of spiritual reawakening to revitalize a stunned post-war society, and Waugh, I think, uses much of the imagery and symbolism Eliot used in his poem because he wished to express, in A Handful of Dust, a similar theme. The title of the novel comes from a passage in "The Waste Land" which captures, with its vivid images of sterility and decay, the nature of the society Waugh has created:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water...
>
> ...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.[10]

Moreover, the frequent appearance of cards and fortune

telling in A Handful of Dust--Brenda has her foot read by a Mrs. Northcote, Beaver tells Brenda's fortune with a pack of cards, Mrs. Rattery is forever setting out involved games of solitaire--are reminiscent of Eliot's "famous clairvoyant," Madame Sosostris, with her "wicked pack" of Tarot cards. "Fear death by water" Madame Sosostris warns, a fate which befalls the Phoenician Sailor of "The Waste Land" and Waugh's Dr. Messenger.

But the most significant parallel between the two works is the common quest motif. The archetypal quest myth, according to Jessie Weston, on whose book, From Ritual to Romance, Eliot based much of his poem, is the story of the Fisher King, whose death, illness, or impotence brought sterility and desolation to the land. The land can be revitalized only when a "questing knight" arrives and asks certain ritual questions about the Grail and the Lance, ancient fertility symbols representing female and male respectively. After these questions are asked, the king is revived and the land becomes fertile once again.

The questing knight of "The Waste Land" fails to restore or revitalize himself and his society. At the end of the poem the land remains arid and the social fabric, represented by London Bridge, continues to crumble:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me.

> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
> London Bridge is falling down, falling down...
>
> (ll. 424-26)

The quest fails because the "hero" of the poem, the poet-prophet, never realizes that his quest should be a spiritual one. Eliot paraphrases St. Luke as evidence that his hero's failure is due to his inability to recognize Christ, risen from the dead:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> --But who is that on the other side of you?
>
> (ll. 359-65)

Tony Last, similarly, "supposes" he believes in God but admits that he has never really thought much about it. Like that of the poet-prophet of "The Waste Land," his quest for a new way of life, "a transfigured Hetton," fails because he does not realize that this quest must be a spiritual one. The failure is indicated in the final scene of the novel, discussed earlier, which shows clearly that no revitalization or restoration has taken place back home, that the change and decay, fathered by Mrs. Beaver and the Bright Young People, symbolized by the deterioration of Hetton Abbey, is continuing.

Tony Last is the first of Waugh's tormented heroes. Unlike Paul Pennyfeather, or Adam Symes or William Boot, he refuses to succumb to the corruption and chaos within his society. Tormented by the Wasteland which surrounds him, Tony searches for something better. But because his search is misdirected he ends up where he began: a prisoner in a world ruled by madness. It will be left for Charles Ryder, in Brideshead Revisited, to travel what for Waugh was the only true road to salvation, the road which leads to Rome.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Evelyn Waugh, "Fan Fare", Life (April 8, 1946), p. 60.

[2]Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p. 7. All quotations are taken from this edition.

[3]Peter Firchow, "In Search of A Handful of Dust: The Literary Background of Waugh's Novel," Journal of Modern Literature III, p. 408-9.

[4]Frederick Stopp, Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 92.

[5]Evelyn Waugh, A Little Learning (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973), p. 219.

[6]Evelyn Waugh, "Come Inside," The Road to Damascus, John A. O'Brien, ed. (London: W. H. Allen, 1949), p. 15.

[7]Richard Wasson, "A Handful of Dust: Critique of Victorianism," Modern Fiction Studies 7(Winter, 1961-62): 334.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 336.

[10]T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," Collected Poems 1909-1962 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1963), p. 51. All quotations taken from this edition.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARLES RYDER: HOPE THROUGH ACCEPTANCE

Critics tend to view Brideshead Revisited as Waugh's iconoclastic novel. While he admits that the book is similar artistically and thematically to the previous works, William Cook argues that Brideshead Revisited "is remarkably different from the earlier novels:"

> The three most commonly noted are the first-person narration, the "romantic" tone, and the pronounced Catholic theme. Here the devices employed in the previous satirical novels are combined in such a way as to produce an effect quite different from the earlier novels which were formulated out of a satiric-ironic view of modernity.[1]

Similarly, Frederick Karl notes:

> The change is apparent in Brideshead Revisited from the second word, "I." There are intermittent passages, particularly at the beginning, reminiscent of the former Waugh, but here, whether his power has weakened or his intention simply changed, irony is lost.[2]

And James Carens echoes these opinions in his book on Waugh:

> Though something of the old, hard brilliance remains, there is a new tone of lush nostalgia

> in this work, the first of Waugh's novels in which his Roman Catholicism is pervasive.[3]

Indeed, Waugh himself came to recognize and to dislike the tone of lush nostalgia in Brideshead Revisited. He explains in a preface to a revised edition of the novel:

> It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster--the period of soya beans and basic English--and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful.[4]

Certainly in terms of style and thematic emphasis, Brideshead Revisited is unique in Waugh's canon. But his essential theme remains unchanged. Like all of Waugh's novels, Brideshead Revisited concerns the plight of the individual in a barbaric world.

One of the main representatives of the barbarism of the modern world is Hooper, the young platoon commander under the hero and narrator of the story, Captain Charles Ryder. Hooper is a product of the state school system so, of course, he has learned nothing of real value, merely "a profusion of detail about humane legislation and recent industrial change" (p. 15). He has lost the ability to communicate, answering questions from his Commanding

Officer with "rightyoh" and "okeydoke." A man with a flat, midlands accent and a working class background, but one who has, nevertheless, become an officer in the British army, Hooper also represents what Waugh hated most about the modern world: the breakdown of the class system. Indeed, Hooper is a personification of the modern era. The narrator of the story even refers to the age in which he is living as "the age of Hooper" (p. 331).

Another representative of the decline and fall of civilization is Rex Mottram, a kind of superstar among the Bright Young People. Politician, gambler, social climber, Rex is the archtype of the young man "on the make." He plays golf with the Prince of Wales, courts only the most fashionable women and is "on easy terms with 'Max'* and 'F. E.'** and 'Gertie' Lawrence"*** (p. 107), though he has no understanding or appreciation of the arts. Rex disdains Oxford because: "It just means you start life three years behind the other fellow" (p. 108). When he decides to marry, he looks not for love but for the girl who will increase his own prestige:

> He wanted to consolidate his gains; to strike the black ensign, to ashore, hang the cutlass up over the chimney, and think about the crops. It was time he married...He knew of Julia; she was by all accounts top debutante, a suitable prize.
>
> (p. 178)

*William Maxwell Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook: English newspaper publisher

**Frederick Edwin Smith, The Earl of Birkenhead: English statesman

***Gertrude Lawrence: English actress

When Rex eventually wins Julia, he decides to become a Catholic so that their marriage ceremony can be the ostentatious affair which he feels a man in his position requires:

> 'That's one thing your Church can do', he said, 'put on a good show. You never saw anything to equal the cardinals. How many do you have in England?'
> 'Only one, darling.'
> 'Only one? Can we hire some other from abroad?'
> It was then explained to him that a mixed marriage was a very unostentatious affair.
> 'How do you mean "mixed?"' I'm not a nigger or anything.'
> 'No, darling, between a Catholic and a Protestant.'
> 'Oh, that?' 'Well, if that's all, it's soon unmixed. I'll become a Catholic. What does one have to do?'
>
> (p. 184)

The prospect of a man like Rex Mottram converting to Catholicism is the most ideal satiric target for Waugh, and he exploits it to the full. In one of the novel's funniest scenes, the priest who is instructing Rex describes to Lady Marchmain the considerable challenge he is facing:

> 'The first day I wanted to find out what sort of religious life he had up till now, so I asked him what he meant by prayer. He said: "I don't mean anything. You tell me." I tried to, in a few words, and he said: "Right, so much for prayer. What's the next thing?" I gave him the catechism to take away. Yesterday I asked him whether Our Lord had more than one nature. He said: "Just as many as you say, Father."
> 'Then again I asked him: "Supposing the

> Pope looked up and saw a cloud and said 'It's going to rain,' would that be bound to happen?" He thought a moment and said, "I suppose it would be sort of raining spiritually, only we were too sinful to see it."
>
> (p. 185)

Like Hooper, Rex has no allegiance to the past. Indeed, he is twice damned because he bears the unfortunate burden of being a Canadian and therefore, Waugh implies, he has no past; he can make no claim to the thousands of years of social history and tradition which make England great. Ironically, by the end of the novel, Rex has achieved considerable distinction by becoming a respected war-time Cabinet Minister. By giving Rex this success, Waugh delivers one of his strongest indictments against the modern world. The social fabric is indeed collapsing when a colonial wheeler-dealer like Rex Mottram can rise to become a minister in His Majesty's Cabinet.

This breakdown in the social order is also symbolized, as it is in many of Waugh's novels, by the decline of the English country mansion. Brideshead Castle is described almost reverently throughout the book. For Charles Ryder it was "an aesthetic education to live within those walls, to wander from room to room, from the Soanesque library to the Chinese drawing-room, adazzle with gilt pagodas and nodding mandarins, painted paper and Chippendale fretwork,

from the Pompeian parlour to the great tapestry-hung hall which stood unchanged, as it had been designed two hundred and fifty years before" (p. 78). But by the end of the novel that change has arrived, and Brideshead Castle, once a symbol of tradition and permanence, is well into its decline. It has been expropriated by the army and is now treated as a common barrack or hut; it has become another victim of "the age of Hooper".

> The builders did not know the uses to which their work would descend; they made a new house with the stones of the old castle; year by year, generation after generation, they enriched and extended it; year by year the great harvest of timber in the park grew to ripeness; until, in sudden frost came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing, Quamodo sedet sola civitas. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.
>
> (pp. 330-31)

This change and decay of Brideshead Castle might also suggest another of Waugh's favourite themes, the decline of the Church. As at least two critics have pointed out,[5] the Church is referred to, on several occasions, in the Old Testament, as the "Bride of Christ"--in other words as the Bride of the Head of the Church. Brideshead Castle, then, represents the Church and its decline symbolizes not only the collapse of the social order and the modern disregard for tradition, but also the decline in the role

which religion and faith play in contemporary society.

Like all of Waugh's novels, Brideshead Revisited presents a picture of a world floundering helplessly at the approach of a moral and spiritual wasteland. Again, like all of Waugh's novels, Brideshead Revisited is primarily concerned with the individual's response to this savage world.

In Chapter Three we saw that Tony Last, in A Handful of Dust, in contrast with Waugh's earlier heroes, is tormented by the nature of the world in which he lives and attempts to find something better--a "transfigured Hetton." But because his quest was not a spiritual one, Tony fails, ending up just as he was at the beginning of the novel--a prisoner in a world ruled by madness.

Charles Ryder is the second of Waugh's heroes tormented by the corruption in the world around him. But unlike Tony Last, Charles chooses what for Waugh was the only really effective way of coming to terms with the modern world; he becomes a Roman Catholic. The process of his conversion is never described, but we are not surprised to learn, in the epilogue, that Ryder has become a Catholic. For in the course of the novel, he plays an important role

in the lives of three lapsed Catholics, who ultimately feel compelled to return to the Church.

The first is Sebastian Flyte whom Ryder meets during his first year at Oxford. Sebastian's "flight" is away from the discipline and ~~rigors~~ vigours of Catholicism and towards the arcadian world of childhood innocence, symbolized by the teddy bear which he pampers like a spoiled child. "Sebastian is in love with his own childhood," says Cara, the mistress of Sebastian's father, "his teddy-bear, his nanny...and he is nineteen years old" (p. 100). But Arcadia is, by definition, transitory. In their second year at Oxford Charles and Sebastian are forced to settle down or risk expulsion. While Charles manages to adjust to the routine of university life, Sebastian does not:

> With Sebastian it was different. His year of anarchy had filled a deep, interior need of his, the escape from reality, and as he found himself increasingly hemmed in, where he once felt himself free, he became at times listless and morose, even with me.
>
> (p. 103)

To "escape from reality," now, Sebastian turns more and more to alcohol.

Like Graham Greene's whiskey priest, Sebastian is escaping from the reality of the Church and the demands it

makes on him. "It's very difficult being a Catholic" (p. 83), Sebastian tells his friend, "I wish I liked Catholics more" (p. 87). The demands which the Church makes on its members are personified in Sebastian's mother, Lady Marchmain, an unyielding Catholic who insists that her family be as fervent as she is in their allegiance to the Church. Cordelia, Sebastian's young sister, explains to Charles:

> '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. When they want to hate him and his saints they have to find something like themselves and pretend it's God that they hate...It seems to explain poor mummy.'
>
> (p. 213)

Sebastian's heaviest drinking bouts coincide with visits to his family, especially his mother. Whenever he leaves Brideshead, a surrogate for the Church, his mood lightens:

> The further we drove from Brideshead, the more he seemed to cast off his uneasiness--the almost furtive restlessness and irritability that had possessed him.
>
> (p. 41)

Sebastian's ultimate re-acceptance of faith seems to be a curious victory for Catholicism. After wandering all over Europe and Africa, settling for short periods in various places, Sebastian, by now a confirmed alcoholic, is discovered,

destitute and starving, outside a monastery near Carthage. He is taken in as "a sort of underporter" and, presumably, he is to spend the rest of his life as one of "a few odd hangers-on in a religious house" (p. 293). It is Cordelia, Sebastian's sister, who explains to Charles that, even though his friend's life seems to be irrevocably ruined he has, in fact, come back to the Church, and is now "very near and dear to God" (p. 293).

In spite of this new close relationship with God, Sebastian's life has not been one which anyone, especially Charles Ryder, would wish to emulate. But while it does not directly lead to Charles's conversion, Cordelia's story of Sebastian's return to the Church does cause him to pause and consider the direction his own life is taking.

While Sebastian was stumbling across Europe and Africa, Charles has been abroad in search "of something I had known in the drawing-room of Marchmain House and once or twice since, the intensity and singleness and the belief that it was not all done by hand--in a word, the inspiration" (p. 216). He does come to recognize something that Waugh made clear in A Handful of Dust: that the literal jungle of Latin America is not much different from the moral and spiritual jungle of England:

'There's a lot of work waiting for you.

> I promised Lady Anchorage you would do
> Anchorage House as soon as you got back.
> That's coming down, too, you know--
> shops underneath and two-roomed flats
> above. You don't think, do you, Charles,
> that all this exotic work you've been
> doing is going to spoil you for that
> sort of thing?'
> 'Why should it?'
> 'Well it's so different. Don't be cross.'
> 'It's just another jungle closing in.'
>
> (p. 221)

But, like Tony Last, he does not find salvation outside of his society:

> But despite this isolation and this
> long sojourn in a strange world, I remained
> unchanged, still a small part of myself
> pretending to be whole.
>
> (p. 218)

The failure of his quest is indicated by his paintings. While the critics rave about the new direction Charles's art has taken and proclaim, ironically, that he "has at last found himself" (p. 260), Anthony Blanche, the only person Charles really trusts when it comes to appraising his art, immediately sees the truth. The paintings, he notices, are essentially unchanged from his earlier work. They are "charm again, my dear, simple creamy English charm, playing tigers" (p. 260).

After hearing Cordelia's account of Sebastian, Charles lies awake turning over in his mind the things she has told

him. He suddenly realizes that, like a horse which refuses a jump, he has refused even to contemplate the possibility of salvation through faith. This, in turn, leads to the realization that he is in danger of alienating himself further and further from the rest of the world. Waugh uses a vivid image of a trapper in an arctic hut to describe Charles's alienation:

> And another image came to me, of an arctic hut and a trapper alone with his furs and oil lamp and log fire; everything dry and shipshape and warm inside, and outside the last blizzard of winter raging and the snow piling up against the door.
>
> (p. 295)

Charles's increasing concern about cutting himself off from the rest of the world is a first step towards his acceptance of Catholicism.

Lord Marchmain's death-bed repentance and re-acceptance of the Faith lead to Charles's second step along the road to the Church. Lord Marchmain had originally converted to Catholicism so he could marry, but after fifteen years with the tyrranical Lady Marchmain, he has emigrated to Venice where he lives "in most conventional Edwardian style" with his mistress, "a personable, middle-aged lady of the theatre" (p. 56). After his wife's death, and in anticipation of his own, Lord Marchmain returns to Brideshead. He adamantly

ignores the priest his eldest son brings to visit, until, on his deathbed, he finally accepts absolution and makes the sign of the cross.

Lord Marchmain's final act of repentance may be somethat difficult to accept, given his earlier hatred for his wife and her religion--a hatred which was manifested by his eager willingness to allow his daughter to get married in a protestant ceremony. Some critics have ridiculed the episode for its lack of verisimilitude and obvious didacticism, some have praised its moving beauty. Paul Doyle has even pointed out that Lord Marchmain's death-bed repentance is almost identical to the real-life final conversion of Oscar Wilde.[6] Whether or not the scene works artistically is something which we must decide individually. More important here is the effect the incident has on the hero of the novel. As Charles stands by Lord Marchmain's bed, watching the priest perform extreme unction, he suddenly finds himself praying for the sign which the priest is trying to draw from the dying man. Lord Marchmain makes the sign of the cross and Charles has his first lesson in the efficacy of prayer:

> Then I knew that the sign I had asked
> for was not a little thing, not a passing
> nod of recognition, and a phrase came
> back to me from my childhood of the veil
> of the temple being rent from top to bottom.
>
> (p. 322)

Sebastian's return to the Church had led to contemplation, Lord Marchmain's has led to prayer. This is the second step toward Charles's ultimate acceptance of Catholicism.

Julia's "flight" from the Church and her eventual return provide Charles with a final example of achieving personal fulfillment through the acceptance of faith. When Julia married Rex Mottram in a protestant ceremony she had denied her allegiance to Rome. Yet her religion is something she can never get completely out of her mind; "It becomes part of oneself" (p. 247), she admits to Charles. She had wanted, even, to bring her child up a Catholic; "That's one thing I can give her" (p. 247). But her child is born dead, a symbol of her sinful marriage.[7]

Charles first meets Julia early in the novel when he visits Sebastian at Brideshead. While impressed by Julia's "quattrocento beauty," Charles is too involved in his friendship with Sebastian to pay her much attention. Some years later they meet again on board the ship returning to London from New York, and gradually they fall in love. Lord Marchmain eventually wills Brideshead Castle to them, foreshadowing a happy, if predictable denouement. But in the eyes of the Church of Rome (and therefore in the eyes of Waugh) their relationship is sinful.

Julia seems innocent of the sinful nature of her relation-

ship with Charles until confronted by her brother who arrogantly refuses to bring his fiancée to his home as long as Charles and Julia are under the same roof "living in sin" (p. 272). Although Julia has always seen Brideshead for the "pompous ass" (p. 272) he is, the remark upsets her; indeed, it leads her to sermonize, at some length, on the significance of her "sin":

> 'A word from so long ago, from Nanny Hawkins stitching by the hearth and the nightlight burning before the Sacred Heart... Mummy carrying my sin with her to church... mummy dying with my sin eating at her...Christ dying with it, nailed hand and foot.
>
> (p. 274)

In the preface to the revised edition of Brideshead Revisited Waugh apologized for the lack of realism in Julia's outburst, explaining that it was "essentially of the mood of writing" (p.8). For all its faults, the speech does serve to signal the reawakening of Julia's latent loyalty to her religion.

After the speech, it comes as no surprise that, with Cordelia and Bridey away in London, Julia is the one who sends for the priest to give Lord Marchmain final absolution. Like her brother and her father she has wandered "to the ends of the world" but is finally brought back to the Church "with a twitch upon the thread" (p. 212). It is now inevitable that she terminate her relationship with Charles:

> 'Just go on--alone.' How can I tell what I shall do? You know the whole of me. You know I'm not one for a life of mourning. I've always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am, the more I need God. I can't shut myself out from his mercy.
>
> (p. 324)

Charles, in turn, takes the final step toward his own conversion. He admits he understands what Julia has just told him: that God is merciful and that his Grace cannot be denied; that there is, indeed, a divine purpose in a pagan world. Just as Sebastian was a forerunner to Julia for Charles's love, so Julia is a forerunner in Charles's movement toward a love of God. "The avalanche was down", he says at the end of his narrative, completing the metaphor he began after he heard from Cordelia of Sebastian's return to the Church, "the hillside swept bare behind it; the last echoes died on the white slopes; the new mound glittered in the silent valley" (p. 324). The tone here, appropriately, suggests renewal. The avalanche has swept away the isolated trapper, encased in an arctic hut, and has left behind a "new mound" glittering in a "silent valley."

As his final act in the novel, Charles walks to the chapel attached to Brideshead Castle, where he says a prayer, for him "an ancient newly-learned form of words" (p. 330). There he notices a small copper lamp which still burns at

the altar. He sees the lamp as a symbol of the continuity of faith, the permanence of the Catholic Church in an essentially barbarian world:

> 'Something quite remote from anything the builders intended, has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played, something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame--a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre, or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones.'
>
> (p. 331)

He returns to his quarters, looking, in the words of his second-in-command, "unusually cheerful" (p. 331).

Yet "cheerful" is not an adjective we associate easily with Charles Ryder. In the prologue and epilogue of Brideshead Revisited, set after his conversion, Charles is basically the same person he was throughout the novel, before he embraced Catholicism. He remains isolated from the rest of society; he still seems like a man, perpetually depressed. Even in the final pages of the book he is telling Hooper: "I'm homeless, childless, middle-aged, loveless" (p. 330).

Throughout much of Brideshead Revisited and some of A Handful of Dust, Waugh has implied that the tormented hero's quest for meaning and stability in a frenetic and unstable world, must be a religious one. But even after he becomes a Catholic, Charles Ryder seems unable to cope with the "age of Hooper." This, I think, shows Waugh the artist prevailing over Waugh the moralist. Had he shown Charles, at the end of the novel, as a secure, well-adjusted individual Brideshead Revisited would have run the risk of becoming too didactic or apologetic. But, as James Carens points out:

> ...if by "apologetic" novel we mean one that crudely or even subtly simplifies experience and glosses over certain of life's complexities so as to flatter a fixed system of belief, then again Brideshead cannot be classified as such a work...Indeed, the author gives us no reason to believe that he is making a case for his Catholics qua Catholics, for the lives of the Marchmains and of Charles Ryder are not pretty ones, and their Catholicism is no easy consolation.[8]

The tormented hero, then, will not discover, through the acceptance of Roman Catholicism, an easy panacea for the sickness of the modern world. He will discover, as Charles Ryder does, hope, in the realization that something permanent does exist within a world of change and decay. This permanence is symbolized by the "small red flame" which continues to burn at the altar of the chapel at Brideshead Castle, while everything around it falls apart. But hope alone

is not sufficient; something else is needed. Waugh's last hero, Guy Crouchback, will show us what that something is.

FOOTNOTES

[1]William J. Cook, Jr., Masks, Modes, and Morale: The Art of Evelyn Waugh (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), p. 195.

[2]Frederick Karl, The Contemporary English Novel (Toronto: Ambassador Books, Ltd., 1962), p. 173.

[3]James F. Carens, The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 98.

[4]Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 7. All quotations are taken from this edition.

[5]Rodney Delasanta, "Truth and Beauty in Brideshead Revisited" Modern Fiction Studies 2(Summer, 1965), p. 143.

[6]Paul Doyle, "Waugh's Brideshead Revisited," The Explicator, 7 (March, 1966), p. 2.

[7]Delasanta, p. 143.

[8]Carens, p. 101.

CHAPTER FIVE

GUY CROUCHBACK: THE PRIVATE CAUSE OF THE SOUL

Waugh's war trilogy, collectively entitled Sword of Honour, begins at the outbreak of World War II and ends, not including the epilogue which is set in 1951, with the Partisan victory in Yugoslavia, in the winter of 1944. The war setting provides a natural metaphor for the Waugh world, ripe with corruption and chaos, on the brink of total destruction. To detail the collapse Waugh returns once again to his favourite themes. The decline in the class system comes under attack again in Sword of Honour as does the decline in the influence of the Church. The pretensions of Communism and life in the English Armed Forces touched on in Put Out More Flags and Scoop, are fully developed in Waugh's magnum opus.

The army which Waugh describes in Sword of Honour is an institution typical of the Waugh world. Confusion and inefficiency are the norm. With every operation the army mounts come orders and counter-orders, long delays, interminable chaos. Troops arriving at new posts are never expected, transportation is never supplied, accommodation

is never adequate. At the beginning of the second volume of the trilogy, Officers and Gentlemen, the hero, Guy Crouchback, reports to Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters for orders about his new posting. He is told to report to the Isle of Mugg for "special duties," though no one seems to know exactly what his special duties are to be. When he finally arrives at Mugg he finds that he is completely unexpected and not entirely welcome. "This was the classic pattern of army life," he thinks, "the vacuum, the spasm, the barely human geniality." (p. 46)[1]

This inefficiency among army administrators is matched only by their apathy. Guy learns early in Men at Arms, the first volume of the trilogy, that his fellow officers are not concerned about whether or not the cause for which they are fighting is a just one. They do not share, for example, Guy's indignation over Russia's invasion of Poland and are amazed by the naivete Guy reveals when he speaks of war and justice in the same breath. Guy's brother-in-law, Arthur Box-Bender, explains the real reason for England's involvement in World War II: the government had to fight against Hitler to please the socialists:

> 'The socialists always thought we were pro-Hitler, God knows why. It was quite a job in keeping neutral over Spain.. If we sat tight now, there'd be chaos.
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 25)[2]

Waugh's funniest comment on the absurdities of military life is found in his description of the power struggle between Guy's colleague, Apthorpe, and their Commanding Officer, the tough and ferocious Ben Ritchie-Hook. Indeed, Apthorpe, in addition to being a medium for Waugh's satire on military life, stands as a personification of the retrogressive public school world from which Waugh drew so many of his characters. He is, as Robert Kiely notes:

> ...at a particularly early stage of development even for a member of Waugh's cast of primitives. His energies are concentrated on simple biological needs which have been settled or put out of the center of civilized minds for thousands of years. Not only is he obsessed with the pleasures of defecation, but he is compelled by an instinct, unaffected by regulations or consideration for fellow soldiers, to construct elaborately secure "nests" for himself at every new post, however temporary.[3]

The centerpiece of Apthorpe's nest is his thunderbox, an Edwardian portable chemical toilet which he carries, at considerable inconvenience, to every new post, and then conceals, so he can use it in comfortable privacy--a precaution against contracting venereal disease from one of his fellow soldiers. But one-eyed Ritchie-Hook, the enfant terrible of World War I, discovers the precious thunderbox and claims it as his own. Apthorpe immediately realizes that someone else is using his most cherished possession and, with Guy's help, he searches continually for new hiding places, trying in vain to outwit Ritchie-Hook. Finally, Ritchie-Hook booby-traps the thunderbox with a bomb which explodes just as Apthorpe sits down. Dazed and defeated,

Apthorpe returns to his room, pausing on the steps to mutter, with unintentional irony, Ritchie-Hook's favourite expression:

> There was more of high tragedy than of bitterness in the epitaph he spoke.
> 'Biffed.'
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 157)

The trilogy contains many other episodes which make fun of the military--the reconnaissance patrol which Guy leads and from which Ritchie-Hook returns carrying the dripping head of an African soldier; the incident about the army nutrition expert on the Isle of Mugg who ventures into the bush to prove to the troops that it is possible to survive without a truck-load of provisions, and who returns on a stretcher, exhausted and emaciated. But Sword of Honour is not simply a war story. Waugh goes far beyond this military satire in his attempt to create the picture of a society on the verge of complete devastation.

Once again, Waugh cites the breakdown of the class system as a prime cause for the decline and fall of western civilization. The principal symbol of this decline is Guy's fellow-officer, Trimmer, a direct descendant of Hooper in Brideshead Revisited. In spite of his questionable background and his Cockney accent, Trimmer manages to get a commission in the Royal Corps of Halberdiers. But, unlike Guy, Trimmer is not impressed by the corporate self-estee

of his regiment, nor has he any notion of the sacrifice and dedication to duty which a war demands. He is happiest hanging around the radio in the billiards room, listening to popular music, and shuffling around the dance floor.

In a society which romanticizes the common man, however, Trimmer is destined to become a success. To boost civilian morale, and to convince Labour M. P.'s that their attacks against the snobbery in the armed forces are unwarranted, the army's publicity department decides to transform Trimmer into a genuine working-class hero. He is put in charge of the incredible Operation Popgun, a mission that requires him to lead a group of men to a tiny uninhabited island near Jersey, to make certain the island is not occupied by enemy forces. But, typically, the expedition lands, by mistake, in occupied France. While Trimmer stumbles around, firing his gun at a barking dog and cowering behind rocks, the soldiers under his command successfully blow up an enemy train.

But it is Trimmer who receives nearly all of the credit for the operation and overnight he becomes a national hero. He is awarded the Military Cross. He is sent on a lecture tour of England and America. A newspaper dubs him "the demon barber," a reference to his pre-war job as a hair-dresser on a luxury ocean liner. Ironically, Trimmer is, in

fact, exploited by a society which hopes, perhaps, to clear its collective social conscience by idolizing a genuine working-class hero. Waugh, of course, sneers at this society with its belief that a common man like Trimmer can perform those duties, possess those qualities, which are the birthright of the upper classes. But the motif of the collapse of the class system, as another manifestation of a disintegrating society is, in the war trilogy, as it is in all of Waugh's fiction, a double-edged sword of dishonour. Whenever Waugh satirizes the pretensions of the lower classes, he satirizes, as well, the irresponsibility of the upper classes, condemning them even more ferociously for abrogating what he believed were their traditional, ancestral responsibilities: moral and spiritual leadership, patriotism, loyalty, honour. Sword of Honour contains three major portraits of Waugh's decadent aristocrats.

The first one we meet is Guy's ex-wife, Virginia Troy. A direct descendant of the Bright Young People, Virginia shares their philosophy that personal pleasure is the only worthwhile objective in life. Three times married, three times divorced, Virginia cannot take personal relationships seriously because, like all the Bright Young People, her only real concern is herself. Having left her third husband, Virginia eventually finds herself poor and pregnant;

the father of her child is Trimmer. She searches for an abortionist but is unsuccessful. Finally, she turns for help to Guy, who, having never acknowledged their divorce because it is contrary to the laws of the Catholic Church, immediately accepts her back. Virginia Troy is, up to a point, an attractive character; beautiful, certainly, vivacious and goodnatured. But with her sexual promiscuity and her refusal to accept responsibility for her own actions, Virginia stands as one of Waugh's most obvious representatives of a collapsing social order.

Guy's fellow-officer Ivor Claire also represents the decadence of the English aristocracy. At first, Claire is seen through Guy's eyes, clouded by romantic notions of officers and gentlemen, as the epitome of upper-class courage and virtue, "quintessential England:"

> Guy remembered Claire as he first saw him in the Roman spring in the afternoon sunlight amid the embosoming cypresses of the Borghese Gardens, putting his horse faultlessly over the jumps, concentrated as a man in prayer. Ivor Claire, Guy thought, was the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account, Guy thought.
>
> (Officers and Gentlemen, p. 114)

But when the battle for Crete ends in the defeat of X Commando, Claire, disobeying the orders of his superiors, deserts his troops and flees to the safety of Alexandria. With this act of outright cowardice, Claire betrays both

his class and his country, contributing significantly to the sense of disintegration which pervades the entire trilogy.

Lady Julia Stitch also represents the irresponsibility of that social class which Waugh felt should be responsible for providing a country with moral and spiritual leadership. A fictionalized portrait of Waugh's close friend, Diana Cooper,[4] Lady Julia is, like Virginia Troy, an attractive character in many ways. In fact, it is Lady Julia's most admirable quality, her eagerness to help distressed friends, which causes her to turn against both national honour and Christian principles. At the end of Officers and Gentlemen Guy hands Julia a sealed envelope containing a dog tag taken from a dead British soldier, and he asks her to pass it on to her husband, the British government-representative in Alexandria, because he would know the proper channels to go through to ensure that the soldier's death is acknowledged and his family informed. Believing that the envelope contains information about Ivor Claire's unmilitary conduct in Crete, Julia throws it away. With this act, she not only denies recognition and a Christian burial to a young British soldier, but she also condones Claire's cowardice and disloyalty.

The influence of communism in the world of Sword of Honour is a third manifestation of a modern world on the

verge of collapse. Ignoring Russia's contribution to the allied cause during World War II, Waugh bitterly condemns what he saw as England's endorsement of communism. The opening scene of Unconditional Surrender, the third volume of the trilogy, takes place at Westminster Abbey where hundreds of Londoners are standing in line to view a ceremonial sword which has been made "at the king's command as a gift 'to the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad,'" to honour the Russo-British alliance:

> Every day the wireless announced great Russian victories while the British advance in Italy was coming to a halt. The people were suffused with gratitude to their remote allies and they venerated the sword as the symbol of their own generous and spontaneous emotion.
>
> (p. 22)[5]

But the irony of this national gratitude is evident by the escutcheon on the sword's scabbard which has been fashioned incorrectly and is upside down, a vivid symbol of England's twisted affiliation with Russia.

Several characters in the war trilogy are members of the English Communist Party and, as we would expect, they are among the most active contributors to the disintegration of the world described in Sword of Honour. Ludovic, a semi-psychotic writer obsessed with death, murders his commanding officer, Major "Fido" Hound, and writes a novel,

The Death Wish, about the decline of the English aristocracy, personified by Lady Marmaduke who bears some resemblance to Virginia Troy and Julia Stitch and to Lady Marchmain in Brideshead Revisited. The homosexual Sir Ralph Brompton, diplomatic advisor at Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters, daily patrols his building "in the self-imposed task of political indoctrination."

> 'I can tell you the main points. Tito's the friend not Mihajlovic. We're backing the wrong horse in Malaya. And in China too. Chiang is a collaborationist. We have proof. The only real resistance is in the northern provinces--Russian trained and Russian armed, of course. They are the men who are going to drive out the Japs.
>
> (Unconditional Surrender, p. 29)

And Gilpin, though he has a minor role in the trilogy, is important because he eventually becomes a Member of Parliament and an important undersecretary--an indication of the magnitude of Waugh's concern over the strength of the communist movement in his country.

But Waugh's bitterest comment on the contribution communism is making to the decline and fall of the modern world is implicit in his account of the communist takeover in Yugoslavia, described in the last section of Unconditional Surrender. Running "rings around [Churchill]" (p. 225), Tito has elicited English support for his attempt to establish political tyranny in Yugoslavia. This is, perhaps, the supreme irony of the entire trilogy. As Christopher Sykes notes:

> Bitter indeed is the picture of how in a Jugoslavia slowly but certainly coming under the domination of the Communist Party led by Tito, the British and American allies help in

> the extinction of surviving freedom,
> partly out of wishful thinking and partly
> out of blank stupidity.[6]

Waugh returns to another one of his favourite themes in Sword of Honour, the decline of religion, to further emphasize the retrogression of the modern world. In novels like Decline and Fall and A Handful of Dust, Waugh created the impression of a society without a real religious foundation by depicting a "modern churchman" who was able to serve his parishioners without committing himself to any belief, and an insane priest who spoke to his English congregation as if they were soldiers serving in India. The priests who appear in the trilogy also help to create the picture of a society where religious devotion comes second to money and politics. Father Whalen, for example, takes an interest in Guy only because he knows that Guy can provide him with a list of all the Catholics in his division--a list the priest needs in order to get a capitation grant from the war office. Another Catholic priest shows much more interest in Guy's cigarettes than in his sins:

> After the absolution he said: 'Are you a foreigner?'
> 'Yes.'
> 'Can you spare a few cigarettes?'

(Unconditional Surrender, p. 171)

A third arouses Guy's suspicion by asking detailed questions about the size and location of his regiment. It turns out he is moonlighting as a fascist spy.

Similarly, Waugh conveys the impression of a society suspicious of religious devotion by recording reactions to Tony Box-Bender's decision to become a monk. Tony's father, a Conservative Member of Parliament, is convinced that his son's decision shows signs of insanity:

> 'Shall I tell you what I think? Religious mania. It's as plain as a pikestaff the poor boy's going off his head.
>
> (Officers and Gentlemen, p. 247)

And, at the end of the trilogy, Elderberry indicates society's general impression of those who are devoted to religion, lumping them together with those who suffer from broken marriages or financial embarassment:

> Elderberry remembered that Box-Bender had had trouble with his own son. What had it been? Divorce? Debt? No, something odder than that. He'd gone into a monastery.
>
> (Unconditional Surrender, p. 240)

In the war trilogy, then, Waugh brings together all of his favourite themes--the incompetence of the British military establishment, the rise of the "common man" and the decline of the aristocracy, the pernicious influence of the political left, and the decline of the Church, to

create a picture of a modern world floundering helplessly at the approach of a moral and spiritual Wasteland. Indeed, Sword of Honour depicts a society obsessed with "the death wish," a phrase which reverberates throughout the trilogy, forming the title of Ludovic's novel and the sub-title of the last book of Unconditional Surrender.

Just as this theme of the decline and fall of civilization is central to all of Waugh's work, so too is the central critical question which Sword of Honour poses: How does the intelligent, sensitive individual respond to and survive in this world of change and decay? Guy Crouchback is the third and last of Waugh's tormented heroes, a direct descendant of Tony Last in A Handful of Dust and Charles Ryder in Brideshead Revisited. Like them, Guy is tormented by the corrupt and decaying world which surrounds him and is determined to find something which will allow him to live a meaningful life.

Having spent the last eight years in melancholy isolation, at the Italian summer home of his aristocratic Catholic family, Guy is pleased about the imminent outbreak of a second world war because he knows that the war will force him to re-enter the society he abandon ed after the collapse of his marriage and so end his eight years of shame and

loneliness:

> Just seven days earlier he had opened his morning newspaper on the headlines announcing the Russian-German alliance. News that shook the politicians and young poets of a dozen capital cities brought joy to one English heart. Eight years of shame and loneliness were ended. For eight years Guy, already set apart from his fellows by his own deep wound, that unstaunched, internal draining away of life and love, had been deprived of the loyalties which should have sustained him. He lived too close to Fascism in Italy to share the opposing enthusiasms of his countrymen. He saw it as neither a calamity nor as a rebirth; as a rough improvisation merely. He disliked the men who were edging into power around him, but English denunciations sounded fatuous and for the past three years he had given up his English newspapers. The German Nazis he knew to be bad and mad. Their participation dishonoured the cause of Spain, but the troubles of Bohemia, the year before, left him quite indifferent. When Prague fell, he knew that war was inevitable. He expected his country to go to war in a panic, for the wrong reasons or for no reason at all, with the wrong allies, in pitiful weakness. But now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was in plain view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle.
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 12)

Guy begins his quest at the tomb of Roger of Waybrooke, an English knight who, while on his way to participate in the second Crusade, was killed in battle near Santa Dulcina. To Guy, Waybrooke is, as H. E. Semple notes, "a reminder that mere man can and did dedicate his sword to the cause of good."[7] Guy feels an especial kinship with "il Santo

Inglese" who reinforces Guy's romantic notion that war is a crusade, fought on behalf of God and country, for order and justice.

But soon after he arrives in England, Guy learns that he, alone, perceives the war in these terms:

> Russia invaded Poland. Guy found no sympathy among these old soldiers for his own hot indignation.
> 'My dear fellow, we've quite enough on our hands as it is. We can't go to war with the whole world.'
> 'Then why go to war at all? If all we want is prosperity, the hardest bargain Hitler made would be preferable to victory. If we are concerned with justice the Russians are as guilty as the Germans.'
> 'Justice?' said the old soldiers. 'Justice?'
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 25)

This is really the beginning of the collapse of Guy's illusions about helping to re-establish, through participation in World War II, some order and justice to a chaotic and unjust modern world. But Guy does not yet realize it. Indeed, after he finally gets a commission in the Royal Corps of Halberdiers, Guy believes his quest is beginning to show signs of success. He is overwhelmed with pride when his Commanding Officer, the ferocious Ben Ritchie-Hook, announces that the Halberdiers will soon be on the battlefield:

> At those words Guy's shame left him and pride flowed back. He ceased for the time being to be the lonely and ineffective man--

> the man he so often thought he saw in himself, past his first youth, cuckold wastrel, prig--who had washed and shaved and dressed at Claridge's, lunched at Bellamy's and caught the afternoon train, he was one with his regiment, with all their historic feats of arms behind him, with great opportunities to come. He felt from head to foot a physical tingling and bristling as though charged with a galvanic current.
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 136)

In the first half of the first volume of Sword of Honour, then, Waugh establishes a pattern which will form the basis of the plot of the war trilogy. Guy continually re-affirms in his own mind the illusion, born at the tomb of Roger of Waybrooke, that he can make a significant contribution to a world struggling desperately to re-establish order and justice. But always something happens which chips away at that illusion, until, in the final volume of the trilogy, Guy, alone among Waugh's heroes, learns the lesson which forms the core of Waugh's philosophy about the individual's relationship to the world of change and decay. In the last volume of the trilogy, Waugh said, "I will deal with Crouchback's realization that no good comes from public causes, only private causes of the soul."[8]

Soon after his elation over the prospect of seeing action, Guy first begins to realize that his conception of the just cause of World War II may, in fact, be an illusion. He realizes this when he learns of the Russian

victory in Finland and sees the reaction of his fellow Halberdiers to this catastrophe:

> No one at Kut-al-Imara House seemed much put out by the disaster. For Guy the news quickened the sickening suspicion he had tried to ignore, had succeeded in ignoring more often than not in his service in the Halberdiers; that he was engaged in a war in which courage and a just cause were quite irrelevant to the issue.
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 142)

But when he meets Ivor Claire in the second volume, Officers and Gentlemen, Guy's faith in the potential greatness of his "endangered kingdom" returns once more. Here, in the person of Ivor Claire, Guy thinks, is quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account. A landed aristocrat, sophisticated and fashionable, a valiant soldier with a Military Cross pinned to his uniform, Claire is, to Guy, a reincarnation of Roger of Waybrooke.

This illusion, too, is short-lived. When Guy learns toward the end of Officers and Gentlemen that Claire has deserted his troops after Crete had fallen to the enemy, he is overwhelmed with depression and despair:

> He had no old love for Ivor, no liking at all, for the man who had been his friend had proved to be an illusion. He had a sense, too, that all war consisted in causing trouble without much hope of advantage Why was he here in Mrs. Stitch's basement, why were Eddie and Bertie in prison, why was the

> young soldier lying still unburied in the deserted village of Crete, if it was not for Justice?
>
> (Officers and Gentlemen, p. 239)

The final blow comes, on the same day, when Guy learns that England has found a new ally in Russia:

> It was just such a sunny, breezy Mediterranean day two years before when he read of the Russo-German alliance, when a decade of shame seemed to be ending in light and reason, when the enemy was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off, the modern age in arms.
>
> Now that hallucination was dissolved . . and he was back after less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world, where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led blundering into dishonour.
>
> (Officers and Gentlemen, p. 240)

As the third volume of the trilogy opens, Guy no longer harbours any illusions about the survival of the modern world. After spending two years in a world where priests were spies and aristocrats, traitors, in a world which accepts Russia as a political ally, Guy is ready to accept the inevitable retrogression of western civilization. But Guy is not ready to "crouch back" for good just yet. He still believes that his personal honour, at least, can still be satisfied by his participation in the war. Unconditional Surrender is concerned, basically, with the collapse of this last illusion, and Guy's final realization that no good ever comes from public causes, that in order

to survive in a world of change and decay, man must surrender unconditionally to it, isolate himself from it, and be content with private causes of the soul.

Assigned to Yugoslavia as part of the British mission which is helping Tito establish political tyranny, Guy despairs of ever having the opportunity to satisfy his thirst for personal honour. Like Ludovic, he becomes obsessed with the death wish which hangs over the second half of Unconditional Surrender--the catchwords for Waugh's vision of the future of twentieth century society. "Father," Guy confesses to a Catholic priest, "I wish to die." (Unconditional Surrender, p. 170).

But when he learns of the plight of a group of Yugoslavian Jews who, in the course of the struggle for political control of the country, have become desperate and helpless "displaced persons," Guy sees the opportunity to emulate the heroism of Roger of Waybrooke. Here, at last, he thinks, "in a world of hate and waste, he was being offered the chance of doing a single small act to redeem the times." (Unconditional Surrender, p. 192).

Although he does manage to secure for the Jews a few essential supplies, Guy's "small single act" is ultimately unsuccessful. The Jews are simply shifted from one camp to another and seem destined to be "displaced persons" indefinitely. With Guy's failure comes his realization

that it is futile to make public causes a prerequisite to private honour. Waugh emphasizes this point in a crucial interchange, at the end of the trilogy between Guy and Madame Kenyi, the leader of the displaced Jews:

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

(Unconditional Surrender, p. 232)

As he learned in Men at Arms and Officers and Gentlemen that the decline of the modern world is irreversible, Guy learns in Unconditional Surrender that private honour cannot be satisfied through commitment to public causes. According to Waugh's highly individual eschatology, the tormented hero can only survive within a moral and spiritual Wasteland by isolating himself from it and by committing himself to private causes of the soul. This, too, is a lesson Guy learns in the last volume of Sword of Honour.

In the development of his realization about the importance of private acts of charity, Guy's mentor is his

father, Gervase Crouchback, one of the few really decent characters to appear in a Waugh novel:

> He was an innocent, affable old man who had somehow preserved his good humour--much more than that, a mysterious and tranquil joy--throughout a life which to all outward observation had been overloaded with misfortune. He had like many another been born in full sunlight and loved to see night fall..He had rather early lost his beloved wife and had been left to a long widowhood. He had an ancient name which was now little regarded and threatened with extinction. Only God and Guy knew the massive and singular quality of Mr Crouchback's family pride. He kept it to himself. That passion, which is often so thorny a growth, bore nothing save roses for Mr. Crouchback. Mr Crouchback acknowledged no monarch since James II. It was not an entirely sane conspectus but it engendered in his gentle breast two rare qualities, tolerance and humility.
>
> (Men at Arms, p. 34)

A kindhearted, Catholic aristocrat who lives in simple isolation at a small seaside hotel in Matchet, quietly supporting several charities and a few needy individuals, Mr. Crouchback represents an older, more stable and just world. "With his death [in Unconditional Surrender]," says Christopher Holles, "a last relic of decency has gone from the world."[9]

Mr. Crouchback serves as Waugh's mouthpiece in Sword of Honour. He is the only character who realizes that private acts of charity, private causes of the soul, are a prerequisite to a really worthwhile and meaningful existence. Sensing his son's bitterness and despair over

his inability to satisfy, through participation in the war, his quest for personal honour, Mr. Crouchback says, in a letter to Guy.

> Quantitative judgements don't apply. If one soul is saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face.'

(Unconditional Surrender, p. 17)

At the end of the book Guy begins to understand at last the importance of his father's advice. In re-marrying the now destitute Virginia and, more important, in choosing to raise her son, the father of whom is the reprehensible Trimmer, as his heir, Guy abandons public causes in favour of a private act of charity. Virginia's death (she is the victim of an air-raid) does not affect his decision. With the conclusion of his futile and ironic mission in Yugoslavia, Guy returns to England, marries Domenica Plessington, the Catholic daughter of a family friend who cared for Trimmer's son after Virginia's death, and goes off to live at the family estate at Broome with his new wife and his heir.

The significance of Guy's final act in the trilogy has been the subject of an interesting critical controversy--a controversy compounded by the fact that Waugh changed the ending of the first Chapman and Hall edition of Unconditional Surrender and then changed it again when the trilogy was published as a whole in 1965. In the first Chapman and Hall

edition, published in 1961, Guy and Domenica have, in addition to Trimmer's son, two children of their own. In the second Chapman and Hall edition they have no children of their own but, says Box-Bender, "that's not always a disadvantage." Finally, in Sword of Honour, published in 1965, Guy and Domenica again have no children of their own, but now Box-Bender makes the comment: "Pity they haven't any children of their own."[10]

What is the significance of these changes? A reviewer for The Times Literary Supplement saw the change in the second edition where Guy and Domenica have no children of their own, as a denial of "the happy, lucky ending," implicit in the first edition where the couple has two children of their own. This change, he continued, "marked an alteration in Waugh's concept of divine providence." [11]

Winnifred Bogaards, on the other hand, argues that Guy is luckier in the last two versions of the ending and that the ending implies a truce in the battle between the classes:

> Once he and Domenica are denied a family, little Trimmer takes on a far greater significance as a means which divine providence, no respecter of rank or wealth, has chosen to provide an heir to a devout Catholic couple who would otherwise be barren. When Waugh arranges that the pious country squire takes responsibility for a child who is the product of fashionable Mayfair and the common man--the two social groups

> who have been sworn enemies throughout Waugh's fiction--and when he pointedly represents this child as a providential gift, surely he suggests that human compassion and charity, with God's help, can and should end the battle of the classes.[12]

But Robert Murray Davis does not interpret the ending of Sword of Honour as a comment on the class struggle:

> The question of whether or not Guy has children of his own is irrelevant to the central themes of the novel. the acceptance of moral responsibility in place of the comforts of illusion and of the Christian duty of charity in place of personal egotism. Waugh undoubtedly deleted Guy's children in the final version of the novel because he wished to leave Guy with his virtuous acts as ends in themselves rather than reward him with "prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks." (Henry James, The Art of Fiction)[13]

The temptation to interpret the ending of the trilogy as a comment on the class struggle is, of course, enormous, in view of Waugh's tremendous interest in the class system. But given the author's hint about the ultimate theme of Sword of Honour--"no good comes from public causes, only private causes of the soul"--Davis's interpretation of the ending must be closer to Waugh's intention than the interpretation of those critics[14] who see the ending as a comment on the class struggle. The important theme of Sword of Honour is, as Davis says, "the acceptance of moral responsibility in place of the comforts of illusion and of the Christian duty of charity in place of personal egotism." By re-marrying the troubled and destitute Virginia, and by

providing a home for the child of one of Waugh's most worthless characters, Guy commits himself to an almost martyr-like act of charity. Yet he is clearly rewarded with the tranquility and sense of purpose which he sought so desperately ever since he prayed before the tomb of Roger of Waybrooke. As Box-Bender notes--and this is the last line in Sword of Honour--"things have turned out very conveniently for Guy." (Unconditional Surrender, p. 240).

Unlike Tony Last and Charles Ryder, Guy Crouchback does ultimately discover the way to live a meaningful existence in a world of change and decay. Tony Last, having travelled the road not to Rome but to Camelot was, of course, destined from the start to be unsuccessful. Charles Ryder, by embracing Catholicism at the end of Brideshead Revisited, does discover some hope for himself and for his world, symbolized by the small flame which continues to burn at the altar of the chapel at Brideshead Castle, while the Castle itself crumbles in the wake of "progress." But Ryder clearly does not learn of the need for the Christian duty of charity in place of personal egotism. Waugh's last tormented hero, Guy Crouchback, does, however, discover the key to survival in a world of change and decay. Man must deny public causes because the decline and fall of the modern world is clearly irreversible;

he must isolate himself from this world and strive for salvation through commitment to private causes of the soul.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Eyelyn Waugh, Officers and Gentlemen (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1971), p. 46. All quotations are taken from this edition.

[2]Evelyn Waugh, Men at Arms (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1971), p. 25. All quotations are taken from this edition.

[3]Robert Kiely, "The Craft of Despondancy--The Traditional Novelists" Daedalus (Spring, 1963), p. 229.

[4]Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh (London: William Collins and Sons, 1975), p. 170.

[5]Evelyn Waugh, Unconditional Surrender (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), p. 22. All quotations are taken from this edition.

[6]Sykes, p. 428.

[7]H. E. Semple, "Evelyn Waugh's Modern Crusade," English Studies in Africa (March, 1968), p. 48.

[8]Quoted by Frederick Stopp, Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 46.

[9]Christopher Hollis, Evelyn Waugh (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1966), p. 34.

[10]For a collation of the three variant endings see Winifred M. Bogaards, "The Conclusion of Waugh's trilogy: Three Variants," Evelyn Waugh Newsletter (Autumn, 1970), pp. 6-7.

[11]Anon., "Wartime Revisited," The Times Literary Supplement (March 17, 1966), p. 216.

[12]Bogaards, p. 7.

[13]Robert M. Davis, "Guy Crouchback's Children--A Reply," English Language Notes VII (December, 1969, p. 128.

[14]In addition to the article by Bogaards see J. Dellaere-

Garant, "Who Shall Inherit England? A Comparison between Howard's End, Parade's End and Unconditional Surrender, English Studies (Feb., 1969), pp. 101-05; and Joseph F. Mattingly, "Guy Crouchback's Children," English Language Notes, VI (March, 1969), pp. 200-01.

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