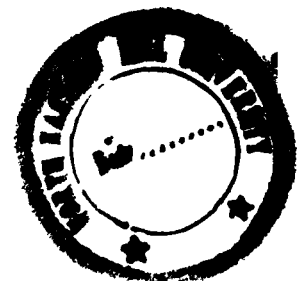


COMIC VISION OF LIFE IN EVELYN WAUGH
EXPLORATION AND ASSESSMENT

R. K. DHAR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES

THESIS
SUBMITTED IN
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Certified that Mr. R.K.Dhar prepared his dissertation entitled "Comic Vision of Life in Evelyn Waugh: Exploration and Assessment" under my supervision. Further certified that I consider it worthy of submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the North-Eastern Hill University.

Dr. S.Homchaudhuri.

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Contd...II

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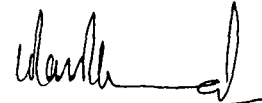
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CHAPTER-I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This is a study undertaken to explore how the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh is shaped and structured by the attitude to change and progress. Of all literary terms, the term 'comic' is perhaps the most protean. So a definition of the term, in the context of its application to Waugh, becomes essential. But before it may be done, it is essential to understand the attitude out of which it is born. Accordingly, I have paid attention first to laying bare the meaning of change and progress in Evelyn Waugh.

The onward march of time leaves behind it a trail of change. Whether this change is progressive in character or not has been a topic of much debate among historians. Two irreconcilable approaches are, however, discernible: one, progressive and the other, cyclical. The first, traceable to theories of 'enlightenment', runs through the thought both of Humanist and Romantic historiography. The second, advanced by cyclical historiographers like Toynbee, John Dewy and Oswald Spengler, disputes the overwhelming faith in the inevitable progress of mankind. It regards change as cyclical and hence, the idea of progress, a delusion in the long run. Himself a former student of history at Oxford, Waugh inclines to the latter belief.

He maintains:

Progress, as it has been understood since the eighteenth century, has proved a disappointment. For every gain there has been a compensating, or even preponderating loss. Former 'progressives' suspect that they have gained all that is attainable and are in danger of losing it, while others believe that for a century the 'spirit of the age' has been moving in a wrong direction.¹

While Waugh shares with the latter a contempt for the false claims of progress, he differs from them in two major respects. Change, according to the cyclical historiographers, travels along a spiral-shaped path which, in spite of obliterating all chances of betterment, does not prevent one from touching a new point at the end of one revolution. Waugh's notion of change rules out even that possibility. He believes that the circuitous course of change brings one back to one's original position at the end of one revolution. The second major point of difference lies in their points of view. While the cyclical historiographers view change from the secular angle, Waugh views it from the religious as well as the secular angle. The realisation of progress depends on the individual concerned. If he seeks to achieve it through secular change, then he shall be caught in the futility of circuitous change. But if he wishes to do so through religious change, then he shall move along a linear path that ends at the transcendental hub of the wheel of life.

The end of such a spiritual odyssey promises hope and regeneration. It is this idea of progress that is central to Waugh's attitude to change and progress. That is why Waugh writes:

I believe that man is, by nature, an exile and will never be self-sufficient or complete on this earth; that his chances of happiness and virtue, here, remain more or less constant through the centuries and, generally speaking, are not much affected by the political and economic conditions in which he lives; that the balance of good and ill tends to return to a norm.²

As Waugh's comic vision of life grows out of both these attitudes to change, it is useful to understand the word 'comic' in the context of both. The comic vision of life that emerges out of the secular attitude to change is of the nature of absurdity for the man who is deluded into achieving progress through secular change is caught in the demonic circle of meaninglessness and futility. The 'comic' here connotes absurdity which has been defined by Eugene Ionesco thus:

Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose,
Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and
transcendental roots, man is lost; all his
actions become senseless, absurd, useless.³

However, in order to understand the comic nature of the persons deluded by the apparently progressive nature of secular change, we also need to define the word 'comic' after the manner of Plato in Philebus, as:

... a vice which gets its name from a certain habit of mind, and is that particular form of this vice which exhibits the contrary of the state of soul spoken of in the inscription at Delphi.⁴

Put more precisely, it may be said that comic characters suffer from a 'foolish false conceit of themselves'.⁵ By considering himself far more progressive than he really is, the comic character attracts our ridicule. Yet our ridicule is never allowed to touch the borderland of condemnation as the comic writer also makes us sympathise with the ignorance of the comic character. This saves characters in a comedy from becoming the butt of satiric ridicule. Plato plays up the significance of sympathy in 'comic catharsis' when he distinguishes between those suitable for 'the singular blending of pleasure with pain' and those who are not.⁶ In a somewhat similar manner, Northrop Frye maintains that the comic catharsis 'raises sympathy and ridicule'.⁷ It may, therefore, be said that comedy, unlike satire, elicits the sympathy of the reader for the person ridiculed. Reacting to Bergson's suggestion that the comic is unfeeling, Eric Bentley too observes:

Precisely that anti-emotional attitude which Bergson attributes to the comic in general belongs... to farce in particular. Farce, not comedy, is 'unfeeling'. Conversely, the bitterness and sadness that so readily come to the surface constitute our first, best evidence that in comedy feeling is not only present but abundant.⁸

In marked contrast with the comic vision that emerges from a secular attitude to change is the comic vision that is forged by the religious attitude to change. Gone is the ennui and futility of an absurd world. In its place, is encountered hope and meaningfulness in the resurrection of a life bogged down earlier by the secular world of change. No wonder then that the superior vision of life realised here also has a sublimating effect on the meaning of the word 'comic'. In view of this development in Waugh, I have redefined the word 'comic' here on the lines of Northrop Frye and Eric Bentley. The former observes:

The ritual pattern behind the catharsis of comedy is the resurrection that follows the death, the epiphany or manifestation of the risen hero.⁹

This is precisely the pattern that emerges in those of Waugh's novels, which unfold his ultimate comic vision of life. That such a view of comedy is often ignored by critics who argue, on the lines of Aristotle, that comedy deals with low action performed by low characters, should not deter us from endowing the comic with grandeur and splendour. Eric Bentley has rightly observed:

Yet, if comedy begins in the kitchen and the bedroom, it can walk out under the stars. It can attain to grandeur. If this is not generally admitted, it is only because any comedy that has grandeur is immediately stamped as Not a Comedy.¹⁰

Like Frye, he too maintains:

The comic dramatist's starting point is misery; the joy at his destination is a superb and thrilling transcendence.¹¹

In the comic vision of this kind, the comic character, by transcending the limitations that render him ridiculous, attains sublimity and splendour both in his conduct and personality. The word 'comic', thus, undergoes a semantic volte-face in its application to characters here. It no longer signifies foolish conceit. Instead, it connotes freedom from ignorance and admission to the wonderland of truth and meaningfulness. Eric Bentley has, therefore, rightly remarked:

Now the art of comedy is an undeceiving, an emancipation from error, an unmasking, an art, if you will, of denouement or untying.¹²

Evelyn Waugh⁴ represents the post-modernist tradition in modern British fiction. In marked contrast with the avant-garde movement, it emphasised solving "the problems of 'structuring' history in literature... in rather a different way - for instance, by allowing the concern with crisis and change to become part of the matter of literature, rather than as a feature of its experimental form".¹³ Ronald Firbank stood for Waugh as a shining example of this change in fictional style.

In an essay on Firbank, Waugh explains how the former solved the problem of representation in fiction. He remarks:

Other solutions are offered of the same problem (representation in fiction), but in them the author has been forced into a subjective attitude to his material; Firbank remained objective and emphasized the fact which his contemporaries were neglecting that the novel should be directed for entertainment.¹⁴

Taking a cue from his literary ideal, Waugh preferred to retain the classical attitude of objectivity towards his work for the sake of entertaining his readers rather than confusing them in a labyrinthine subjective attitude. His concern with communicating his personal vision, however, was not allowed to get impaired thereby. The recurrent use of symbolic images and a highly stylized plot convey the author's comic vision of life amply.

However, a prominent stream of literary criticism has tended to condemn Waugh for his supposed lack of values owing to his inability to see through his objective style. Waugh is treated as a splendid entertainer but devoid of any significant attitude to life that can earn him a place among the literary greats. This attitude is discernible in both, the reviewers and the critics. Among the reviewers, Gerald Gould¹⁵, Arnold Bennett¹⁶ and

and Desmond Shawe-Taylor¹⁷ are appreciative of Waugh's brilliant sense of humour but not of the equally profound philosophical point of view that informs it. Similarly, Eric Linklater and Ernest Oldmeadow not only fail to understand Waugh's comic vision of life but also castigate him for reasons that are not supported by facts in the novels. The former accuses Waugh of being 'so abominably subversive as to mock the idea of progress',¹⁸ and the latter contends that his novels are 'a disgrace to anybody professing the Catholic name.'¹⁹ John Brophy²⁰ is candid enough to confess his inability to locate the moral centre of Waugh's comic vision. In considering 'Europe a more effective background... than the other continents' in Waugh, Derek Verschoyle²¹ disregards Waugh's preoccupation with the exploration of the idea of change and progress that shapes his comic vision of life. Though Waugh's early novels received rave reviews from Rose Macaulay, yet they too are myopic in getting at the significance of Waugh's comic novels. She is of the opinion that Waugh is one of those gifted writers who 'step aside, turn an oblique glance on the world they know, reject it, and, half deliberate, half instinctive, compose one of their own making, a world within a world, in which they can move and invent with greater felicity, sureness and ease'.²² Her praise does more harm than good.

.By dissociating Waugh from the world of reality, she deprives the comic vision manifest in his novels of any sound metaphysical basis. Her dissatisfaction with the Catholic novels, where Waugh reveals the philosophical basis of his comic vision of life, is understandable in the context of her desire that 'he should speedily retrace his steps' to the 'baroque circus tent' of his imagination.²³

A survey of recent criticism reveals that Waugh's art of objective narration continues to act as an impenetrable Kafkaesque castle for a good number of critics also. Louis O. Coxe opines:

A high moral purpose, working in the fury and mire of human veins, and low shifts men stoop to: this is the double theme of classical comedy and satire, and it is just here, I believe, that Mr Waugh fails, for all his real virtues of wit and style.²⁴

Even though Gilbert Highet accepts Waugh's works as examples of successful satire, he does not attribute any definable set of values to them. He argues quite unacceptably that both virtue and vice are ridiculed in Waugh. He opines:

The main point of this is the double-edged satire that the good are dull and stupid, and that the beautiful and rich are corrupt and ruthless: the world is not governed by moral principles, or even by orderly reason, but by chance and the power of the absurd.²⁵

Hight overlooks: the absurdity found in Waugh's comic universe owes not to a lack of principles as such but to man's decision to abjure them and lead a secular life of self-aggrandisement. By suggesting that Waugh writes "at once social chronicle and fantasy in a spirit of comic delight that absolves him from consistent moral presentation,"²⁶ Malcolm Bradbury takes up a familiar stand. Though A.E. Dyson grants success to Waugh in 'the fineness of his style', yet he deprives his works of any morally coherent comic vision when he argues:

Much of his success depends on the fineness of his style; 'fine style' thought, of in the old fashioned way, as felicity of utterance, wit, charm, rather than as a vital union of form and moral content. His bons mots deserve to be repeated exactly. Take away the verbal precision, and you crash down too violently on the meaning.²⁷

Martin Green mistakenly opines that Waugh is 'both for and against everyone, or rather no one'.²⁸ By arguing thus, he muddles up the moral issues in Waugh's comic vision of life. Though James F. Carens recognises the positive aspect of the works beginning with Brideshead, he does not do so in the case of the earlier novels. He argues:

The early novels remain generally negative and destructive; and, consequently, Waugh is criticized for lacking a high moral purpose and writing satire without a moral centre.²⁹

Graham Martin's analysis suffers from the same malady that has plagued the preceding ones. He fails to see 'any alternative position in whose terms the attack (on modern civilization) can be understood'.³⁰ Therefore, he contends:

Except in a kind of brilliant faking, Waugh never goes beyond the external accuracy of observation which served him in the satires.³¹

His indictment is, perhaps, one of the best examples of how one of Waugh's artistic strengths, his objective style, has been turned into an artistic weakness. These critics ignore that language and the form of a fictional work can be made to reveal the author's personal vision of life even without direct authorial intrusions. That Waugh could do so speaks of his firm and commendable grasp over the technicalities of his trade.

While the impenetrable objectivity of Waugh's fictional style has led some critics to the point of denying the presence of 'an implied author' in his works, his much too vocal public personality has led others to superimposing the views of Waugh, the man on Waugh, the 'implied author'. Waugh's personal life style and stray remarks clearly reveal a predilection for the antiquated rather than the modern. His biography by Sykes records how he preferred to stay in imposing gothic houses rather

than in a modern one. But Waugh was not unaware of this shortcoming in his own self. In A Little Learning, he mentions how he fell a victim early in his life, to the Englishman's confusion of the antiquated with the sublime.³² But critics have preferred to ignore the significance of this introspective condemnation and Waugh is supposed to play up the importance of old English values as enshrined in the obsolescent institution of chivalry. He is, thus, misunderstood to represent in modern English literature, a reactionary trend to the valuelessness of modern times. As Martin J. Stannard has rightly observed, 'In an age of egalitarianism, Waugh has often seemed a redundant elitist'.³³

Prominent among the reviewers who have followed this line of critical approach are Donat O'Donnell, J.B. Priestley, David Pryce-Jones, V.S. Prichett, Gore Vidal and Simon Raven. Donat O'Donnell argues that

The main emotional constituent of Mr. Waugh's religion - using the term in a wide sense - is a deep English romanticism.³⁴

Similarly, J.B. Priestley notices in Waugh an attempt to bolster redundant aristocratic values apart from those enjoined by Roman Catholicism. He opines that he 'is an author pretending to be a Catholic landed gentleman'.³⁵ David Pryce-Jones stresses that 'it is the old order that matters to Evelyn Waugh'³⁶ and that he tries 'to enlist (in his works) our sympathy for the old order, our sorrow

at the financial and moral collapse of the aristocracy ...³⁷. In a way, V.S. Pritchett accepts the idea of class-snobbery in Waugh, when he tries to play down its significance.

To object to his snobbery is as futile as objecting to cricket, for every summer the damn game comes round again whether you like it or not.³⁸

Gore Vidal argues that Waugh indulges in 'romantic day dreams which are not only quite as unpleasant as the things he satirises, but tend in their silliness to undermine his authority as critic.'³⁹ Though Simon Raven recognises the significance of Roman Catholicism as a symbol of order and goodness in Waugh, yet he too imputes aristocratic values to him.⁴⁰ Waugh was justifiably stung by these reviews and he lost no time in making known his displeasure to one of the reviewers, David Pryce-Jones, who later came to regret having written the review, 'especially the infantile leftism in it'.⁴¹ The pitfalls of biographical criticism are written large on most of these reviews. A cardinal principle of literary criticism is violated. The man with whom the works are associated is substituted for the artist who created them. Consequently, his works are condemned for what they themselves reject.

A survey of the somewhat comprehensive criticism reveals the continuation of this tendency in a good number

of critiques on Waugh. It goes to Stephen Jay Greenblatt's credit that he should have focussed attention, perhaps for the first time, on the significance of wheel-imagery in understanding the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh. But it is precisely in doing so that he errs. Though there can be no two opinions about the primacy of the wheel-imagery noticed by him, his inference from it is unacceptable. He misconstrues the circular motion of the wheel to imply the meaninglessness of action or change merely in modern times. As a result, he too localises the moral centre of Waugh's comic vision of life in 'the value structures of the past'.⁴² He ignores that the circular motion of the wheel symbolises in Waugh the futility of change or action at the temporal plane of existence. The superiority of the hub in the wheel of life is a constant reminder of this fact. Terry Eagleton regards Waugh's fiction as an example of upper-class novel and attributes to it the limited and fragmentary vision of such a novel. He also detects an ambivalent attitude towards the upper classes in Waugh's novels: 'the need to defend at certain crucial points, an upper-class world which is also satirised'.⁴³ Bernard Bergonzi, in his initial appraisal of Waugh, adopts a right stand. But his later evaluation suffers from an untenable emphasis on the aristocratic values of life. In his review of A Handful of Dust, he

had rightly maintained that

... in its treatment of the doomed Gothic hero - not yet a Catholic hero - it points forward to such ambitious later novels as Brideshead Revisited and, in particular, the Sword of Honour trilogy where Guy Crouchback, a more complex and developed version of Tony Last in the early novel ... realises the insufficiency of the gentlemanly ideal and is stripped of his romantic illusions.⁴⁴

But in The Situation of the Novel (1979), Bergonzi seems to have changed his stand altogether. He argues here:

The total pattern of Waugh's work reveals a consciousness that is indeed dedicated to looking backward, to reliving the past and trying to preserve its values, and which ultimately is unable to resist the pressures of modernity, although it never willingly surrenders to them.⁴⁵

The thrust of the analysis by Jeffrey Heath is on showing how Waugh's own search for a refuge that promises order and harmony from the cramping confines of an irrational and chaotic world gets carried over into his novels.

His search was so urgent that it inevitably carried over into his novels, where it became a major motif, and if we examine the refuges in Waugh's fiction we may discern a pattern which illuminates the core of his work and personality.⁴⁶

Accordingly, he classifies his fiction into two segments: the one written before Brideshead and that written after it. While in the former, 'Waugh's protagonists typically find solitary refuges which are false', 'in the fiction of later date they discover the correct refuge which has



been adumbrated by the false ones; the Household of the Faith'.⁴⁷ The adoption of a biographical approach, however, tells upon his critical insights. Like Terry Eagleton, he discerns in Waugh an ambivalent attitude towards the objects of his comic ridicule. He opines:

... surely the truth is that Waugh disapproves of what delights him, and is fascinated by what he deplures. It is this ambivalence which provides the very germ and matrix of his art.⁴⁸

S.M. Pandeya, in a more recent analysis, argues after Peter Green⁴⁹ that the romantic nostalgia for the ancien regime provides the moral centre to Waugh's comic vision of life. Pandeya⁵⁰ bases his argument on a passage in *Decline and Fall* that reads:

'English spring', thought Paul. 'In the dreaming ancestral beauty of the English country'. Surely, he thought, these great chest-nuts in the morning sun stood for something enduring and serene in a world that has lost its reason and would so stand when the chaos and confusion were forgotten?⁵¹

Its interpretation by David Lodge⁵² aptly invalidates Pandeya's stand.

The preceding analysis of criticism on Waugh may foster the impression that criticism has run completely amuck in the case of Waugh. But it is not so. There has been a steady stream of literary criticism that has recognised Waugh's concern with playing up the Roman

Catholic values of life as against any secular values. Accordingly, the merits and demerits of Waugh's comic vision of life, as unfolded aesthetically, have been pointed out and his literary achievement has been assessed. Traces of it can be found even in the early reviews. John Bayley, F.J. Stopp, and Brigid Brophy best represent this section of reviewers. John Bayley emphasises the primacy of Roman Catholicism in Waugh.

Both Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene are writers who use their Catholicism as a weapon and a probe; they explore vice and anarchy from a definite standpoint.⁵³

But the point of his argument lies in his hope that 'Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene will not be taken too seriously and will not attract too many disciples'.⁵⁴ By calling his concern with the Roman Catholic values of life as partisan, he detracts attention from the aesthetic significance of Waugh's view-point. F.J. Stopp has, in a way, set criticism right on this point. He not only draws attention towards the Catholic standpoint of the novels but also warns against judging the artist's achievement, in transmuting this viewpoint into art, in a manner other than aesthetic. He rightly argues:

Lord Marchmain's change of heart and Charles Ryder's conversion, Helena's heroic virtue and her discovery of the fragments of the True Cross... are all matters which are the appropriate subjects of aesthetic delineation. But they are not problems for solution, since the novel is not a spiritual case - history. It is enough for the novelist that such things are humanly possible; his task is limited to making them humanly and poetically probable.⁵⁵

Brophy also has rightly noticed Waugh's concern with the rejection of the inadequate past and the acceptance of Roman Catholic values. She observes:

Mr Waugh, after stating that Brideshead in contrast to the first novel by Waugh, was 'not meant to be funny' declared its 'general theme' to be 'romantic and eschatological'; the really extraordinary thing is that precisely the same is true of the general theme of Waugh's novels.⁵⁶

She, however, does not speak of the simultaneous rejection of the modern way of life in Waugh. It is essential to do so in case one is to understand the supremacy of Roman Catholic values of life over the temporal ones.

The problem with the reviews on Waugh is that they are either sketchy or inadequate.

Detailed attention to this concern in Waugh is more forthcoming in the critiques written by Stephen Spender, Christopher Hollis, A.A. De Vitis, David Lodge, and Richard Johnstone. Spender considers the emphasis on Roman Catholicism as self-defeating and an artistic blunder on the part of Waugh. He argues:

It is when he identifies his prejudices with a moralizing religion that qualities anachronistic and absurd in his view of life - intolerance, bigotry and self-righteousness - work against his talent, and even tend to caricature⁵⁷ the very ideas he is supposed to be supporting.

Far from undermining his art, the Roman Catholic thrust of Waugh's fiction gives his comic vision of life depth and stability. Christopher Hollis, in contrast, recognises Waugh's development as a novelist alongside his pre-occupation with perfecting a literary form that could adequately convey his religious interest.⁵⁸ But he refrains from showing how this affects ultimately his comic vision of life for Waugh is essentially a comic writer. A.A. De Vitis takes a provincial view of comedy when he argues that Waugh succeeds only in the so-called early comic novels and not in the 'confines of the traditionally serious (Catholic) novel.'⁵⁹ He ignores the sublimity that Waugh's comic vision of life attains in the so-called traditionally serious novels. Also, he overlooks how language and fictional form are made to blend with this vision to achieve a unique aesthetic expression. David Lodge's analysis, though brief, is decidedly superior to that of most other critics in this group and also an improvement over Stephen Jay Greenblatt's work. Unlike the latter, he does not commit the mistake of associating the moral centre of Waugh's comic vision with the value structures of the past.

He recognises that Waugh's Christian anti-humanism leaves no room for the acceptance of any secular value system.⁶⁰ But the thrust of his critique is on Waugh's success in the artistic portrayal of the 'myth of decline'. Such an approach tends to overlook the sublimity of Waugh's comic vision as unfolded in the novels that show the achievement of progress through religious change. David Lodge's analysis focusses attention only on the degradation that creeps into human society when it tries to achieve progress through secular change. It, therefore, takes a partial view of the vision that emerges from Waugh's works. Though Richard Johnstone has rightly perceived the significance of Roman Catholic values of life in Waugh's comic outlook on life, yet he is concerned more with trying to show Waugh's lack of intellectual conviction in it than in trying to show how it grows out of his work artistically. He argues:

The order imposed here by Waugh's Catholicism is, like Upward's Marxism, no more logically convincing than any of the other means of ordering existence that are dismissed in Journey to the Border or in A Handful of Dust. The power of the belief springs not from any inherent compelling logic, but from the individual's overwhelming will to believe.⁶¹

By asking for logical necessity in a work of art, he overlooks the fact that a work of art is not a logical treatise but an aesthetic expression of the author's vision of life.

In order that a true estimate of Waugh's artistic capabilities and achievements may be made, it is of paramount importance that his comic vision of life be understood not only from the Roman Catholic point of view but also in terms of his singular attitude to change and progress. I, therefore, intend to show, in the following pages of this thesis, how Waugh's comic vision of life grows effortlessly and, above all, with artistic facility, out of his singular approach to the concept of change and progress. In trying to substantiate that, I would also like to underline the fact that Waugh's genius is quintessentially comic and not satiric, as many critics have tended to suggest.

The world that confronted Waugh was not only caught up in the cyclone of change but was also obsessed by it. The sense of change felt by man in the twentieth century has been unparalleled by that in any other age. The world has presented so changing a face that it has been difficult to reconcile with the long and continuous string of changes. Malcolm Bradbury has rightly summed up the modern situation thus:

Living now is not at all like living then. We live in a world of persistent change, where the past is dead and the present is dying; our pressing imperatives are drawn from a temporal location somewhere between the present and the future. Our problems are persistently novel; and precedent and the past are unpromising guides. And so to be modern is not only to live now, but to live now in a certain way.⁶²

What Bradbury emphasises while defining 'modernity' is the act of living now in a persistently changing environment. Jung sees eye to eye with Bradbury on this point. He opines in a somewhat similar strain:

... the modern man is a newly formed human being; a modern problem is a question which has just arisen and whose answer lies in the future; the exemplary modern man is moving towards a fuller consciousness of the present and finds that the ways of life which correspond to earlier levels of consciousness pall on him.⁶³

Behind this unprecedented pace of change lie, however, the hopes and aspirations of the humanist and enlightenment historiographers who by their secular utterances have helped man humanise history to the point of seeking fulfilment within its bounds. The urbanisation and democratisation that the English and other European societies have undergone in the wake of industrialisation have particularly proved their point right. Progress can be achieved on earth through means totally within man's reach. Man only needs to quicken the pace of change by ushering the world into a technological era.

It is at this very moment of celebration of man's progress through secular change that a strong anti-progressive view of history was shaping itself in the unsettling revelations of Freud's psychological theories and those of the new generation of physicists. Freud

belittled the significance of reason in human conduct when he drew attention to the tendency of mind to rationalize the desires that press for satisfaction. Suddenly, reason lost the pre-eminence it was granted by the enlightenment theorists and it was reduced to the rank of a handmaid of the powerful irrational unconscious mind. The savage in man stood revealed and man could no longer turn a blind eye to this overwhelming reality. If the reason of man could not be trusted, then how could the notion of secular progress be accepted? The civilised man, by being vulnerable to the same irrational drives of the unconscious mind as the barbarian is, presented a picture of helplessness and stagnation. The advances in physics compounded this feeling of uncertainty and anti-progressiveness. The concern of science with 'models of reality' rather than reality itself came to be recognised. This introduced a note of subjectivity in the hitherto objective science. The knowledge that science uncovered relative truths and not the absolute one added to the intellectual confusion. Man began to realise the amorphous nature of a relativistic world. Both science and reason proved inadequate guides to a progress that could be lasting and true. The modern age has thus concretised the fears and apprehensions of the cyclical historiographers in a way that no other age has done.

That Waugh was not insensitive to this obsession of the age with change is obvious from what he has to say about the nature of its occurrence in rural England:

The process is notorious and inevitable.
Expostulation is futile, lament tedious.
This is part of the grim cyclorama of
spoliation which surrounded all English
experience in this century...⁶⁴

In coming to terms with it, however, he chooses a path which resembles neither that of the progressives nor that of the anti-progressive cyclical historiographers. Even though it is individualistic, yet it is not outside the tradition of Roman Catholic Church. Waugh is one with the cyclical historiographers in rejecting the claim of linear secular change. In his opinion, the quest for progress through secular change is a sheer mirage. Yet he takes a step ahead of the pessimistic outlook of these theorists. He sees a ray of hope for humanity in the religious transformation of man's outlook and conduct. According to him, man can hope to progress if he gives up the secular outlook and moors himself in the water of eternity. It is this dual approach to the phenomena of change and progress that informs his profound comic vision of life. It speaks highly of Waugh that he should have been able to outline this metaphysic right in his first major novel, Decline and Fall (1928)

The image of the revolving wheel that Waugh invokes here is central to an understanding of the metaphysical basis of his comic vision of life. Its significance is persistently felt in its recurrent use, obvious or concealed, throughout the entire length of Waugh's fictional work. The wheel is metaphorically compared to life. At this point, however, a distinction is made between the commonly held notion of life and the one suggested here. This difference is clarified with the help of the placement of the wheel in a circular room with seats for spectators. Life can mean, as it is popularly thought, an objective observation of the action performed by others, and it can also signify participation in the change effected by the action of life. The people who sit and watch the revolving wheel from the distance of the gallery, live life in the former way. But those who jump on the revolving wheel live it in the latter way. Waugh opines:

People don't see that when they say "life" they mean two different things. They can simply mean existence, with its physiological implications of growth and organic change. They can't escape that even by death, but because that's inevitable they think the other idea of life is too - the scrambling and excitement and bumps and the effort to get to the middle, and when we do get to the middle, it's just as if we never started. It's so odd.⁶⁵

The wheel, therefore, represents change in contrast with the gallery which does not, as change implies movement in time and space.⁸ Therefore, the people who choose to sit and observe from the stands are called 'static' characters. A static person may also refrain from participating in the action of life by getting fixated with some outdated values of life. A classic example of such a character in Waugh is Tony Last. Comic fun arises when a static character strays into the world of change represented by the wheel. He finds himself an unequal match for the people who are not static and is rescued only when he realises that he is unfit for the world he has strayed into.

The philosophical basis of Waugh's comic vision of life, however, goes deeper than that. The wheel of life has two prominent parts: the revolving portion and the stable hub. It is the former which represents change and not the latter as only the former displays a movement both in time and space and not the latter. In other words, the revolving portion of the wheel represents temporal reality with its obvious relativism and the stable hub represents eternal reality with its much too evident transcendental absolutism. In Roman Catholicism, the faith of Waugh's own deliberate volition, the Church is the temporal representation of eternal reality in the way the hub is. Thus the revolving portion of the

wheel signifies the secular world of change and the hub, the Roman Catholic Church. In the story 'Out of Depth', Rip Van Winkle wakes up after five hundred years of slumber and discovers to his utter surprise that the entire world has changed beyond measure. In this changed world, however, Rip sees one sign of permanence: the Roman Catholic Church. Only it has not undergone any change. The service in Latin continues and the Sacrament is administered without any change. Again in Edmund Campion, the Jesuit priest expresses similar views in a striking manner.

'Make the best of Rome', he (Edmund Campion) wrote later to Gregory Martin, 'Do you see the dead corpse of that Imperial City? What can be glorious in life, if such wealth and beauty has come to nothing? But who has stood firm in these wretched changes - what survives? The relics of the Saints and the chair of the Fisherman.'66

Suffice it to say then that the Roman Catholic Church stood for Waugh as an eternal reminder of an immutable reality. Keeping out of the Church means, therefore, losing the eternal perspective of Roman Catholicism and gaining, instead, a secular outlook on life, which is fostered by the revolving wheel of life.

Consequently, a person who steps on the wheel of life is confronted with two options. He may either choose to go along with the circular motion of the wheel or else direct his efforts towards the hub of the wheel by cutting

through the circular motion of the revolving wheel. The desire to go along with the motion of the wheel implies readiness to participate in secular change for human betterment and progress. This is what the progressive thinkers have been emphasising and this is what science has been trying to achieve with its cocksure positivism. However, as the graph of this change indicates such efforts are foredoomed to failure. Progress involves not merely a movement in time and space, as change does, but a considerably perceptible shift in the position of the individual or the society undergoing change that is amenable to value judgement. This, however, is precisely what the circular motion of the wheel does not impart to the secular efforts of man. The wheel of life with its circular motion brings the subject, undergoing change, back to its original position once it completes one revolution. Moreover, no position on the circle of the wheel can be adjudged better than another. Eugene Ionesco's definition of absurdity aptly defines the nature of secular change. Cut off from the transcendental source of his existence, man gropes in the dark when he undertakes to achieve progress through secular change. His fate is as absurd as that of Sisiphus. The fact that the participant in this change, called 'dynamic' character by Waugh, refuses to see the absurdity of his actions in the beginning renders him comic. The shattering of the illusion makes his end grim and gives the comic vision unfolded here,

a dark tinge. That is why, Waugh has also been called, many times, a writer of black humour. The incipient tragedy within the comic situation obtaining here precludes the censure of the individual. It demands, instead, our sympathy for the person ridiculed. A suitable example of such a 'dynamic' character in Waugh is the Emperor Seth of Azania in Black Mischief. The novels that unfold the comic vision of absurdity have been grouped under the appellation of 'lesser comedies' by me. In choosing and using this term for these novels, I have been guided by the quality of vision revealed here.

The rejection of the circular motion of the wheel of life for the linear motion directed towards the stable hub of the wheel of life implies a desire to achieve progress not in terms of secular change but through religious change. This is precisely what Roman Catholicism aims at: deflecting men from the 'wasteland' of sin towards the rejuvenating world of prelapsarian reality. As the graph of this change indicates, such an effort is bound to meet with success. The linear course of this change is very much amenable to value judgement. Besides, as the person, undergoing this change, approaches the hub, he has to face less and still less the destabilising impact of the circular motion of the revolving wheel. This means his progress becomes perceptible in the degree of stability he has

achieved on the linear course of religious change. The final moment of triumph comes when he reaches the hub of the wheel for no sooner does he reach there than he is liberated from the shackles of the secular world of change. Upon reaching here once, he attains the bliss of immutable transcendental reality. In Waugh, such an act is conveyed through a conversion to Roman Catholicism and a staunch adherence to its doctrine. The best example of such a character in Waugh is Helena. I have called the characters willing to undergo this change, 'spiritual elites' for their superiority owes to their superior attitude to life. Some of these characters, however, do not realise this in the beginning. It is then that they become butts of comic ridicule. But no sooner do they reject the path of secular change and embark on that of religious change than they cease to be so. Yet they continue to remain essentially comic characters, for the act of emerging out of ignorance into the light of knowledge is also a part of comedy, as Eric Bentley has also emphasised. The comic vision that is unfolded here is of the nature of resurrection and epiphany. This makes the comic outlook presented here at once Christian and universal in appeal. The sense of joy and transcendence of misery at the end of the comic hero's journey is the hallmark of greater comedies. Accordingly, I have termed the novels which play up this sublime

comic vision, 'greater comedies'. These comedies speak of the artistic maturity and insight that Waugh achieved in his literary career and shall, therefore, remain the foundation of any evaluation of Waugh as an important twentieth century writer.

In trying to gauge the extent of Waugh's ability in conveying his comic vision of life successfully, I have been guided more by aesthetic considerations than any other, in my critical approach. Primacy has, therefore, been given to the 'implied author' in the works rather than the man with whom the works are otherwise associated. This has necessitated a distinction between Waugh as an author and Waugh as a man. The task of doing so is made easier in Waugh as he himself inclined to this literary approach. The words of Pinfold - Waugh in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold are revealing in this regard.

Mr. Pinfold gave nothing away. Not that he was secretive or grudging by nature; he had nothing to give these students. He regarded his books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself to be used and judged by others.⁶⁷

This, however, does not imply that useful sidelights offered by Waugh's life and utterances have been ignored. It only means that they have been considered for their supplementary value only and so far as they do not damage the argument contained within the works themselves. This has meant reliance on a close textual analysis of the works.

Such an approach is particularly rewarding as it concerns itself essentially with the neat and successful aesthetic expression of the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh.

The task of aesthetic analysis differs widely from that of a logical analysis. While the latter demands of the writer that he should explain the situations in his works, the former does not. Here, it would be pertinent to point out that the logic of a work of art is revealed in its skilful use of artistic devices and not in a logical disputation for a work of art is not a piece of argumentative prose but an aesthetic whole. The novel is placed uniquely in this regard. The novelist, as Iris Murdoch has observed, "has a blessed freedom from rationalism... he has always been... a describer rather than an explainer".⁶⁸ This distinction is particularly useful in Waugh as he, like Ernest Hemingway, believes in using language suggestively and sparingly.

My analysis of his comic vision of life shall proceed thematically rather than chronologically. As the law of association in psychology has also shown, the sequence of man's thoughts scarcely reveals a chronological pattern. I have, therefore, divided my analysis of Waugh's major fiction into two chapters: chapter two and three. Such a division is rewarding as it enables the reader to have a glimpse of the myriad manifestations of one kind

of vision in different novels at one place and also in marking the shift in the artist's comic view of life. Accordingly, the second chapter of my thesis makes an attempt at understanding how Waugh uses his artistic skills in the lesser comedies for successfully conveying a vision of absurdity about a world that has steeped itself in the quest for progress through secular change. The novels studied here are: Decline and Fall (1928), Vile Bodies (1930), Black Mischief (1932), A Handful of Dust (1934), Scoop (1938), Put Out More Flags (1942), The Loved One (1948), and The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold (1957). An indepth individual analysis of each novel has been undertaken here to study the significance of each in the canon of Waugh's creative work.

The third chapter of my thesis deals with the novels which fall under the title, 'greater comedies'. These are: Brideshead Revisited (1945), Helena (1950), and The Sword of Honour Trilogy which includes three novels: Men at Arms (1952), Officers and Gentlemen (1955), and Unconditional Surrender (1961). An attempt has been made here to study how Waugh reveals his artistic maturity and genius in completely sublimating his comic vision of life by developing in each of these works a vision of hope and promise, based on Roman Catholicism.

As the names of the novels listed above may have also suggested, my study of Waugh's comic vision of life is limited in its scope to the eleven major novels of Evelyn Waugh; the three novels included in The Sword of Honour Trilogy being treated as one. In doing so, I have been guided by the feeling that the other minor works are more of the nature of long short stories rather than novels. Besides, the graph of Waugh's artistic achievement comes through more clearly in the major novels than in the minor fictional works.

My study of Waugh's comic vision of life is based on the Penguin editions of his novels, by and large. In choosing to do so, I have been guided by two considerations. One, they are easily available. But that alone would be insufficient for deciding to do so. Material easily available may not be truly reflective of an author's true artistic potential. Consequently, the entire argument so constructed may look like a house with a foundation of sand. My second consideration, however, takes care of it. The Penguin editions, apart from their easy availability, also mirror truly the real artistic intentions of Evelyn Waugh. Based on the British first editions, which continue to be the authoritative versions of almost all Waugh-novels, the Penguin editions make a departure in the case of Brideshead Revisited which is based on the new Uniform edition.

Here, it would be pertinent to point out that significant variations occur in the case of the new Uniform editions of Brideshead Revisited and The Sword of Honour Trilogy only. So far as the variations in the latter are concerned, they have been critically evaluated in the analysis of this novel.

CHAPTER 2LESSER COMEDIES

Central to the comic vision of life manifest in the lesser comedies of Evelyn Waugh is the comic absurdity of a world which has chosen to better its state of existence through secular change. The repetitive nature of secular human endeavours promises no material change in the lot of man. Caught in the vortex of secular change, man returns to his original state of existence again and again. Out of it grows a sense of comic futility of all secular human efforts. Waugh suggests that if man has to progress then he must transcend the cycle of repetitive events and touch the hub of the wheel of life where alone life is salvaged from the delusion of secular change. Ignorance of the absurdity of seeking progress through secular change prevents one from seeing this point. Consequently, the person who is taken in by the delusion of bettering his lot through secular change not only renders himself comic but also deprives himself of the opportunity of living life meaningfully. Waugh's comic vision of absurdity, therefore, contrasts sharply with that of Albert Camus, an existentialist. In his An Essay on Sisyphus, he maintains that the pleasure with which Sisyphus accepts his absurd fate epitomises man's attempt to live fully even in the face of the stark reality of the absurdity greeting all his efforts. Camus' Sisyphus has no other

choice save that of accepting his absurd fate as he denies the possibility of religious salvation. But Waugh's comic characters have an alternative choice in selecting religious change as the means to progress. So there is no attempt in Waugh's lesser comedies to celebrate an absurd secular life. Rather, the emphasis is on its rejection. Therefore, even when Waugh explores the absurdity of a secular world seeking progress by effecting a string of secular changes, his comic vision of life continues to remain poised in the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life. This lends the comic vision revealed in the lesser comedies an air of absurdity that is different in tone and texture from what is encountered either in the Theatre of the Absurd or the existentialist works of art.

Waugh wrote eleven major novels, the three novels included in the war trilogy being treated as one. Out of them, eight novels contain a vision that is distinctly absurd. Accordingly, an attempt has been made to study them as lesser comedies. Each novel has been considered separately in order that the comic vision of absurdity in each becomes vivid.

DECLINE AND FALL (1928):

Decline and Fall (1928), Waugh's first major novel, is set against the backdrop of modern Britain. The reason is not far to seek. Quite evidently, Waugh wishes to hold up to ridicule the progressive notion of secular change as epitomised in the secular advancement of modern British society. It is pertinent to note here that modern Britain is the child of 'enlightenment' belief in the progressive character of secular change. In the words of R.G. Collingwood:

The historiographers of the Enlightenment thought the central point of history... (to be) the sunrise of the modern scientific spirit. Before that, everything was superstition and darkness, error and imposture. And of these things there can be no history... because there is in them no rational or necessary development; the story of them is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.¹

It is precisely by showing the omnipresence of these very anti-cultural values in modern Britain that Waugh ruthlessly renders ridiculous the progressive claims of the 'enlightenment' historiographers. His irony is, therefore, directed at the self-deceptive illusions of the progressive historiographers. Lest this should be mistaken for his sympathy with the antiquated and obsolete code of chivalry, he makes the comic censure through the point of view of a static character, Paul Pennyfeather. He is an academic

who is conditioned by his association with the values of the past. It is difficult for him to outgrow it. He may, therefore, be likened to a person who is merely capable of watching the action of life from the spectators' gallery, but not of participating in it. By rendering Paul ridiculous again and again, Waugh draws attention to the inadequacy of the value system of the past. Thus, Waugh conveys forcefully the idea of absurdity implicit in the quest for progress through secular change. This is the vision that is characteristically common to all lesser comedies of Waugh.

With the intention of exposing the luxuriant and unchecked growth of barbarity in modern Britain, Evelyn Waugh focusses his artistic attention on three important segments of British social life: education, high social life and judiciary. Each forms the subject-matter of a separate section in the novel. Commenting on this scheme, Cyril Connolly observes perceptively:

School life, high life and prison are the three stages, and each is exquisitely comic and plausible.²

It is by making Paul undertake a picaresque journey through these three phases of British social life that Waugh exposes the depravity rife in the secular institutions of modern British society.

Waugh's choice of the artistic form suitable for this purpose is highly ingenious. The picaresque fiction, right from Lazarello de Tormes (1554), had been employed to 'point out the follies of ordinary life'. Introduced into England by Alain Rene Le Sage's The Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane, the tradition underwent a major change in the hands of Smollet whose Roderick Random replaced the picaro of loose morals with one of good breeding. Waugh's use of the tradition here is more in the line of Smollet than in that of Le Sage. Before him, Dickens had already used it, after the manner of Smollet. But the Dickens who used it, was the immature Dickens. The mature Dickens shunned it, preferring, instead, the more compact plot of temporal-cum-logical progression. In Dickens, its use, therefore, signifies immaturity and inability to select and order events significant for furthering the novel's thematic line of intention. In contrast, it signifies, in Waugh, artistic maturity. The lack of logical progression in the development of events helps Waugh in reinforcing the idea of the lack of logical development in the process of secular change. Consequently, his vision of absurdity concerning the secular quest for progress becomes all the more graphic.

Paul Pennyfeather, like the Spanish picaro, is an orphan. The resemblance ends here. Unlike his prototype,

he is a student of theology at Oxford. The world of scholarship entails an assessment of social reality but not participation in its changing facade. It is, therefore, 'static' and Paul, by virtue of inhabiting it, can be considered a 'static' character. As the movements of Paul are restricted within the bounds of the 'static' world of scholarship, his acquaintance with the 'dynamic' world of change, is minimal.

However, by an irony of fate, he is transplanted from his native 'static' world into the alien 'dynamic' world of British society. One night, when all sensible people quit Oxford for the irrational and savage festivities of the Bollingerites, he, returning from one of the meetings of the League of Nations, unwillingly encounters this 'dynamic' lot. Though they come from high society, their celebrations are tinged with barbarism and savagery:

At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles, what an evening that had been!³

Individuality, in so far as they are concerned, verges on the abnormal. One expects that those in authority, at least, would have shown normalcy by restoring order on the campus. But the two Dons who are expected to do so, revel in it and even pray 'sacrilegiously that they might attack

the Chapel so that their income from the penalties imposed on them would shoot up. Thus, beneath the thin veneer of civility can be discerned the menacing proportions of barbarity. Waugh's own assertion at another place illustrates this point well.

Barbarism is never finally defeated, given propitious circumstances, men and women who seem quite orderly will commit every conceivable atrocity. The danger does not come from habitual hooligans; we are all potential recruits for anarchy.... Once the prisons of the mind have been opened, the orgy is on.⁴

It is by such an orgiastic group of barbaric students that Paul is debagged. The custodians of moral order on the campus, the two Dons, instead of coming to his help, are instrumental in the framing of the charge of indecency against him. Paul is, as a result, sent down unjustly. The incident is significant in the story-line of the novel as it serves two purposes. One, it helps in revealing the inversion of values that is peculiar to the dynamic world of decadent humanity. Two, it thrusts Paul out of the safe environs of the static world of scholarship into the perilous surroundings of the dynamic world of modern Britain. Paul's sojourn in the dynamic world is essential for the exposure of the decadent nature of modern Britain. Paul's successive reverses at the hands of the dynamic world of British society play up successfully

its rampant valuelessness and ruthless barbarity, on the one hand, and the inadequacy of static ideals in combating these regressive features in British society, on the other.

There is no mistake in understanding right in the first novel that Waugh has made certain essential choices. He has decided to give the story a firm historical location and draw on our sense of historical verisimilitude by highlighting the contrary values signified by the 'static' and the 'dynamic' world. While the static world is comparable to the gallery sheltering spectators of the play of life, the dynamic world is comparable to the ever-changing region of the wheel of life. In the world-view of Evelyn Waugh, the dynamic world is the secular world making a vain bid to achieve progress through an essentially circular secular change.

Paul suffers his first reverse at the hands of his 'dynamic' solicitor-guardian who apart from withholding his allowance on the pretext of his shameful conduct, advises him to see life 'in the raw'. Waugh writes suggestively:

- That spring Paul's guardian's daughter had two new evening frocks and, thus glorified, became engaged to a well conducted young man in the office of Works.⁵

The very choice of profession in the case of his guardian is suggestive of the degree of dynamism in him. Paul's cloistered life does not equip him to deal with such a person. He is, therefore, left with no choice save that of struggling for survival in the tempting environs of the dynamic world. Try however much he might, he can never retrieve his original state the one prior to the Bollinger night. Something quintessential has gone out of him. It is the loss of his real identity. Though a 'static' character, he becomes of necessity a 'dynamic' person in the changed situation. As that runs counter to his true nature, he ceases to be a 'real' person. He becomes, so to say, a shadow of his previous self. In his analytical study, Dyson pays less than adequate attention to this underlying change when he writes:

As the leading character, and minor character, disappear, one feels not only that society doesn't care, but that the author, doesn't care himself. The causes of Paul Pennyfeather's mysterious disappearance are neither explored nor regretted.⁶

Eagleton, in contrast, has shown acute perceptiveness of the functional nature of this change. He opines:

The significance of Paul's blankness is two fold. It allows the novel's real concern - the life of upper class society - to emerge 'objectively', as a neutrally descriptive record rather than as part of a more personal, inward, evaluative history; and it deftly prevents their experience from being unduly criticised by the man who is its sacrificial victim.⁷

It is partly on account of this objectivity in the narrative that Dyson is unable to comprehend the change in Paul. The disappearance of Paul as a real character, far from being an artistic weakness, is a sign of artistic strength. No writer of picaresque fiction had till then effected such a change in the protagonist's identity, and for such a purpose. In this respect, Waugh has made an innovative use of the tradition of 'picaro'.

The first aspect of modern British society exposed by Paul's picaresque journey is its educational system. Paul's 'picaresque' struggle for survival leads him to the doorsteps of Church and Gargoyle scholastic agents. The experiences described here and at Llannaba castle, Dr. Fagan's model school of vice and disobedience, reflect Waugh's own when he was in a somewhat similar predicament. Asked to apply for a job that demands knowledge of subjects that Paul does not know, he replies:

'But I don't know a word of German, I've had no experience, I've got no testimonials, and I can't play cricket'. 'It doesn't do to be too modest,' said Mr. Levy. 'Why, only last term we sent a man who had never been in a laboratory in his life as senior Science Master to one of our leading public schools...'⁸

Paul's experience resembles that of his creator who once found himself in a precisely similar situation. Waugh writes about his own predicament thus:

But, as the scholastic agent remarked, few headmasters were able to find men with all the qualities they demanded and with desperate levity I offered to teach anything which any one might require.⁹

Despite these resemblances, it would be a gross exaggeration to interpret the entire novel merely as a pastiche of autobiographical material. As Waugh himself once wrote:

Nothing is more insulting to a novelist than to assume that he is incapable of anything except the mere transcription of what he observes.¹⁰

In the offices of the Church and Gargoyle, scholastic agents, Paul learns about the elaborate gradations of public schools. Though he offers no comment on it, the reader reacts by laughing at its ridiculousness. His interview with Dr. Fagan, Llanaba Castle's owner, is also instructive similarly. Asked about the reason of his abrupt discontinuance of studies at Oxford, he responds, due to his training in honesty, by confessing the truth. Paul's conduct, contrasted with Dr. Fagan's who uses this confession to lower the sum offered for the job, is not only like that of an uninitiated picaro but also like that of a static character who feels uncomfortable in the attire of an assumed 'dynamic' role.

'I understand, too, that you left your University rather suddenly. Now... Why was that?' This was the question that Paul had been dreading, and true to his training, he had resolved upon honesty. 'I was sent down, sir, for indecent behaviour.'¹¹

A Basil Seal would have held his ground and given nothing away. In contrast, Paul Pennyfeather, like Gilbert Pinfold, is no match for the dynamic characters of the world of secular change. Dr. Fagan's small victory in the interview with Paul shows him up as a 'dynamic' character capable of clinging to the wheel of life in its incessant circuitous motion. It is from such a person that Paul receives his first lesson in the ways of the 'dynamic' world: 'temper discretion with deceit'. This prepares us for the picture of lawlessness to be seen at Llannaba Castle, Dr Fagan's model school of vice and anarchy. Stephen Jay Greenblatt's remarks about this nursery of vice are worthy of note:

Paul's experience at Llannaba is a marvellous initiation into the savagery of society, for all greed, corruption, doubt, ugliness, hysteria, and callous indifference to suffering are found there in microcosm. The butler, Solomon Philbrick, is a criminal; the school master, Captain Grimes is a bigmist and a scoundrel; the Chaplain, Prendergast, is tormented by "doubts" and has no faith; the owner, Doctor Fagan, is a swindler.¹²

Of all these characters, Captain Grimes brings out best the public school code as he is himself the product of that system. Deciphering it, he says thus:

'They may kick you out, but they never let you down.'¹³

Even though he has been, as a student, expelled from his school, yet he is provided with a letter of

recommendation that whitewashes his innate indecency, to help him find a job. It is in this way that British educational system has made the unsuspecting society a dumping ground for all potential anarchists.

Completely unheroic, Grimes prefers to save his life by electing to undergo the undignified course of court-martial rather than killing himself, in all honour. He also has the singular distinction of never sticking to any job for long which he attributes to his 'temperament and sex'. Instability is the basic characteristic of not only individuals like Grimes, but also of the world they inhabit. This grows because of clinging to the wheel of life at its most peripheral orbit. It is here that the giddiness of motion is felt the most. The inference is quite obvious: the degree of 'dynamism' in a person depends on the distance of his position from the hub.

'You see, the nearer you can get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on'.¹⁴

When Grimes says that he is 'singularly in harmony with the primitive promptings of humanity', he highlights a basic truth about the character of a dynamic person: that despite the high rate of change sweeping over their lives, there is a conspicuous absence of any remarkable progress

in their selves. Like the world to which they belong, they do not progress from a state of primitivism to that of culture and civilisation. Grimes, thus, offers a good example of the stagnation of human society at the temporal level and Waugh uses him to his great advantage as a tool and also as a potent artistic device to mock at the progressives' claims of inevitable progress. John Willet expresses similar views when he opines:

There are not many very durable characters in the modern English novel let alone immortals, like Don Juan or Jeeves, but Grimes is now part of our heritage; his language and values, his reflections on the public schools and the honour of the regiment, are marvellous glimpses of a suppressed rich underworld of English life.¹⁵

The other teacher at Llannaba, Prendergast, is an ex-clergyman of the Church of England, who gave up his benefice after spiritual doubts began to plague his mind. The Bishop to whom Prendergast refers his problem is unable to provide a neat solution to them. His evasion is a sign of the spiritual bankruptcy within the Church of England.

'I asked my bishop, he didn't know. He said that he didn't think the point really arose as far as my practical duties as a parish priest were concerned'.¹⁶

Waugh is building up the world in language slowly and steadily and in this persistently developing world, consisting of a devised succession of events, he succeeds in projecting views of disruption found in civilisation, almost the kind of 'inoperancy of the world of spirit' that we find in Eliot's The Hollow Men. No longer a priest, he still nurses hopes of becoming one by seeing, oneday, the light that will dispel his doubts.

'Perhaps one day I shall see Light', he said, 'and then I shall go back to the ministry'. Meanwhile Clutterbuck ran past the door, whistling hideously. 'That's a nasty little boy,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'if ever there was one'.¹⁷

The atrocious degree of indiscipline in Prendergast's personality instinctively renders the world around him, hostile to him. The students delight the most in teasing him. One student even calls him 'Prendy' at the breakfast table while he is saying the grace. Prendergast thus embodies the spiritual instability that is eating into the vitals of British society.

In a letter to Paul, Potts, his Oxford friend and a fellow static character, writes with insight and understanding:

'... the great problem of education is to train the moral perceptions, not merely to discipline the appetites.... it is in greater fastidiousness.

rather than in greater self control that the future progress of the race lies. I shall be interested to hear what your experience has been over the matter.'18

Paul's experience is disappointing, for both his colleagues represent values contrary to the ones emphasised by Potts. While Prendergast is a victim of 'moral perplexity', Grimes is given to 'self indulgence'. A society whose educational system is manned by such 'a criminal class' and 'potential recruits for anarchy' can scarcely claim to be a civilised society for instead of overcoming the anarchic bent of informed and raw minds in their care, they shall themselves encourage a free and unrestrained expression of these forces. It is by drawing attention to such examples of disorder and anarchy that Waugh mocks at the infantile belief of the secular progressive historiographers.

No wonder then that the students reading in such a farcical system of education are audacious and 'flippant even in front of their mentors. Several anecdotes in the novel show students asserting themselves at the expense of their teachers. Paul's first encounter with these students brings out in sharp focus the comic disorder prevailing in the school. A never-ending chorus of 'Good morning, sir', greets him as he enters the class for the first time. Waugh writes:

'Oh, shut up', said Paul
 At this the boy took out a handkerchief and
 began to cry quietly. 'Oh, sir', came a
 chorus of reproach, 'you've hurt his feelings.
 He's very sensitive; it's his Welsh blood, you
 know; it makes people very emotional. Say
 "Good morning" to him, sir, or he won't be
 happy all day. After all, it's a good morning,
 isn't it sir?'¹⁹

The quoted conversation illustrates not only the spirit
 of light-weight comic fun but it is also charged with
 significance: the dynamic way of life has found its way
 even into the attitudes of the students too. In order
 that Paul may wrest initiative from them, he must employ
 against the dynamic world its own weapons. He does so
 by asking his students to write an essay on 'self-
 indulgence', promising to reward the one that is longest.
 Such a kind of education, doled out in the public schools,
 makes a mockery of all objectives of education, especially
 that of equipping children for the tough task of being
 responsible members of a civilised society.

Paul's willingness to learn the depraved ways of
 a 'dynamic' life show the growing influence of his dynamic
 colleagues. He even compromises his dignity for the sake
 of getting the money that Alastair Digby Vane Trumpington
 offers to him by way of damages for the injury caused to
 him on the Bollinger night. Potts' displeasure with such
 a suggestion is reminiscent of the attitude of the vanished
 static Paul.

'I fairly let him have it, I can tell you, and told him just what I thought of him for making such an insulting suggestion. I asked him how he dared treat a gentleman like that just because he wasn't in his awful set. He seemed rather taken aback and said: 'Well all my friends spend all their time trying to get money out of me,' and went off'.²⁰

Paul's conduct in the episode under discussion contrasts with that of Potts and parallels Alastair's. The emergence of a new set of relationships indicates that the direction in which Paul is drifting, leads to the dynamic world. These successes delude Paul into considering himself as dynamic as Grimes. However, his encounter with Margot Beste-Chetwynde shatters this belief.

The Annual School Sports further highlights the callous indifference to indiscipline and decorum prevailing among the custodians of discipline themselves. Though they begin on a frivolous note, they culminate in a savage finale. Dr. Fagan's penchant for pomp and splendour makes him introduce a revolver for starting the races. By a strange working of fate, it falls into the hands of the drunk Prendergast, who has been made the starter. Instead of shooting it in the air, he fires it in Tangent's direction and consequently shoots him in the foot. The barbarity of the action is enhanced by Prendergast's complete indifference to what he has done; he waxes

eloquent on ecclesiastical matters with the vicar who cannot help pronouncing him deranged. While his comic capers regale the readers, Tangent's injury strikes a note of concern. Prendergast has shown himself to be capable of releasing anarchic and disorderly forces. It is for this tragic potential concealed in comic situations that Waugh's humour is preeminently famous.

With the finishing of Annual School Sports, the public school system appears in all its comic disorderliness and vulnerability to barbaric forces. Besides, it is also presented as the breeding ground of values that are antithetical to the idea of progress. By revealing the lack of progress through secular change, Waugh slowly builds up his comic vision of absurdity.

Waugh now proceeds to show how a diseased educational system has affected the health of the British society, and with this purpose in mind, he introduces Paul to the very heart of high social life, the Mayfair upper class circle of Margot Beste-Chetwynde. But before Paul meets Margot, he rendezvous with his old 'static' friend, Potts. The meeting is significant as it sheds light on the nature of Paul's consequent disappearance a second time. In Pott's company Paul enters a familiar world, the static world of scholarship and thereby retrieves his lost 'static' personality momentarily, though he is not consciously aware of it. Waugh writes:

For an evening at least the shadow that has flitted about this narrative under the name of Paul Pennyfeather materialised into the solid figure of an intelligent, well educated, well-conducted young man, a man who could be trusted to use his vote... with discretion and proper detachment...²¹

Paul's later separation from Potts refocuses attention on the loss of his real identity in view of the shift from his native 'static' world.

... but next day, he woke up leaving himself disembodied somewhere between Sloane Square and Onslow Square.... From the point of view of this story Paul's second disappearance is necessary, because ... Paul would never have made a hero, and the only interest about him arises from the unusual series of events of which his shadow was witness.²²

Waugh intrudes into his narrative in order to hint at the significance underlying Paul's mysterious disappearance and its obvious use for the novel's thematic line of intention: the comic inadequacy of static ideals in a comically futile and absurd world of secular change.

At King's Thursday, Paul meets Otto Silenus, a young architect whose intellectualism is self-defeating. Yet, it is through him that most of Waugh's significant comments on the history of human society are made. These comments in some way order the importance of the other parts of the novel; they work on the beliefs of the reader. Admittedly, Waugh finds that some of the beliefs

on which a full appreciation of the work depends come to him ready-made and somehow these beliefs must be accepted fully by the postulated reader as he comes to read the book; he reinforces these ideas concerning change and progress by weaving them into the texture of the novel. Thus, Silenus regards the process of 'becoming' vile as it has rendered man unfit both for the static life of a machine and the free life of a monkey. None of the possibilities are in themselves attractive. Waugh is castigating here, in an oblique manner, the evolutionary concept of change.

By now, Paul has started regarding himself a 'dynamic' person. His success with Margot has assured him of his ability to move about in the dynamic world with some measure of success. It is in this false self-estimation and in his gullibility about the purity of Margot's shady business that he shows himself a comic fool. Even after being alerted by Philbrick, the man who knows the underworld very well, and by Potts who sniffs white slave traffic at Margot's place, he chooses to turn a blind eye to what goes on under his nose. Paul's illusions about Margot's philanthropy not only render him comic but also have the potential to make his plight grim and tragic. An interesting characteristic of Waugh's comic style is that the incongruity from which the comic elements springs

has very great possibility of turning tragic at any moment. A small hitch during marriage preparations hastens that. The women recruited by Margot for her shady Latin American Entertainment Co. are held up at Buenos Aires. Due to her insistence, Paul goes to procure their release. As the time at his disposal is too short, he goes by plane all the way to that place, with the tickets booked for the return journey. Paul feels himself already the lord of dynamic life and pities Potts' inability to understand his whirl-wind tours across the Atlantic. Paul's ignorance of Potts' real intentions in tracking his movements render him comic. Potts, who is working for the League of Nations, is after Paul to dig out vital clues to the shady business carried out at Margot's house. Comedy here is blended with the tragic as the fate that awaits Paul is grim and unjustified. His sympathy with Margot's women for having been trapped in a notorious street, irritation with Govt. officials who are non-cooperative to him and vexation with the League of Nations which hinders his apparently pious work make him look as comic as Don Quixote who sees in all his miscalculations the hand of some sorcerer. It is only after his arrest that Paul begins to understand the reality of his situation. By then it is too late. When Margot learns about her fiance's arrest, she takes flight, leaving him to suffer for her crimes.

'Paul's blankness' may prevent 'this experience from being unduly criticised'. But it does not in any way mitigate the reprehensibility of Margot's conduct. Eagleton's inference that it shows Waugh's dual approach to upper classes: that of acceptance and rejection, is somewhat lopsided as 'Paul's blankness' merely guarantees the objectivity of condemnation.²³ The second section of the novel, therefore, exposes the sterility and pointlessness of Britain's high social life through the point of view of the rebuffed acquiescent picaro, Paul Pennyfeather. Once again the comic vision of absurdity is concretised in the moral valuelessness of high social life.

Ignoring this function of the second section, John Willet complains that

... there are sizable bald patches, particularly in the second section of the book. To some extent, this comes from the novel's pattern. The school staff have to be brought together in prison so as to stress the similarity of the two regimes.²⁴

True, this section includes the chapter, 'Interlude', that breaks off the narrative for a while. Still, instead of detracting attention from the novel, it helps in a better explication of the subtextual meanings of the novel. Also, this section performs a function much greater than that of allowing the school-staff to reassemble in Sir Lucas

Dockery's prison. As already discussed, it shows Britain to have progressed little from its hated barbaric past in so far as its society lacks all civilised values. Indeed, the imbalance and abnormality in human relations projected here seem more than what one can find even in a primitive society. The claims of British superiority thus look comic against the foreground of its vulnerable reality.

Every society has had to face threats to its existent order from the irrational forces of barbarity and savagery. Modern societies have devised the ingenious system of containing these forces in prisons with the help of an efficient judicial system. As Waugh maintains:

There are criminal ideas and a criminal class in every nation and the first action of every revolution, figuratively and literally, is to open the prisons.²⁵

In a society which is only reputed to be a civilisation, this system becomes ridiculous by its malfunctioning. The third section of the novel is indicative of this imbalance and maladjustment. Paul's trial reduces the system of segregating the criminals from the healthy body of society, to the level of a farce. While the real culprit goes scot free, the Judge and Potts are foolishly content with their success in saving the society from the malicious influence of a white slave trafficker. Like Falder, in

Galsworthy's Justice, Paul is here a victim of the miscarriage of justice meted out in courts of law. Consequently, the fabric of modern British society has been torn into shreds by criminals cunning enough to outwit the law. It would be delusive to consider such a society progressive and civilised. Once again, Waugh exposes the ridiculous faith of the progressive historiographers in the idea of attaining progress through secular change.

Paul's picaresque journey leads him violently to the prison of Sir Lucas Dockery. He meets his old friend, Prendergast, here. Prendergast has by now seen the 'Light' that he had been waiting for. He has discovered that in order to be a priest one need not, of necessity, adhere to any particular Christian theological doctrine. Accordingly, he is now a Modern Churchman in the prison of Sir Lucas Dockery. Prendergast's discovery epitomises the perversion of religion that is so often encountered in the dynamic world. While the Governor, Sir Lucas Dockery, is supposed to be the custodian of physical and mental discipline among the criminals, who are a variation on the barbarians of yesteryears, Prendergast is supposed to be the custodian of their spiritual discipline. Both, however, are misfits in their respective roles as they themselves are the epitomes of indiscipline. Sir Lucas Dockery can be always seen musing over his future

renown for having invented and introduced novel theories of penal reforms. He belongs to that class of people about whom Waugh writes that in the bid to be enlightened and progressive, they have tolerated all shades of opinion and in the process have lost more than gained by the loss of all principles and considered opinions.²⁶ Upon being told about Paul's preference for solitary confinement, he sees signs of introversion in him. So the next thing Paul is made to do is to socialise with a homicidal carpenter who bears a deep-seated ill-will against Prendergast for being a false priest and an infidel. As the carpenter considers himself God's elect and the Sword of Israel against the infidel, Prendergast's life cannot be safe in his hands. In his visions, he keeps on hearing the command, 'Kill and spare not'. So when he is equipped with the tools of a carpenter, on the recommendation of the prison Governor who wishes to provide the aesthetic satisfaction of carpentry to him, he becomes a potential source of danger. The Prison Governor, however, realises it only after he has sawn off, in his cell, the head of Prendergast. The comic obsession of the homicidal lunatic with the visions of blood and murder take on a tragic dimension in Prendergast's cold blooded murder. This is the grotesque element that so often permeates Waugh's fiction.

The death of Prendergast and the defeat of Sir Lucas Dockery's new fangled ideas show Waugh's antipathy to an individualistic attitude to religion, as is manifest in Protestantism. Waugh's views are analogous to those of the Roman Catholic Church in Shaw's Saint Joan. Joan is burnt at the stake not for being an atheist but for encouraging a heretical propensity, whose later image may be found in Waugh's homicidal lunatic. Were every individual free to interpret the scriptures the way he wants, the world would be flooded with a bewildering variety of spiritual values. Waugh's later conversion to Roman Catholicism is anticipated here.

Sometime after Prendergast's death, Paul is shifted to Egdon Heath where he is supposed to pass the rest of his seven years' penal sentence. Captain Grimes is already there. But he does not intend to stay there for long. One day, he makes good his escape despite the entire prison guard force being at his back.⁴ To shroud their incompetence, they declare him dead. From his newly acquired familiarity with the dynamic world, Paul knows that it is not the truth. Once again Waugh exposes the inability and inefficiency of the judicial system in isolating criminals from the society and the modern British society is likened to a jungle infested with savages and barbarians. Thus the myth of progress,

epitomised in Britain's advancement is exploded.

The judicial system is again made to look completely absurd in the fake death of Paul. One day Paul is asked to get ready for an operation of appendicitis, even though he is perfectly alright. He is unable to make out the intention of the prison officials. He is taken to the seaside nursing home of the protean Dr. Fagan, who has by now left the teaching profession because of the meagre living it afforded. Alastair-Digby-Vane Trumpington is there to arrange the false declaration of Paul's death by a drunk Doctor who is amply rewarded. Paul's fake death is significant from the point of view of his search for identity. Underlying it is the fact of his death as a 'shadow' or a pseudo dynamic person. The chapter entitled 'Resurrection' suggests his phoenix-like rebirth as a 'real' 'static' character from the ashes of his imposed 'dynamic' self. Paul's steps are guided towards this self realization by Otto Silenus, who with a blend of wisdom and insight, tells him:

Now you're a person who was clearly meant to stay in the seats and sit still and if you get bored watch the others. Somehow, you got on to the wheel, and you got thrown off again at once with a hard bump. It's all right for Margot, who can cling on, and for me, at the centre, but you're static.... There's a real distinction there, though I can't tell you how it comes. I think we're probably two quite different species spiritually.²⁷

Stephen Spender appears to have overlooked the significance of this experience in Paul's life when he accuses Waugh of not developing his characters properly:

There is no expansion of understanding, not only within the minor figures who are all mindless caricatures, but within the major characters as well.²⁸

Richard Johnstone also falls into the same error when he writes:

These picaresque journeys... are quests for knowledge and personal fulfilment; they lead, however, to increasing incomprehension and isolation.²⁹

In fact Waugh needs to be commended for having made the picaro, a developing character when all through the history of picaresque fiction he had been a stagnant one.

The epilogue re-enacts the action witnessed in the prologue. Paul is back at Oxford, though disguised as a distant cousin of the previous Paul. The Bollingerites are again on rampage. But Paul is wise enough this time to keep clear of them and avoid being thrust on the wheel of 'dynamic' life once again. The only person aware of his true identity is Peter Beste Chetwynde to whom Paul confesses the incompatibility of his static nature with the dynamic nature of Peter's class of people. With the dawning of this realisation, he ceases to be the butt of comic ridicule. In view of Paul's development from a

ridiculous 'shadow' character to a thoughtful 'real' person, it is difficult to reconcile with the views expressed by Stephen Spender:

Perhaps one of the things which makes Evelyn Waugh primarily a comic writer is that, with all his observation of manners and behaviour, he is unable successfully to project his own struggle into a character.³⁰

True, Paul does not touch the peak of self-realisation that Guy Crouchback does. But he does plumb, at least, the reality of his self, however handicapped it may be. This movement from incomprehension to comprehension lies at the base of most comedies.

The action of the novel describes a full circle with the re-admission of Paul at Oxford. Besides, the very situation with which the novel ends is a repetition of that with which the prologue of the novel opened. The circuitous picaresque journey of Paul is analogous to that of a person poised on a wheel whose circular motion robs his efforts of all significance. Stephen J. Greenblatt has rightly pointed out:

The plot of Evelyn Waugh's first novel is not a linear progression, a series of events which conclude in a true shift from the original condition but a great circle "like the big wheel at Luna Park".³¹

The image of wheel, pointed out by Otto Silenus, brings out, in sharp focus, the anti-progressive attitude of the author. The circularity of secular change underlines the comic futility of human endeavour in a world rendered absurd by the exclusion of the true religious impulse from it. This is the vision that is common to all lesser comedies of Waugh. We, therefore, find the thematic assertion of the novel, underlined and accentuated in the circular plot of the novel.

While evaluating the novel, we should guard against being carried away by the flavour of its 'particular' quality: the sheer temporal progression of events in Paul's life, dealing with his comic misadventures. An underlying logical connection between these seemingly unrelated incidents lends the novel its universal quality which is that change at the temporal level of reality yields no significant results. Terry Eagleton's assertion that Waugh's fiction is 'unable to pass beyond its own specialised social experience to discern and evaluate the total structure of which it is a part' is therefore partial and prejudiced in many ways.³²

If Terry Eagleton fails to see the universal quality in Waugh's novels, Stephen Spender reads the novel, inverted:

But the title has also a subtler irony; for Decline and Fall like the novels of Ronald Firbank, deals with a world where there is in reality no Fall, nor Sin, nor Redemption. 33

True, the dynamic characters score over the unsuspecting static character, Paul Pennyfeather, and roam with complete impunity, giving the impression of a Before-the-Fall world. But they also do not escape the point of Waugh's irony, which reveals the futility of their delusive faith in temporal progress on the wheel of life. Moreover, in Waugh's comic vision of life the Garden of Eden lies at the hub of the wheel of life which is symbolic of permanence and order.

The novel shatters the illusions not only of Paul Pennyfeather but also of the progressives who believe in Britain's cultural superiority and in doing so, renders not only Paul but also the progressives, comic. It is this non-progressive character of secular change that lends the world of Evelyn Waugh an air of absurdity which is comic in so far as it mocks at man's delusive faith in progress through secular change and grim, in so far as it holds out no hope of salvation from the pointlessness of an incessant circular motion. Thus the view of life presented here is at once tragic and comic. In a perceptive piece of critical remark Horace Walpole once said, "The world is a comedy to those who think and tragedy to those who feel". There is much truth in understanding life as a curious blend of tragedy and comedy. Waugh in holding the mirror upto a

tragi-comic view of life was merely exploring the old theme in a new way and his perception of reality from the point of view of the genre of literature is as old as that of Shakespeare.

VILE BODIES (1930):

In Vile Bodies (1930), Waugh's second major novel, the focus of artistic attention continues to be the absurdity of seeking progress through secular change. Waugh mocks at the idea of secular progress by showing how an individual who allows himself to be deluded by it returns to his original state of existence despite all his best efforts to improve his lot. The symbolic image of the wheel of life comes through graphically in the various circular images employed by the author for the purpose. Yet Waugh at no stage precludes sympathy from the object of our ridicule. His delusion demands sympathy rather than outright condemnation. This is what makes Waugh's second major novel to remain a lesser comedy rather than becoming a satire. The comedy is, however, tinged with tragedy in so far as it points to the outbreak of disorder and chaos in the shape of the Second Great War, at the end of the novel. In Waugh's comic view of life, while a movement along the wheel of life generates a sense of

ennui and absurdity, the movement away from the hub releases forces of disintegration and instability. A quickening of the pace of secular change thrusts human society to such a state. The comic vision of life revealed in this novel makes both these aspects of secular change explicit.

Culled from Lewis Carrol's Through The Looking Glass, the two epigraphs that preface Vile Bodies (1930), Waugh's second major fictional work, proclaim ideas that form the very foundation of the apparently ramshackle superstructure of its story. The first epigraph, a dialogue between Alice and the Queen, concerns itself with how rapidly a person need run in order that he may get away from his original position. In this regard, the Queen tells Alice:

'Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that.'³⁴

Waugh wishes us to understand that notwithstanding the massiveness of human efforts for change, there can be no real progress as long as the change desired is secular. The circuitous course of secular change deprives human effort of all its significance. The only possibility, whose hope the Queen holds out, is delusive as no person can work twice as hard as his abilities allow. Quite appropriately, there is the exclamation mark at the end

of the second sentence. An accelerated rate of secular change has, however, been mistaken in the industrialised world of today for a spring board for progress. By pointing out the folly of nursing such illusions, Waugh drives home the idea of the non-progressive character of the modern secular world.

The second epigraph, again a dialogue, concerns itself exclusively with the distinction between reality and illusion. When Alice asserts the reality of her self by pointing to the fact of her weeping, Tweedledum questions her complacent belief and doubts the honesty and genuineness of the tears shed:

'I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?
Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt. 35

The inclusion of the second epigraph is justified in so far as it underlines the theme of appearance and reality suggested right in the first epigraph. The interweaving of these epigraphs directs the attention of the readers to the theme of change and progress running through the sub-text of this novel. S.M. Pandeya, however, overlooks the thematic significance of the second epigraph when he restricts its interpretation to the technical aspect of the novel only. He opines:

The first epigraph has a thematic bearing on the book, and the second a technical one ... This (the second epigraph) raises the question as to the nature of reality presented in Vile Bodies There is no wonder that the contemporary socio-cultural reality presented in Evelyn Waugh's novels gives the impression of being a fantasy.³⁶

The central character of Vile Bodies, unlike that of Decline and Fall, has a certain goal to achieve : marriage with Nina Blount. However, like Paul Pennyfeather, he belongs to the static world of scholarship and learning; Adam is a creative writer. When the novel begins, he is on board the ship bound for Dover. Waugh creates a picture of microcosmic British society on this ship by having the passengers on it drawn from the various segments of British society. There are the Bright Young Things, representing the youth of Britain; a politician, representing the British political leadership of the times; and two religious leaders, representing the religious leadership of the times. The ship thus acquires the symbolic significance of human society and the rough sea (that of) the difficulties in the progress of human society.

The roughness of the sea lends a circular motion to the ship which suggests the circular nature of secular change. Waugh highlights the impact of the delusion of secular progress, by showing the sickening effect that the circular motion of the ship has on its passengers. He writes:

Sometimes the ship pitched and sometimes she rolled and sometimes she stood quite still and shivered all over, poised above an abyss of dark water; then she would go swooping down like a scenic railway train into a windless hollow and up again with a rush into the gale; sometimes she would burrow her path, with convulsive nosings and scramblings like a terrier in a rabbit hole; and sometimes she would drop dead like a lift, it was this last movement that caused the most havoc among the passengers.³⁷

The pains Waugh takes in comparing the motion of the ship to a 'scenic railway train', a terrier, a lift, are not without significance. He is establishing in this passage the similarity between the circuitous motion of the wheel of life and that of the ship of human society. The importance of the last sentence cannot also be reduced. It shows the impact that the lifting of the veil of ignorance has when one is brought back to one's original position. The circular motion of the ship thus becomes the central and all pervasive image of the novel.

Modern society provides two kinds of leaders to its members: the politicians and the religious preachers. One expects them to steer the members of their society to a state of well-being and progress. The politician in the micro-cosmic British society on board the ship is Walter Outrage. He has drugged himself with worldly temptations and is, therefore, incapable of leading others. Besides, 'he is (only) last week's Prime Minister'. Among the the religious preachers present are: Father Rothschild

and Mrs. Melrose Ape. As her name also suggests, Mrs. Melrose Ape's religion is a sham. She holds the unchristian opinion that the real religious journey begins only after death.

'Rough? 'course it's rough. But let me ask you this. If you're put out this way over just an hour's sea sickness ..., what are you going to be like when you make the mighty big journey that's waiting for us all? Are you right with God?' said Mrs. Ape. 'Are you prepared for death?'³⁸

Contrasted with it is the truly religious attitude of Father Rothschild.

To Father Rothschild no passage was worse than any other. He thought of the sufferings of the saints, the mutability of human nature, the Four last Things, and between whiles repeated snatches of the penitential psalms.³⁹

Unlike Mrs. Melrose Ape, Father Rothschild makes no distinction between the life before and the life after death. He does not consider the former, 'secular by nature and only the latter, religious. Mrs. Ape thus belongs to the set of pseudo-religious people, about whom Harry Blamires says

... the christian has relegated the significance of the eternal to the life that succeeds this one. In doing so, it has enabled itself to come to terms with the secular mind on a false basis. The basis is that here and now christians and secularists can

share the same conceptions, attitudes, and modes of action within the temporal sphere, since the essential difference between them ... is one which begins to be applicable only when this life is ended.⁴⁰

Thus Father Rothschild's Roman Catholicism in contrast with Mrs. Ape's perverse religion, provides the hub to the wheel of secular life depicted in the novel. Still, Mrs. Ape has her way with the desperate humanity, represented by the seasick Bright Young People as her secular approach to religion is easier for the secular minded humanity to understand. Father Rothschild cannot help deploring this tendency. So when he hears the people on board the ship singing with her, he does not join them. Waugh says, "Father Rothschild heard it and turned his face to the wall".⁴¹ The first episode of the novel is thus indicative of the extent of helplessness of British society by virtue of its pathetic belief in the illusion of secular progress.

After the ship docks in at Dover, the ship of Adam's life starts on its voyage, its destination being marriage with Nina Blount. It would not be out of place to point out here the religious importance of marriage. In Roman Catholicism, it has a unique sacramental value and therefore, Adam's desire for marriage may be mistaken for his quest for the permanence of the Roman Catholic hub of life. That it is not so is clear from the monetary considerations that play

a vital role in the possibility of his marriage. Thus Adam's desire for marriage is, in no way, different from any other secular effort of man. This exposes his endeavours to the absurdity implicit in the circuitous course of secular change. Accordingly, his first attempt at marriage with Nina turns into a fiasco when the manuscript of his autobiography is impounded by the customs officer at Dover. Adam has come to England with an autobiographical type-script. He hopes to enable himself to marry his fiancée, Nina, with its proceeds. Being 'static', he little anticipates the reaction of the offensively inquisitive customs officer who considers his brain-child 'down right dirt' and accordingly, consigns it to flames.

It was sometime before Adam could get attended to. 'I've nothing but some very old clothes and some books', he said. But here he showed himself deficient in tact, for the man's casual air disappeared in a flash....

'Yes', said the customs officer menacingly, as though his worst suspicions had been confirmed, 'I should just about say you had got some books.'⁴²

If Adam's lack of understanding of the real nature of the dynamic world renders him comic, the irrational assessment of Adam's scholarly possessions renders the dynamic customs officer comic also, for he fails to see the real merit of Adam's book. With the loss of the book, Adam's hopes nose-dive like the ship which bore him back to England. The circuitous course of Adam's attempt manifests in his return to his original state of penury. The ship of Adam's hopes

describes a circle, in its rise at the prospect of marriage and fall because of its impossibility after the incident at the customs. Waugh, thus, draws our attention successfully to the futility of secular progress. A distinction needs to be drawn here between Waugh and the cyclical historiographers like Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth century Muslim thinker, makes an allowance for secular progress, at least in the short run, when he compares the growth and decay of "dynasties" to that of living organisms.⁴³ Oswald Spengler too makes such an allowance when he traces the course of human history from blatant barbarism through a classical period into a new type of barbarism where everything is commercialised and vulgarised.⁴⁴ In contrast, Waugh denies the possibility of secular progress even for a short while. Even the hope of such a progress proves to be illusory, as it happens in the case of Adam. Notwithstanding external change, the human society never progresses to a state of civilisation, so long as the change effected is merely secular.

Henceforth, the impoverished Adam leads the life of a picaro shuttling through the different local circles of British high society with a view to improving his fortunes and consequently, marrying Nina.

Adam's picaresque journey takes him first to Shepherds' hotel which is owned by Lottie Crump. Among the people assembled in the hotel is the ex-King of Ruritania. A victim of instability in his own lost kingdom, he is of the opinion that England too is in the grip of political instability.

'And now when I come to England always there is a different Prime Minister and no one knows which is which'.⁴⁵

The instability manifest in the political order of British society, has deeper roots. It stems out of a perversion of moral values. Waugh conveys it in the conduct of Outrage who, right at that moment, is closeted intimately with Princess Yoshiwara in contravention of all principles of morality. Waugh is here expressing a view that has long been popular and is still very common among lay readers of fiction. Waugh's representation of reality can be justified, for it communicates philosophical or moral truths in a lively and pleasing manner, and if it meant telling things which were not literally true, the untruths or for that matter the aberrations of the moral truth can be interpreted metaphorically as ways of representing an underlying general truth. In fact, Waugh's projection of reality may be viewed as a plausible reconstruction of what might well have occurred.

It is at Lottie Crumps' hotel that Adam's hopes describe a second circle. A young man who visits the hotel at this time, challenges any one to perform the trick he can. Adam accepts his challenge for a sum of five hundred pounds. Adam performs it not once but twice and wins, in the process, one thousand pounds. The sight of so large a sum fills Adam's mind with the hopes of marrying Nina. The ship of his hopes rises once again on the waves of life. Dizzy with excitement, he gives it away to a drunk Major who promises to multiply it for him by betting it on a race-horse, Indian Runner. Adam rings up his fiancee to apprise her of his ability to marry her by virtue of the sudden wind fall he has had and the thousands he would have, after winning the bet on Indian Runner. Nina sees through the illusion of Adam's hope of marriage as she is well aware of the poor quality of that horse. So she advises Adam to get his money back from that drunk Major. But before Adam may catch him, he has already made off with his money. Once again, the ship of Adam's desire dips down to the place from where it had risen and once again, Waugh underlines the comic futility of secular change. Though the reader cannot help laughing at Adam's excessive faith in the illusion of secular progress, yet the reader's ridicule is untainted by malice as he sympathises with the ignorance of the comic character. It is this quality that precludes a Waugh novel from being called a satire.

Waugh's attitude to change shows signs of resemblance with that of Roman Catholic Church, even though he got converted sometime after the composition of this novel. The attitude of Roman Catholic Church to secular change has been summed up for us by Harry Blamires who writes thus:

For the Christian mind earthly well being is not the summum bonum, as pain and death are not the worst evil. Eternal well-being is the final aim and end of things here. This means that success and prosperity within the earthly set up can not be regarded as a final criterion. Nor indeed can happiness within time be regarded as a final criterion.⁴⁶

The Catholic antipathy to 'earthly well-being' should be understood in the perspective of Man's Fall from the Garden of Eden state. As one sociologist says:

While christianity laid a basis for the idea of progress in the teachings of redemption, it also put forth the idea of the "fall of man" and the total depravity of the human race and thus left hardly any scope for the notion of possible improvement of Man's condition on earth.⁴⁷

The perspective provides an incontrovertible evidence of Waugh's irony being centred in the morality of Roman Catholic Church.

The theme of disorder and consequent decay of human society regains Waugh's attention when he describes the events that lead to the fall of Sir Brown's government.

Archie Schwert has invited the Bright Young People to a Savage Party. As the name suggests, the invitees are expected to come dressed as savages; a fact that points to the increasing irrationality and barbarity among youth. Order and civilisation have lost their lustre for them. Barbarity fascinates them, as they see novelty in it. The seeds of disorder and decay are, therefore, germinating even in the psyche of British Youth. It is to such a lot of young anarchists that Sir Brown falls a victim. The press takes him unawares when it reports the savage festivities of the Bright Young People at his residence and the parliament dismisses his government on the charges of immorality in private and public affairs, the latter being substantiated with Agatha's shameless treatment at the customs upon reaching Dover from France. Sir Brown becomes an easy scapegoat of an irrational social system for neither the odium of the press nor that of the parliament is just or founded on any cause that may be attributed to him. The frequent change of political leadership and that for unreasonable charges shows not only the extent of the impermanence that has crept into the British Society but also of the irrationality that has gained sway over all human assessments.

It has rightly been pointed out by J.B. Bury in The Idea of Progress that man's faculty of improving himself is the source of his other faculties, including his

sociability and it has been fatal to his happiness too. Man's capacities, stimulated by fortuitous circumstances, urged him onward, but he thus set out on the fatal road which led to the calamities of civilisation. Waugh's concept of change and progress is a vicious circle and man comes back over and over again to the point from which he started. There is no doubt that the ferment of ideas that the author creates in this and subsequent novels concerning change and progress provides the staple with which he builds up the framework of his novels; for these reasons Vile Bodies may be regarded in the words of D.H. Lawrence, as one bright book of life. Indeed it is a tremulation on the ether.

Adam's third attempt to find the means which shall make him acceptable to Nina, takes him to her father, Colonel Blount's house, Doubting All at Aylebury. Adam's meeting with the colonel is one of the most hilarious episodes in the novel. Before Adam departs for Aylebury, Nina informs her father of his arrival. But when Adam introduces himself to the colonel, he shuts the door upon him, denying that he had ever invited him to the luncheon. When Adam rings again, wishing only to use the telephone, the Colonel, in a sudden spurt of affability, asks him in, though still mistaking him for a vendor of vacuum cleaners.

'.... Why don't you come in? Have you come about the vacuum cleaner?'

'No'

'Funny, I've been expecting a man all the morning to show me a vacuum cleaner. Come in, do. Won't you stay to luncheon?'

'I should love to'.

'Splendid....'

.... Colonel Blount picked up a telegram and read it

'I'd quite forgotton, ' he said in some confusion.

'I'm afraid you'll think me very discourteous, but it is, after all, impossible for me to ask you to luncheon. I have a guest coming on very intimate

family business.... To tell you the truth, it's some young rascal who wants to marry my daughter....',⁴⁸

The colonel in his ignorance abuses Adam in his face. The latter, however, bears with it, keeping in mind his own need. It is only after the colonel discovers his identity that the comic fun explodes and the novel resumes its serious overtone. The comic episode of Adam's meeting with Colonel Blount illustrates the moral perplexity frequently found in Waugh's novels. The sub-plots help to enlarge the meaning of the main plot and hence they have a functional role in the framework of his novels. In playing up the moral bewilderment of his created world, Waugh betrays an inclination for form and feeling, for colour and richness, and he did not make the mistake of supposing that one was inconsistent with the other.

Adam's comic meeting with Colonel Blount, encourages false hopes of marriage in Adam's mind as he receives a cheque for one thousand pounds from his future father-in-law. Adam's ship of desires rides high once again. Waugh writes:

It does not befall many young men to be given a thousand pounds by a complete stranger twice on successive evenings. Adam laughed aloud in the Rector's car as they drove to the station.⁴⁹

In his high state of excitement, he calls on Nina to acquaint her with his success. She is quick enough to notice the deception practised by her father as he has signed 'Charlie Chaplin' on the cheque. She, however, keeps it to herself. The two spend that night together. Thus, Nina deliberately allows herself to be seduced. In the morning, she shatters Adam's illusion by letting him know the real worth of the cheque. Adam's ship now dives once again into the hollow on which it stood earlier. Adam's inability to progress is comparable to Vladimir and Estragon's predicament in Beckett's Waiting for Godot. Like Adam waiting for his never-to-materialise marriage with Nina, Vladimir and Estragon wait ceaselessly for the Godot who never turns up. Both Waugh and Beckett thus deny any notable change in man's lot. Yet, while Beckett is a pessimist who considers even the hope offered by religious revelations and teachings false, Waugh does not think so. A movement towards the sub-specie aeternitatis reality of Roman Catholicism, symbolised by the hub of the wheel of life, constitutes in Waugh's comic vision of life a step towards progress and freedom from the sterility of modern secular life.

Opportunity knocks once again in the shape of the job of Chatterbox on the Daily Excess. Adam gets it as the previous Chatterbox, Lord Balcairn has singed his head in the gas-oven after being caught reporting a party from which he was purposely excluded. It is a gruesome end of the fallen gentry. Adam's quick successes as a Chatterbox fill him again with the hope of marriage. With the intention of materialising it, he calls on Colonel Blount once again. His second visit to Doubting All forms the backdrop to another comic misadventure. Doubting All is buzzing with the activity of the Wonder-Film company who are shooting a film on Wesley. The Director of the film mistakes Adam for a reporter who has come to report the shooting. The Colonel too fails to recognise him and Adam's efforts in trying to identify himself look absurd in the face of the Colonel's rigid inability to understand. Adam has to return without being able to seek the Colonel's consent for the marriage. Upon returning to London, he discovers that Nina and her childhood friend, Ginger, in performing his job by proxy have unwittingly violated the prohibitory orders of Lord Monomark against mentioning three names: Espinosa, Count Cincinnatti and green bowler hats. As a result of this mistake, Adam loses his job of 'chatterbox' and Adam's ship of desire once again returns to its original place. Marriage has eluded him the fourth time. All his efforts for changing his condition have

yielded no result for the circular path of secular change brings the labouring man back to his original position. We seem to hear the echo of Tennyson's famous lines: 'The old order changeth and God fulfils himself in many ways'. Change is the condition of life and with it man moves from lesser progress to greater progress. The situation in Waugh's novels is similar, in so far as he acknowledges the reality of change and different, because it proves illusory in improving the lot of human society. Nevertheless, there is a renewal of faith and the development of events, as we shall see in our subsequent study of other novels, sheds light on the supreme importance of faith signified by belief in Catholicism.

While the non-progressive character of Adam's life describes a circuitous course round the hub of the wheel of life, the decadence of Britain describes a different kind of course. It is discernible in the increasing disorder, political instability and moral perplexity in British society. Commenting on the disregard for order among the Bright Young People, Father Rothschild remarks:

'Don't you think', said Father Rothschild gently, 'that perhaps it is all in some way historical? I don't think people ever want to lose their faith in religion or anything else.... they are all possessed with an almost fatal hunger for permanence. I think all these divorces show that. People aren't content just to muddle along now-a-days.... They say, "If a thing's not worth doing well; it's not worth doing at all." It makes everything very difficult for them'.⁵⁰

The 'fatal hunger for permanence' among the youth shows how chaos and anarchy have struck roots in the social structure of England. Father Rothschild sees only a catastrophe such as a war, a fit finale to this divisive trend. Walter Outrage, who lacks the penetrating insight of Father Rothschild, a spiritual elite, is alarmed upon hearing war mentioned. He mistakes it for an actual one and remonstrates comically against the withholding of this information from him.

'What war?' said the Prime Minister sharply. 'No one has said anything to me about a war. I really think I should have been told. I'll be damned,' he said defiantly, 'if they shall have a war without consulting me. What's a cabinet for if there's not more mutual confidence than that? What do they want a war for, anyway?'⁵¹

Condemned to the Sisyphean task of meaningless labour on the wheel of life, the dynamic Walter Outrage cannot have the insight which a spiritual elite at the hub of the wheel of life can have. Before the astounding insight of the latter, the former's reliance on worldly knowledge looks comically myopic. Father Rothschild, the only spiritual elite in the novel can thus analyse the outbreak of wars, in a profound manner. Father Rothschild asserts:

'Wars don't start nowadays because people want them. We long for peace, and fill our newspapers with conferences about disarmament and arbitration, but there is a radical instability in our world order, and soon we shall all be walking into the jaws of destruction again, protesting our pacific intentions.'⁵²

The course of destruction chalked out by Father Rothschild is such that it leads one away from the hub of the wheel of life to the farthest orbit on the wheel. The degree of impermanence, because of the high rate of speed at the outermost orbit, is so high that it is difficult to keep oneself in place there. Obviously, impermanence in world order manifests itself in a castrastrophe like war. Progress and decline in Waugh, therefore, need to be understood in the perspective of the direction of change, to or away from the hub. In this respect, Waugh differs from the cyclical historiographers who see progress and decline occurring on the circuitous course of life only. His view parallels the christian view of progress and decline as a movement towards or away from the permanent values of christianity. To be christian must be understood here as having faith in redemption and revulsion against the original sin which continues to haunt the mind of man.

The circular car race provides another image to Waugh in conveying the idea of circular secular change. A statue of Fame embraced by Speed has been kept for the car which stands first in this race. Waugh appears to suggest that human efforts are rewarded similarly in the 'dynamic' world. The man who travels fastest on the wheel of life and reaches the starting point first is, ludicrously enough, adjudged the best in the competition. Though by returning

to his original position, he negates the significance of all his efforts, yet he earns fame in the secular world. The incongruity between fact and fiction renders the entire enterprise ridiculously comic. Agatha Runcible's motor car accident, during this race, and her later nightmare of moving round and round at a faster and still faster pace ceaselessly, brings out the absurdity of engaging oneself in secular change. Commenting on the pathetic plight of Agatha Runcible, Rose Macaulay writes:

Agatha Runcible, whirling to her fatal crash in a fantastic motor race... is a figure perhaps more menacing and exemplary than the Bright Young Person she seems; Mr. Waugh might, with a little less of artistic control, have emphasised this aspect of her, given her in her last moments a spiritual malaise more explicit and profound than her delirium of racing cars.⁵³

Though Rose Macaulay reads the obvious meaning, the 'menacing and exemplary' fate of Agatha; she is unable to see the 'spiritual malaise' it implies. Apparently, it stems out of her inability to understand the symbolic significance of the circular car race. In contrast, Stephen Jay Greenblatt does not miss the profound implication of Agatha's nightmarish end as he considers her 'delirium dream' to be of prime importance to the novel.

The central image of Vile Bodies is the delirious dream of Agatha Runcible, who had drunkenly stepped into an idling racing car and cracked up after a few wild spins around the track....⁵⁴

Greenblatt, however, reduces the symbolic significance of the image of circle when he restricts it to the process of change taking place in modern times only while, according to Waugh, the image of circle or wheel stands for the entire continuum of time or life. This error of judgement impels him to see the moral centre of Waugh's irony within the temporal perspective of life, in the "value structures of the past".⁵⁵

It is during this race that Adam discovers the drunk Major who again lends false hope to Adam by wishing to return the multiplied sum of thirty five thousand pounds to him. As he does not have the sum upon him then and as he has lost even his money-purse, he wonders if Adam would help him. Adam obliges him by borrowing from Archie Schwert. The next day Adam goes to the drunk Major's hotel to get the huge sum of thirty five thousand pounds from him. When he learns that the drunk Major has already left the place, all his hopes fizzle out and he feels that he has come back to the starting point of all his futile endeavours.

Though Adam has been unable to get married to Nina, he buys her with a bad cheque off Ginger to whom she has been married, by now. The episode is suggestive not only of moral disorder but also of Adam's growing conformity to

the ways of this disorderly and irrational 'dynamic' world. In his third visit to Doubting All, along with Nina, it is he and not the Colonel who wins. The forgetful Colonel, unable to recognise Adam, mistakes him for Ginger, Nina's real husband. The colonel's confidence, in knowing him as a child, is, therefore, rendered amusing and incongruous:

'.... I used to know your father very well indeed at one time. Used to be a neighbour of mine over at where-was-it. I expect you've forgotten those days. You used to come over here to ride with Nina. You can't have been more than ten or eleven....'56

The servants, however, recognise him. So does the Rector. What perplexes them is Adam's impersonation as Ginger Littlejohn. The Rector presumes mistakenly that the colonel's son-in-law also might be suffering from a fickle memory. In this respect, Adam succeeds in throwing dust into the eyes of all those present at Colonel Blount's Doubting All. A ludicrous situation emerges when the Rector sympathises with Adam's supposed handicap. Ignorance of the reality of the situation renders the Rector comic and the reader has a hearty laugh at his expense.

'Quite off his head, poor boy. He didn't even remember coming here before. One expects that sort of thing in a man of the Colonel's age, but for a young man like that a very bad look out for the next generation....'57

If intuition does not provide us with the decisive data to support the existence of the self, some other way should be found to confirm or deny the intuitive idea. Our past experiences are present in some way in our memory. Yet, Hume remarks, quite rightly, that our experiences or perceptions are different from each other and may exist quite separately, having no need of anything else to support their existence. In fact, we need some kind of permanence and continuity to make the process of understanding possible and when the conditions of permanence are lacking, we experience the tastes of comedy. This is precisely the kind of mistake which develops when Adam presents himself as Ginger to the Colonel and the Rector.

The absurdity of 'dynamic' life is perhaps best brought out by the film that Colonel Blount shows to his supposed son-in-law and Nina. Wherever the action of the movie holds dramatic potential, the movie rushes through the episodes there. By not allowing any dramatic situation to develop, the movie stifles its dramatic element. However, the action of the movie slackens, wherever it is drab and uninteresting. Waugh's view of life thus compares favourably with Eliot's view of the fallen humanity or with that of the absurd dramatists who too saw no dramatic element in life.

While Adam and Nina are enjoying their Christmas at Doubling All, the war breaks out. The actualisation of the war lends authenticity to Father Rothschild's penetrating analysis of this world. The news of the war is juxtaposed with the tidings of comfort and joy brought by Christmas. The virtuosity in the act of juxtaposition is significant for only after the destruction of an unstable and irrational secular world can there be a possibility for the establishment of a stable Christian social order worthy of being called civilisation. Waugh's point is illustrated by his views in one of his essays, "I see Nothing But Boredom... Everywhere".

... I can see nothing objectionable in the total destruction of the earth, provided it is done, as seems most likely, inadvertently. If it is done in malice someone will have behaved culpably.⁵⁸

It is Waugh's deep discontent with the dynamic secular world that prompts him to acquiesce with the total destruction of the world.

"At the end of the novel, we find Adam reading a letter from Nina, on the biggest battlefield in the history of the world. By now, Nina is with Adam's child who Ginger thinks mistakenly to be his own. Thus, even Ginger is not spared from comic ridicule. It is during this war that Adam discovers his drunk Major who by now has shot up to

the rank of a General. He offers Adam his money which by now has lost much of its value. So the receipt of that money makes little difference to Adam's struggle for winning the hand of Nina Blount. Waugh here conveys an abstruse fact: not only are the secular actions of man foredoomed to failure but the very standards of measuring secular progress are impermanent and unreliable. There is no hope, therefore, for the modern man in the secular dynamic world. Rebecca West has traced this note of disillusionment from Eliot through Huxley to Waugh most perceptively.

Vile Bodies has, indeed, apart from its success in being really funny, a very considerable value as a further stage in the contemporary literature of disillusionment. That may be said to have started with T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land. Although that work had a supreme emotional effect it was not easy to guess what Mr. Eliot was disillusioned with, and why.... Then came Mr. Aldous Huxley whose contribution . . . left no doubt whatsoever as to what he was disillusioned with, and why Now Mr. Evelyn Waugh comes along to define this distaste... Young people, he tells us, are disgusted with the world because it is full of those who drink too much and think too little.⁵⁹

Her analysis, however, fails to bring out the real causes underlying the disillusionment of the youth in Evelyn Waugh's fictive world. She offers a simplistic explanation that ignores the significance of the profound metaphysic concealed in Waugh's comic view of the world. A saner analysis comes from L.P. Hartley who attributes the note of disillusionment to the impermanence of the world

in which the Bright Young People, ironically called so, live.

If we read this high-spirited book between the lines, and look its gift-horse, humour, in the mouth, we may find that the ground is not really solid beneath our feet, we are dancing on a volcano, carousing on the edge of a precipice...⁶⁰

Waugh's artistry needs to be commended for making a seemingly broken plot and apparently descriptive images to subserve the thematic line of intention in the novel. The course of Adam's efforts, directed towards marrying Nina, conforms to that of a circle which helps in establishing the analogy between Adam's attempts and those of a person on the wheel of life. The analogy is reinforced by the various circular images suggested in the narrative. The relationship of the 'formal circle' to that of the 'thematic circle'⁶¹ thus helps in strengthening the feeling of comic helplessness and absurdity of secular change usually found in the lesser comedies of Waugh.

Terry Eagleton, however, deprives Waugh's novels of their legitimate 'universal' quality by including them in the category of 'upper-class novel' and foisting on them the quality of its restrictive vision.

Both the upper-class and lower middle-class novels confront panic and emptiness, as an 'objective' quality of contemporary experience; yet that sense of uncontrolled collapse is, equally, the quality of a constricted social vision in the novel itself, unable to pass beyond its own specialised social experience to discern and evaluate the total structure of which it is a part.⁶²

True, Waugh's novels take their protagonists to the heart of high social life. But that should not be used as a stick to beat the artist with, for

His knowledge (the author's) of the world is limited by his own experience. It is practically impossible for those who live among poor people to write about the rich, a writer who has never been seriously in love can not make his characters seem so; upbringing, education, experience of travel, of the war, etc., all circumscribe and determine the incidents of a book.⁶³

Moreover, the Waugh novels do pass beyond the social experiences they describe. This is evident from the comic vision of life that emerges from them. The circuitous path that Adam's fortunes describe, the perpetual nightmare reality of a circuitous motion evident in Agatha's fate and the decline of British social system are ideas that point to the all-pervasive idea of the futility of secular change; a vision, which is at once original and profound. Vile Bodies thus provides an important step forward in the canon of Waugh literature.

BLACK MISCHIEF (1932):

The first two novels of Waugh preponderated with exposing the comic fallacy of mistaking secular change for progress. By the time Waugh came to write Black Mischief (1932) at Madresfield, Lord Beauchamp's moated house near Malvern, he had got converted to Roman Catholicism. The change had an impact not only on his personal life but also on his artistry. It is evident from the explicit expression of the theme of non-synonymity of secular change with progress in this novel which lies at the base of all lesser comedies of Waugh. Though the moral centre of Waugh's irony, the hub of the wheel of life, mentioned first in Decline and Fall (1928), already displayed Catholic characteristics, it now took on an overtly Catholic significance. With the clarity of thought provided by Roman Catholicism, Waugh felt himself well-equipped for the strenuous task of expressing the theme common to his first two novels, in a historical framework. Consequently, he chose to narrate the history of a fictive barbaric nation whose ruler is desirous of translating the delusive Enlightenment philosophy of secular progress into a reality.

The change in the physical setting of this novel has, however, elicited a mixed response from critics. While Gilbert Highet is of the opinion that it is prompted by the novelist's desire to satirise 'the current idealistic

doctrine that all races are brothers under the skin'⁶⁴, Lionel Stevenson thinks that it 'gives Waugh equal opportunities for ridiculing Western sophistication and primitive savagery'.⁶⁵ Stephen Greenplott rejects these opinions and asserts that it is 'a condemnation far more of the cultivated Westerner than of the African'⁶⁶. David Lodge too denies any traces of 'racial snobbery' in the novels, dealing with the African situation, 'where if any group survives the author's impartial irony, it is the non-Europeans'⁶⁷. Despite this, Greenblatt and Lodge comprehend the thematic significance of the change in setting inadequately. While the former considers it no more than a means of heightening the ironic force of Waugh's biting scrutiny of his homeland⁶⁸, the latter thinks that it merely shows 'the primitivism of Africa... as both a foil to and a portent for a civilization that was itself declining into a new, and less appealing, kind of barbarism'.⁶⁹ Both these analyses ignore the centrality of Waugh's desire to show, through the changed setting, the comic futility of a nation's journey towards secular progress on the circular path of secular change.

Seth, the central protagonist of this novel, is the descendant of Amurath, the Great who was responsible for founding the Azanian Empire, with its capital at Debra Dowa.⁷⁰

Inhabited mostly by the savage tribes of Sakuyu and Wanda, Azania was under Arab rule until it passed into the hands of Amurath, a three-fourth Negro. Inflamed by the desire of developing his empire, secularly of course, he took steps to modernise it. Amurath, thus, falls into the seductive delusion of mistaking secular change for real progress just as the Enlightenment historiographers did.

His successes and failures are indicative of the victory and defeat respectively of Enlightenment historiography. One of the first steps taken by him, in this direction, is the introduction of 'a railway' between Matodi and Debra Dowa. Waugh remarks ironically enough:

Reluctantly, step by step, barbarism retreated; the seeds of progress took root and, after years of growth, burst finally into flower in the single, narrow-gauge track of the Grand Chemin de Fer Impereal d' Azanie.⁷¹

The mock epic style employed here leaves no room for doubt regarding where the author's sympathies lie. Waugh had no illusions about the extirpation of barbarism by secular change. Barbarism can scarcely be overcome with a change that is incomprehensible to people.

The first few trains caused numerous deaths among the inhabitants, who for some time did not appreciate the speed or strength of this new thing that had come to their country. Presently they became more cautious and the service less frequent.⁷²

Among other changes that he introduced were the abolition of slavery and the declaration of christianity as the official religion. The former had little impact on the prevalent practice as it was never made known to the real offenders.

He proclaimed the abolition of slavery and was warmly applauded in the European Press; the law was posted up prominently in the capital in English, French and Italian where every foreigner might read it; it was never promulgated in the provinces nor translated into any of the native languages; the ancient system continued unhampered but European intervention had been anticipated.⁷³

The response of the European Press, against the backdrop of this eyewash, is not only ludicrous but is also condemnatory of their progressive stance.

Again, the declaration of Christianity as the official religion by itself does not lend significance to the progressive designs of Amurath as the basis on which they are pursued, is unchristian and secular. Seth wishes it to further his efforts for secular progress and also to ward off European intervention.

As a result of these secular changes, Debra Dowa comes up as a modern city with a gesselschaft social structure. This is evident from the picture Waugh paints of it. A haphazard jumble of shops, missions, barracks,

legations, bungalows and native huts sprang up in Debra Dowa. The character of the inhabitants also changed:

...the main population, however, was always cosmopolitan, and as the country's reputation as a land of opportunity spread through the less successful classes of the outside world Debra Dowa gradually lost all evidence of national character.⁷⁴

The disorder that afflicts a gessellschaft social structure, also plagues Debra Dowa. Waugh writes:

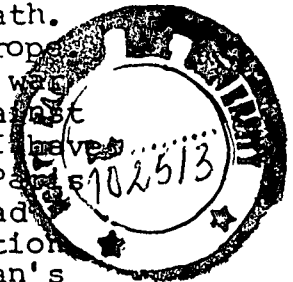
The ground between and about the buildings was uneven and untidy; stacks of fuel, kitchen refuse, derelict carriages, cannon and ammunition lay in permanent places; sometimes there would be a fly-blown carcass of a donkey or camel, and after the rains pools of stagnant water; gangs of prisoners, chained neck to neck, could often be seen shovelling as though some project were on hand of levelling or draining.⁷⁵

Disarray is a sign not of civilisation but of barbarity. Thus despite the changes effected in the Azanian society, it continues to be as it was before. The circular path of secular change deprives human efforts of any significant achievement, a view that is diametrically opposed to that of the Enlightenment and Humanist historiographers.

When the action of the novel begins, Amurath and his daughter are already dead, his grandson, Seth, is fighting with Seyid, the husband of the late Empress, for political control over the island-state. Oxford-educated,

his imagination is fired by the Enlightenment zeal of human progress on the circuitous path of secular change. He is, in this respect, far more dynamic than his grandfather, Amurath. Moreover, Seth has been exposed in his youth to the 'dynamic' life of the Western society which has made him conscious of 'modernity'. He, therefore, sees the battle between him and his father as one between progress and barbarity.

'Fools, what do they know? What can they understand? I am Seth, grandson of Amurath. Defeat is impossible. I have been to Europe. I know. We have the Tank. This is not a war of Seth against Seyid but of progress against Barbarism. And Progress must prevail. I have seen the great tattoo of Aldershot, the Paris Exhibition, the Oxford Union. I have read modern books... The whole might of Evolution rides behind him; at my stirrups run woman's suffrage, vaccination and vivisection. I am the New Age. I am the Future'.⁷⁶



Seth's excessive reliance on the tank exhibits his unshakable faith in the superiority of whatever is modern. In this regard, he is completely hoodwinked by the Western ideas of progress. David Lodge has rightly commented that 'Seth personifies a misplaced faith in Western ideas of progress'.⁷⁷ His 'misplaced faith' is comic in so far as it persists in the face of reality. The tank on which he pins all his hopes, proves to be of no more use in the battle than of serving as a punishment cell. The battle is won, instead, by 'two very ancient weapons - lies and the long spear'.⁷⁸ A fitting reply to Seth's notion of

modernity comes, though he fails to see the point of the irony, in the manner of Seyid's death.

'They should not have eaten him - after all, he was my father...
It is so... so barbarous'.⁷⁹

In the theme of cannibalism, that emerges from Seyid's death, Waugh shows that the comic adventures into modernity by a deluded ruler, can have grave consequences as well. The comic and the tragic get blended quite often in Waugh when the dynamic world is allowed to have its way unhampered. The forces of barbarity unleashed in this battle mock at the progressive claims of Seth, and by inference, the Enlightenment and Humanist historiography also. Thus, Seth, as the deity of secular change, becomes the butt of ridicule in this novel.

Instead of reading in his victory, the fallacy of modernisation as a means to progress, Seth reads in it an urgent need for the modernisation of his people.

'I am afraid that as yet the Wanda are totally out of touch with modern thought. They need education. We must start some schools and a university for them when we get things straight'.⁸⁰

It may be argued that if education, which is a culture of mind, is not a sure way to civilisation, then what else is. True, education has the noble aim of civilising human society. But the kind of education that Seth chooses for

his subjects is the secular education of the West, about which T.S. Eliot has brilliantly written:

All our knowledge brings us nearer to our
ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death no nearer to GOD.⁸¹

Moreover, Seth himself, as a product of that system of education, is a figure of fun. The need for modernisation that is accelerated social change in a secular perspective, keeps pressing upon his mind. Waiting for the delinquent engine to return, he ponders over the urgency of the need.

'My people are a worthless people. I give orders; there is none to obey me. I am like a great musician without an instrument. A wrecked car broadside across the line of my procession... a royal train without an engine... goats on the platform... I can do nothing with these people. The Metropolitan is drunk. Those land-owners giggled when the engine broke away; I must find a man of culture, a modern man... a representative of Progress and the New Age.'⁸²

Modernity, Seth's obsession, has however already made an incursion into Azania, in the shape of the Embassies and legations of the so-called civilised West. The co-existence of the decadent West and the barbaric East marks 'a unique stage of the interpenetration of two cultures'.⁸³ The description of the three Embassies, representatives of the West, shows that the civilisation for which Seth aspires, is no civilisation for its imposed order is unable to contain the forces of impermanence and instability. While

the American Ambassador suffers from a false sense of superiority,

... he had chosen that post and had not regretted it, enjoying during the last eight years a popularity and prestige which he would hardly have attained among his own people.⁸⁴

the French Ambassador's excessive suspiciousness verges on the comic. When M. Ballon, the French Ambassador, learns of Bishop Goodchild's visit to the British Legation, he attaches an uncalled for importance to it. He thinks that the British Ambassador keeps himself informed about the town through the Bishop. In other words, he is obsessed with the idea of espionage. The elaborate ritual of his retiring to bed is highly comic as it shows the extent to which he has been taken in by his own imagined fears.

M. Ballon ascended the stairs to bed. In his room he first tested the steel shutters, then the lock of the door. Then he went across the bed ... and examined the mosquito curtains... examined the magazine of his revolver and laid it on the chair at his bedside... He slipped another revolver under his pillow. He tiptoed to the window and called down softly:
 'Sergeant'
 There was a click of heels in the darkness. 'Excellence'.
 'Is all well?'
 'All well, Excellence'.⁸⁵

M. Ballon's excessively cautious nature, despite its comicality, is not unexpected. A lifetime's association

with a disordered and savage world has made him be on his guard against dynamic characters like Margot Chetwynde and Basil Seal and thereby, escape the fate of a Paul Penn feather. In this respect, he is a part of the secular 'dynamic' world. Despite all the Enlightenment claims of the rational superiority of modern man, he is as superstitious as a savage. Before sinking into the stupor of sleep,

his hand found and grasped a small-curved nut which he kept under his bolster in the belief that it would bring him good luck.⁸⁶

If the French Ambassador represents one pole of the dynamic world, the Ambassador, Sir Samson Courteney, represents another. Oblivious of the world around him, he is happy in the calm of his domestic life. If his French counterpart renders himself comic by grossly exaggerating his false fears, he becomes comic by flagrantly belittling the gravity of reality. This has earned him the name of Envoy Extraordinary. Bishop Goddchild's visit, which had made M. Ballon fret so much, reveals on the other hand, Sir Courteney's comic disregard for reality.

'Everyone is in a great state of alarm in the town,' said the Bishop. 'There are so many rumours. Tell me, Sir Samson, you do not think really, seriously, there is any danger of massacre?'

Contd...

The Envoy Extraordinary said: 'We seem to have tinned asparagus for luncheon every day... I can't think why... I'm so sorry - you were talking about the massacre. Well, I hardly know. I haven't really thought about it... Yes, I suppose there might be one... Don't do to get worried... I should have thought we could have grown it ourselves.'⁸⁷

The Envoy Extraordinary's attitude is that of a man who unconsciously feels himself incapable of changing the disordered and predatory 'dynamic' world and therefore, lets the matters drift without burdening his own mind with the task of changing the direction of its course. As it is a response fathered by a highly unstable world order, there is no distortion of truth in the depiction of Sir Courteney's personality. By being a product of the 'dynamic' world, he is Waugh's indirect and objective indictment of its progressive claims.

The Envoy's thirteen year old 'silly' daughter, Prudence, is in love with William, the first secretary to the British Legation. Their constant attempts to invent new ways of loving show the superficiality, and consequent insincerity, of their feelings. The impermanence of their love is a sign of decadence in the quality of human relations.

Given the opportunity, it can easily transfer to another person. Such an occasion arises on Basil's arrival.

Prudence forgets William and takes to the highly unstable Basil. The theme of cannibalism again rears its head in their idle love talk. Basil tells Prudence, "You're a grand girl, Prudence, and I'll like to eat you". To this she replies; "So you shall, my sweet, anything you want". It is gruesomely realised in the denouement when Basil unwittingly consumes his mistress at a cannibal feast. The cannibal instincts portrayed here make mockery of the progressive claims of the Enlightenment and Humanist historiographers as they show a lack of Western cultural superiority over African barbarism. T.E. Eliot, in Sweeney Agonistes, points to a similar lack of progress in the secular efforts of human society. Aldous Huxley too, in his fiction, has drawn attention towards the barbaric potential of modern man.

In a perceptive piece of critical writing, Stephen Jay Greenblatt remarks:

The abortive attempt to modernize Azania is not a statement of the African nation's inability to share in the glories of civilization but a shy and satiric examination of modernity itself. The struggle which Seth envisages as a mortal combat between barbarism and progress is a miserable sham, for Western culture itself is no longer meaningful. Ⓒ

By having founded itself on the false basis of secularised Christianity, the Western culture, as was seen in the first two novels, has drifted away from the rock of the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life and has, thus, exposed itself to the impermanence that keeps on growing as one moves away from the hub. Greenblatt, however, does not

interpret the meaninglessness of Western culture in these terms, he does so within the false framework of temporal reality. He writes:

Those Western ideas which might have given Seth's project real significance have been abandoned. Basil informs Seth: "We have got a much easier job now... If we'd had to modernize a country then it would have meant..." 'What is all that?' asked the Emperor. 'Just a few ideas that have ceased to be modern'...⁸⁹

The passage on which Greenblatt bases his argument, instead of playing up the meaningful stability of the ideas which would have given Seth's project real significance, exposes the vulnerability of those secular ideas to the change that the modern secular man has been effecting, under the delusion of secular progress. Permanence, according to Waugh, lies only in Roman Catholic values of life. So only they could have given meaning to his project of progress.

Seth, however, lives in blissful ignorance of the reality of the modernised West. He waits for the man who would use the magic wand of accelerated secular change to modernise his nation and thereby, bring it at par with the putative civilisation of the secular West. His choice falls interestingly enough, on Basil Seal, a person who is the very epitome of change and instability. Upon reading about the trouble in Azania, Basil, who has a natural penchant for rackets, becomes eager to go there. He not only deceives his mother who is planning a stable career at the Bar for him, but also robs her of her emerald bracelet when she does not

give him any money. Only a dynamic character like him can be so unfeeling as to do this and also to beg money of a mistress, unabashedly. The 'exceptional energy and initiative for an Evelyn Waugh hero'⁹⁰ that Spender discovers in him owes to this dynamism of his.

Basil's encounter with Seth is a meeting of two dynamic characters. Seth, by virtue of being placed on the outermost orbit of the wheel of life, is far more dynamic than Basil. Yet, when Seth sees Basil, he feels inferior.

Seth recognized him in his first grave survey of the restaurant and suddenly, on his triumphal night in his own capital, he was overcome by shyness.⁹¹

Seth's shyness springs out of the delusion of Western superiority which Basil represents by his flashy and dashing personality. As Waugh writes:

... Basil still stood for him as the personification of all that glittering, intangible Western culture to which he aspired.⁹²

Their close association cures Basil of any illusions of scoring over Seth for the latter proves to be intractable by virtue of the greater instability he epitomises in his personality. Seth, however, never learns the truth of Basil's personality. He continues to mistake Basil's disorderliness, a barbaric trait, for his progressiveness. The facade of sophistication hides the barbaric potential of Basil which is, indeed, a counterfoil of the blatant

barbarism of the Earl of Ngumo. Seth is reminded only of the barbaric Earl of Ngomo 'pacifically winking at the ladies as they danced past him'.

" 'Insupportable barbarians', he thought, 'I am sure that the English lords do not behave in that way before their king. Even my loyalest officers are ruffians and buffoons. If I had one man by me whom I could trust... a man of progress and culture'.⁹³

With the induction of Basil into Seth's service, his modernisation plans breathe with life. The 'Ministry of Modernization' is opened and it is located at the site occupied previously by the old Empress' oratory. Commenting on the secular nature of the changes contemplated by this ministry, Greenblatt rightly remarks:

The attempt to replace the worship of God with the worship of Progress is even more obvious in the site of the Ministry of Modernization, which occupies what had formerly been the old Empress' oratory.⁹⁴

As the course of secular change is circular and not linear, Seth's modernisation plans are an exercise in futility. Mr. Youkoumian, the Armenian counterpart of Basil, is made his Financial Secretary. In his lust for money, he compares favourably with Judas Iscariot.

It is evident from the avid interest he takes in one of the first tasks undertaken by the ministry, the issue of boots to the bare-footed Azanian army. Before the order is out, he buys boots to be sold later to the army.

He stands to lose when Connolly refuses to buy boots for his army, knowing fully well their uselessness for the soldiers who are used to going barefoot. Upon his deputy's requests, Basil argues with Seth about the modernity of having booted Guards and cleverly insinuates against Connolly being 'not quite modern' in opposing it. Convinced, Seth issues a royal decree, overruling Connolly's sagacious objections and indirectly furthering Mr. Youkoumian's financial interests. The boots have an ironic end when the soldiers who are issued these mistake them for extra rations and therefore, eat them. Hearing their jubilant cries, Basil mistakes them for their extreme satisfaction with being booted. The highly dynamic world of Azanian society is beyond the comprehension of even as dynamic a Western man as Basil Seal. He realises his first defeat when he learns the truth from his own adversary in the venture. Waugh writes:

'That's one in the eye for Connolly', he said, and next day, meeting the General in the Palace yard, he could not forbear to mention it. 'So the boots went down all right with your men after all, Connolly.'

'They went down'.

'No cases of lameness yet, I hope?'

The General... smiled pleasantly.

'No cases of lameness' he replied. 'One or two of belly ache, though ...'

You see my adjutant made rather a silly mistake. He hadn't had much truck with boots before and the silly fellow thought they were extra rations. My men ate the whole bag of tricks last night'.⁹⁵

Basil is rendered comic in failing to comprehend the greater degree of 'dynamism' of the barbaric society of Azania.

The other excursion into modernity, popularisation of birth control measures among the natives, has an equally ironic end. An artist, engaged for the purpose, draws up two posters which distinguish the relative fortunes of a small and a large family. The posters captioned, 'WHICH HOME DO YOU CHOOSE?' , are supposed to encourage the natives to have small and contented families. Their effect is, however, vice versa.

Nowhere was there any doubt about the meaning of the beautiful new pictures. See: on right hand: there is rich man; smoke pipe like big chief; but his wife she no good; sit eating meat: and rich man no good; he only one son. See: on left hand; poor man; not much to eat, but his wife she very good, work hard in field: man he good too; eleven children; one very mad, very holy. And in the middle; Emperor's juju. Make you like that good man with eleven children.⁹⁶

The Emperor's juju is mistaken for the promotion of fecundity and the large family concept. Just as the changes effected by his grandfather, had had little impact on the transformation of Azanian society. Similarly, his secular endeavours also fail in civilising his subjects. According to the Graeco-Roman Humanists, 'whatever happens in history happens as a direct result of human will; that someone is directly responsible for it, to be praised or blamed according as it is a good thing or bad'⁹⁷. They tend to eliminate the role of God and supplant him with 'mere personifications of human agency like the genius of the Emperor'.⁹⁸ By showing the miscarriage of all Seth's modernisation plans, Waugh shows the Humanist claims to be exaggerated and false

in the realm of secular reality. He thus appears to be in agreement with R.G. Collingwood who opines:

The extent to which people act with a clear idea of their ends, knowing what effects they are aiming at, is easily exaggerated. Most human action is tentative, experimental, directed not by a knowledge of what it will lead to but rather by a desire to know what will come of it.⁹⁹

The indictment of Humanist thought, further robs the secular human endeavours of any meaning they may have had. The dynamic secular world is reduced to the status of a jungle, no matter what its outward form may be.

But Seth refuses to see the limitations of human endeavours, unaided by any divine agency. He pursues his modernisation plans with greater vigour and ardour. The accelerated pace of change introduced by industrialisation is matched fully by his ebullient mind. No sooner does his mind ponder over one change in the Azanian social structure than it flits to another. The pace of change that he introduced is even greater than that in the western world. As change has an unsettling effect, the ideas that Seth borrows from the West are not even given time to settle and to be understood in their proper context. They are thus reduced to the level of half-baked concepts. In the less dynamic society of the West, these ideas, though they have little influence on development, have at least been understood whole because of the comparatively lesser unsettling effect of the slower pace of change. The working

of Seth's 'dynamic' mind, thus, tells upon Basil's abilities,

'E's been reading books again, Mr. Seal, that's what it is. You won't get no peace from 'im not till you fix 'im with a woman...'100

whose dynamism is no match for Seth's. The defeat of Basil shows neither him nor Seth in a better light as it is indicative of the victory of one savage over the other. It would not be fair, therefore, to say with Spender that 'Evelyn Waugh's sympathy (lies) with characters like Basil Seal who are not merely sinners but devils.'¹⁰¹

Waugh here draws a comparative analysis of the two cultures. By being subject to a lesser pace of change, the West is nearer the hub of the wheel of life compared to Azania which by being subject to a greater pace of change is farther from the hub. Nearness to the hub in Waugh means superiority while distance implies decadence. The Western society is, therefore, less decadent than the Azanian society. The linear comparison made here is justifiable as it springs from Waugh's linear concept of real change, one that leads to progress or barbarity. This is a point of distinction between him and other cyclical historiographers, Waugh's concept of decadence is, thus, unlike Spengler's.

The rapid unsettling change introduced by Seth's modernisation plans looms up from the shadows in the form of anarchy and insurrection at the end of the novel. The Church, the army and the crafty French Ambassador, with the aid of the Earl of Ngumo, set up a rival candidate for

the throne. On the occasion of the Birth Control Gala Day, there is a rebellion. In the struggle that ensues, Seth loses and has to flee along with Viscount Boaz to the jungles. Debra Dowa's imposed order rips open and the forces of irrationality and barbarity have their way in creating chaos and anarchy. Azania returns, after a long circuitous journey of secular change to its original state of barbarity. Seth, the champion of Enlightenment historiography, himself meets with an ironic and grim end in the jungles.

The circular path of Azanian history brings out the absurdity of man's belief in progress through secular change. Seth's position is rendered comic, in so far as he mistakes secular change for progress, and grim, in so far as he has to lose his life for this mistake. The error of judgement that the tragic hero in Shakespeare falls a victim to, takes a tragi-comic shape here in the fate of Seth, the deity of change in the novel. Besides, the comparative juxtaposition of the Western and the Azanian society brings out the linear concept of progress and decline that Waugh espoused. Thus, the novel shows two directions of change, circular and linear; each of them, however, being critical of the secular approach to life. Eric Linklater shows blatant ignorance of Waugh's attitude to change and progress, when he belittles his achievement in the novel by bringing it down to the plane of Restoration comedy:

Mr. Waugh is so abominably subversive as to mock the idea of progress, especially in such manifestations as might be expected to promote, by a One Year Plan, the adoption of modern organization and habits of life in the negroid Empire of Azania; but Mr Waugh, by living rather on the plane of Restoration Comedy, permits his readers, if they prefer it, to take his criticism simply as a good joke.¹⁰²

Waugh once said that there 'is no more agreeable position than that of a dissident from a stable society'¹⁰³ which, in his philosophy, implies a Roman Catholic society for civilisation, which 'has no force of its own beyond what is given it from within',¹⁰⁴ 'came into being through Christianity, and without it has no significance or power to command allegiance'.¹⁰⁵ The events in the novelistic history of Azania testify to Waugh's belief and also reveal the vantage point from which he assesses the secular efforts of human society. Ernest Oldmeadow's accusation,

There may be books in which sordidness of detail does not overwhelm the spirituality of the pervading idea, but Mr Waugh's is not one of them. On his dunghill no lily blooms,¹⁰⁶

is, therefore, a reflection not on the book he surveys maliciously but on his own inability to detect the pervading Christian idea in the objectively narrated history of Azania.

The circular course of Azanian history reinforced by a plot which ends where it began concretises Waugh's comic vision of absurdity against the backdrop of a world that has allowed itself to be deluded by the enlightenment and humanist historiographers' claim of achieving progress through secular change. In this respect, Black Mischief, forms an integral and essential part of the lesser comedies of Evelyn Waugh.

A HANDFUL OF DUST (1934):

Inspired by his travel in the barbaric region of British Guiana,¹⁰⁷ A Handful of Dust, Waugh's fourth major novel, had a unique genesis in that its final part had already appeared in the shape of the short story, The Man Who Liked Dickens.¹⁰⁸ The novel reveals Waugh's continued preoccupation with the inverse relationship between secular change and progress and the tragic-comic consequences of attempts that treat them synonymous. The novel bears closer resemblance to Black Mischief where the novelist shows the claims of the Enlightenment and Humanist historiographers, concerning the inevitability of human progress through greater modernisation and greater role of human reason, absurd in the serio-comic fate of Seth, who is an embodiment of such beliefs. Having rejected the superiority of the present and the future over the past, Waugh now proceeds to show how the Romantic tendency of the idealisation of the past values of life as embedded in the chivalric code of the Gothic Age is equally misleading and absurd, in its consequences. The comic vision of absurdity that develops here is not unlike that in other lesser comedies of Waugh.

In selecting Tony Last, an out and out feudal character, as his protagonist, Waugh's underlying intention is to show the vulnerability of the secular values of the past to change and the comic fallacy of mistaking them for the eternal values manifest in the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Commenting on this attempt in Waugh, David Lodge writes perceptively:

The modern is ridiculed by contrast with the traditional, but attempts to maintain or restore the traditional in the face of change are also seen as ridiculous; and in any case the traditional usually turns out to be in some way false or compromised.¹⁰⁹

As Tony 'attempts to maintain' the traditional values enshrined in his chivalric code of morality, 'in the face of change', he exposes to ridicule his own self and by implication, the Romanticists. His refusal to participate in the world of change shows him as a static character wishing to shun the dynamic world; a fact that places him in the line of the static heroes of the previous novels. Though Tony's excessive reliance on the past has been explained by many critics¹¹⁰ in terms of his obsession with his neo-gothic house, Hetton, an architectural image of the past values of life, yet its significance in shedding light on his static character has been glaringly overlooked. David Lodge comes closest to it when he highlights his two static qualities of 'innocence' and 'immaturity'.

Tony Last's devotion to it (Hetton), though touching, is misdirected, a symptom and a symbol of his innocence and immaturity.¹¹¹

While 'innocence' brings out, at a mental level, his refusal to outgrow the dated values of the past, 'immaturity' brings out, on an emotional plane, his inability to overcome the

nightmares of his childhood. Tony Last, in other words, suffers from past-fixation. His entire personality is conditioned by an outlook which prevents him from participating in the process of secular change. His plight is akin to that of a person who takes a seat in the spectators' gallery instead of jumping on the constantly revolving wheel of life. It is this attitude which marks a static character out. David Lodge, however, stops short of calling him so.

In order that Tony's 'static' faith in the secular values of the past may be shown false and inadequate, Waugh employs the familiar 'bed-room farce' as an artistic device. All great artists have shown the tendency to select a familiar plot for the sake of conveying their abstruse themes. While Shakespeare uses in King Lear, the story of the betrayal of a father by her power-hungry daughters, T.S. Eliot takes up in The Cocktail Party, the seemingly simple story of the break-up of a marriage. The need for familiar plots has been felt not because of any artistic weakness but because of the author's desire of interesting the readers or the audience in the complex themes of his work. By employing the plot of a 'bed-room farce', therefore, Waugh does not show any artistic weakness; as Ernest Oldmeadow makes out:

The author has not made a clear choice between tragi-comedy and farce.¹¹²

Instead, he reveals his ability to transform an intellectually inert artistic form into a forceful examination not

only of 'humanism and modern society'¹¹³ but also of the culpably inadequate values of the past.¹¹⁴

The fortuitous contriving of the plot mocks at the Humanist tendency of attributing all that happens in history to human agency rather than God or any other unknown factor. It is a matter of chance that Tony should have chosen the dynamic Brenda, " 'nereid' from another domain",¹¹⁵ for his mate. Her choice of a bed is quite suggestive.

She had insisted on a modern bed.¹¹⁶

In the 'static' atmosphere of Hetton, her influence is, however, contained. This makes their friends and acquaintances, mistake their shoddy marriage for a successful one. Only Mrs. Beaver, the presiding deity of the dynamic world of London, does not think so. Giving a piece of her mind to her son, she remarks:

I should say it was time she began to get bored. They've been married five or six years.¹¹⁷

What is needed to hasten the breaking up of this marriage is an agent from her dynamic world. Tony Last, by chance, himself becomes the instrument of inviting him into his world to shatter not only his world but also to jolt his illusions. On one of his trips to London, he, very casually, asks John Beaver, the uninteresting son of Mrs Beaver, to his place. In spite of being aware of the casualness of the invitation,

'... Tony asked me in Bratt's the other night. He may have forgotton'.¹¹⁸

Beaver resolves upon visiting Tony's place. Acting on his mother's advice, he takes all precautions against his visit being stalled. With the arrival of Beaver at Hetton, Tony Last's world gets exposed to the buffetings of the dynamic world. Brenda's initial response to him is as cold as that of her husband. But with greater familiarity, she discovers a fellow-dynamic character in him. Distanced for a long time from the hectic circle of parties in the high society of London, she takes avid interest in Beaver's stories of secular London life. Tony Last, who could never have fully won Brenda's affection, gets supplanted gradually by John Beaver. Commenting on the estrangement of Brenda with Tony, Greenblatt says:

The lack of communication between Brenda and Tony becomes a clear rift when Brenda tells Beaver that she really detests Hetton. "I shouldn't feel so badly about it if it were really a lively house - like my home for instance... but of course Tony's been brought up here and sees it all differently" (p.34). When on a periodic trip to London, Brenda becomes Beaver's mistress, there is no surprise and practically no explanation.¹¹⁹

He attributes the lack of deep psychological examination of the motives behind the break up of marriage to the satirist's concern with characters 'not as individuals with private lives' but as symbols of societal forces. To my mind, the unburdening of Brenda's heart to Beaver and the similarity in their approach to life is a sufficient psychological explanation for the break up of the marriage. Furthermore, Greenblatt's contention, that Waugh is dealing

here with types rather than individuals, is rejected by the novelist himself when he writes, in one of his letters to Katherine Asquith:

Very difficult to write because for the first time I am trying to deal with normal people instead of eccentrics. Comic English character parts too easy when one gets to be thirty.120

The preoccupation with 'normal people', instead of eccentrics, is a clear indication of Waugh's attempts to portray individual or round characters rather than stylised or highly idiosyncratic typical characters. At yet another place, "Fan Fare", Waugh makes an assertive statement about a novelist's business with individual characters only.

A lady in Hampstead, N.Y. asks me whether I consider my characters "typical". No, Mrs. Schultz, I do not. It is horrible of you to ask. A novelist has no business with types; they are the property of economists and politicians and advertisers and the other professional bores of our period. The artist is interested only in individuals.121

While Brenda and Beaver continue to draw nearer and the ramshackle structure of Tony's static world begins to crumble, Tony shows himself foolish in mistaking Brenda's genuine interest in Beaver for the gentlemanly code of courtesy towards a guest. Unaware of the fact that he is surrounded by dynamic people, he renders himself comic by applying the values of his static world to their conduct. A similarly comic situation accrues in Wycherley's The Country Wife where Sir Jasper allows Lady Fidget to be

intimate with Horner, whose false report of impotence has deceived him. Yet, a basic disagreement exists between the two situations. Sir Jasper, unlike Tony Last, is very much aware of the moral corruption in London's high society. Besides, his comic deception is a direct result of his ungentlemanly and ribald pleasure in poking fun at the feigned impotence of Horner. His comicality lies, therefore, more in being out-witted than in being a pitiable victim of the designs of the world. Tony Last, in contrast, is a pitiable victim of the ruthless designs of a dynamic world, out to exploit his illusions. The difference sheds light on the genres to which the two works belong. As satire withholds pity from the person satirised, The Country Wife, in its unsympathetic attitude towards the characters that people it, is a satire on the follies of the Restoration Age, but A Handful of Dust, with its sympathetic attitude towards the deceived hero, is a comedy. By virtue of its tragicomic character, the novel, however, compares favourably with Shakespeare's Othello, whose central character, Othello elicits our sympathy, like Tony Last, in the act of falling a victim to his illusions. Within the broad parameters of this commonality, there is, yet a contradiction between their attitudes to the situation of marital infidelity. While Othello, under the artful tutelage of Iago, suspects the virtuous Desdemona and the faithful Michael Cassio of treachery towards him, Tony Last, under the delusive impact of his 'static' beliefs, ignores the infidelity of his wife. Othello, however, is as static as Tony is, in his ignorance

of the clever ploys of dynamic Venetians, like Iago.

Mistaking Brenda's frequent trips to and long periods of stay in London for her desire to help him with his speeches, when he would stand for elections, Tony applies his 'static' values to an essentially 'dynamic' situation. Brenda is no gentlewoman for she makes discreet enquiries about the 'sex-life' of Beaver from her sister, Marjorie, in London.

'What do you suppose is Mr. Beaver's sex-life?'
 'I shouldn't know. Pretty dim, I imagine...
 You do fancy him?' 'Oh well', said Brenda,
 'I don't see such a lot of young men...'122

Brenda is interested in Beaver not because he fascinates her for he is 'pathetic' to her, but because he is the one man she knows from her native dynamic world. Her affection for him lacks sincerity as does Prudence's in Black Mischief. It is purely physical and ephemeral. Modernity has reduced human relationships to the level of ever changing fashions in dresses or thoughts. She makes her gullible husband pay for the flat she hires from Mrs. Beaver, and indulges in her sexual escapades with Beaver without fear of exposure. Even when Tony is close to discovering her, she turns the tables on him. In a highly ironic situation she makes Tony regret the ungentlemanly act of drinking and visiting night clubs upon being refused a meeting by her.

Tony went and sat alone in front of the library fire. 'Two men of thirty', he said to himself, 'behaving as if they were up for the night from Sandhurst - getting drunk and ringing people up and dancing with tarts at the Old Hundredth... And it makes it all the worse that Brenda was so nice about it.¹²³

Tony's persistent ignorance owing to his static beliefs renders him comic. It is Brenda and not Tony who need repent for faithlessness. Instead, she relishes her unprincipled victory over her husband.

'If I know Tony, he'll be tortured with guilt for weeks to come. It was maddening last night but it was worth it. He's put himself so much in the wrong now that he won't dare to feel resentful, let alone say anything, whatever I do. ... He had to learn not to make surprise visits'.¹²⁴

If Tony is the opposite of Seth, Brenda is the opposite of Desdemona. Blinded by his 'static' chivalric code to the dynamism of Brenda, he willingly allows himself to be deceived and thus rendered comic.

Tony's commitment to his static ideals is so total that he cannot be made to feel interested in the futile cycle of dynamic life. His wife's attempts to get him interested in some other woman fall flat as Tony does not feel impressed by Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar, an absurd product of modern secular life. Burdened with her company, he tries to get rid of her company. When she refuses to comply with his desire, he lets her do what she wants without taking the least interest in her silly gibber.

'I expect you'd like to see your room', said Tony.
'They'll bring tea soon'.

'No, I'll stay here. I like just to curl up like
/ a cat in front of the fire, and if you're nice to
me, I'll purr, and if you're cruel I shall pretend
not to notice - just like a cat - Shall I purr,
Teddy?'

'Er... yes ... do, please, if that's what you
like doing'.¹²⁵

Yet, he cannot avoid feeling discomfited by her presumptuous familiarity.

Not content with duping Tony, Brenda contrives with Mrs. Beaver's help to tamper with the very symbol of his faith in the past, Hetton. Mrs. Beaver arrives with her workmen to renovate a part of the house, in the modern style. Tony is unable to prevent the desecration of his ideal, as it is insisted upon by his wife. Even when the very symbol of his static faith bows down to change, he does not realise the inadequacy and oddity of his 'static' faith in a rapidly changing world. The incursion of the dynamic world into his static world has the effect of orphaning him.

It is the chance death of John Andrews, their only son, which suddenly brings Tony face to face with the bleak reality of his situation. Viewing the effect of his death on Brenda with the help of his obsolete chivalric code of morality, he anticipates that it would 'hurt' her very much. Jock Grant - Menzies who is aware of Brenda's dynamic nature, strikes a realistic note by telling Tony
/ that 'You can't ever tell what's going to hurt people'.
The events that follow shatter Tony's faith in his wife.

'But, you see, I know Brenda so well.'¹²⁶

Unknown to him, Brenda is, in his wife's guise, a femme fatale from the dynamic world.

Informed about the death of her son, she mistakes it for Beaver's and thus, despite herself, gives out to Jock, the bearer of the news, how much she loves John Beaver. It is only after Jock mentions Hetton that she realises her mistake. Still, her concern for John Beaver's safety makes her declare impulsively her love for Beaver.

She sat down on a hard little Empire chair against the wall, perfectly still with her hand folded in her lap ...

She said, 'Tell me what happened. Why do you know about it first?'

I've been down at Hetton since the week end?'

....

She frowned not at once taking in what he was saying.

'John... John Andrew... I... oh, thank God...'

Then she burst into tears.¹²⁷

Despite the ambiguity of her tears, similar to that of the Prioress' 'Amor Vincet Omnia' in The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, the scene brings out, on a psychological plane, Brenda's complete estrangement with the static world of Tony. Graham Martin seems to have ignored the significance of this scene while accusing Waugh of 'never... (going) beyond the external accuracy of observation'.¹²⁸ The disappearance of John Andrew, the bond that held them together, precipitates their physical and legal separation.

Upon hearing of Brenda's desire to move out, Tony shows comic obtuseness in mistaking initially that for

their temporary departure from Hetton as a means of mitigating the impact of John Andrew's death.

'Are you really going?'

'Yes. I can't stay here. You understand that, don't you?'

'Yes, of course. I was thinking we might both go away, abroad somewhere'.

Brenda did not answer him but continued in her own line.

'I couldn't stay here. It's all over, don't you see, our life down here'.

'Darling, what do you mean?' 129

Only after she makes the meaning of her words quite explicit does Tony hear the rumbling of the imminent collapse of his static world. The painful process of Tony's confrontation with his illusion begins with it. The first illusion to be shattered is the compatibility of their two natures. Tony's talk with Jock is quite revelatory, in this regard.

Tony said to Jock, as they sat alone after dinner, 'I've been trying to understand, and I think I do now. It's not how I feel myself, but Brenda and I are quite different in lots of ways.' 130

Notwithstanding this realisation, he is far from comprehending the culpable inadequacy of his static faith in the secular values of the past. It is in the remarkably comic divorce proceedings, where Waugh inverts the usual pattern of justice, that 'Tony's habits and illusions are systematically destroyed'.¹³¹ In Decline and Fall, though Margot had made Paul suffer for her misdeed, she had not become a plaintiff pitted against him. Brenda, far more dynamic than Margot, not only grafts her guilt on Tony by making him the accused in the divorce proceedings but also

swops places with him in seeking justice from the court. She succeeds in doing so because of Tony's chivalric generosity towards the weaker sex. Tony is a development over Paul Pennyfeather in that the latter's chivalry does not confront the dynamism of Margot's lot all the time; Paul accepts money from Trumpington, against all the norms of gentlemanly honour, pointed out by Potts.

As a result of his chivalry towards women, Tony undergoes the grilling ordeal of providing evidence against himself by being seen in the company of another woman, who is a woman of the town, by detectives paid from his own pocket. Upon taking out the child of that woman, he exposes himself to the unjustified censure of the people on the shore, when the child insists on bathing despite the beach attendant prohibiting it.

'But I want to bathe', said Winnie. You said I could bathe if you had two breakfasts'.
The people who had clustered round to witness Tony's discomfort, looked at one another askance.
'Two breakfasts? Wanting to let the child bathe? The man's balmy'.¹³²

The world into which Tony has stepped is one where action is subject to any interpretation for the dynamic world's circular journey lacks logical development; it is a mere temporal progression. Johnstone rightly observes:

The mechanistic modern society cannot be defined by rational means, because it is fundamentally irrational. In Waugh's comic universe, nothing is what it seems.¹³³

By drawing attention to the lack of rationality in the dynamic world of modern times, Waugh castigates the Humanist belief in reasoning and that of the Enlightenment historians in the progress of the secular world.

Once Tony supplies evidence against himself, the dynamic world plays yet another unholy trick upon him. Brenda raises the settlement of five hundred pounds a year, agreed to earlier verbally and not put in writing as insisted by his solicitors, to the staggering sum of two thousand pounds. Tony had rejected earlier the sound counsel of his solicitors, saying, 'Lady Brenda's word is quite good enough'. He now realises his mistake. The static values with which he has been judging Brenda's conduct, prove threateningly misapplied in her case as she is no 'Lady'.

His mind had suddenly become clearer on many points that had puzzled him. A whole Gothic world had come to grief... there was now no armour glittering through the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the green sward; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled. 134

It has led him into a trap out of which there is only way: Winnie, the daughter of that lowly woman. He, therefore, tells Reggie, Brenda's brother, that if they sue him with the help of the evidence supplied to them willingly, he would tear their evidence to shreds with the help of his trumpcard, Winnie.

'... 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?' 135

Tony's firmness with Brenda stems not out of the knowledge of the inadequacy of his static faith in the past but out of his complete disappointment with her utter disregard for the chivalric code. His disillusionment with Brenda is similar to that of Shaw's King Magnus with his prime minister, Proteus' squabbling cabinet who are interested more in wresting veto power from him than in protecting British interests against the hegemonistic designs of America. Just as Magnus feels himself an outsider among the members of Proteus' Cabinet, Tony feels himself an exile in the dynamic world of London. He, therefore, thinks of leaving England in search of his native world.

Tony's quest for the lost city shows up his culpable mistake of substituting the city of God¹³⁶ with a gothic one. The elaborate picture he has in his mind about the city is that of another 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, pennons and banners floating on the sweet breeze, everything luminous and translucent...¹³⁷

He fails to see the true significance of his search as, in the words of David Lodge, his 'real religion is a feudal myth'.¹³⁸ The chivalric values that he believes in were never true, not even in their own age. The reference to the story of King Arthur is implicit in the naming of the rooms, from Malory's Morte de Arthur, at Hetton. Despite

the chivalric ideals professed by his characters, Guinevere betrays Arthur and Lancelot instead of seeking the Holy Grail as a reward for his chivalry, prefers to seek the hand of Guinevere. The chivalric ideal was as good a sign of staticity then as now and Tony, the last of his kind as his name suggests, falls a prey to the same dynamic world that his forbear did. His and Arthur's mistake lies in investing secular ideals, that are susceptible to change, with the significance of sub specie aeternitatis reality of the hub which is beyond the reach of change and hence true for all times. Helena, on the other hand, guards against such a lapse. Her initial romantic association with the past yields place, as she matures, to the supremacy of the Roman Catholic values of life. When she embarks on a similar journey, she knows that the city she searches has to be a Catholic one. Commenting on Tony's inability to supplant Hetton by the Catholic City, Frank Kermodé writes:

The great houses of England become by an easy transition types of the Catholic City, and in this book the threatened City is Hetton; it will not prove to be a continuing city.¹³⁹

Led by the Virgil-figure of Dr. Massinger straight into the inferno of the dynamic world of the Amazonian jungles, Tony's childhood nightmares return to him, as a consequence of his blunder of looking for the lost static world in a highly dynamic world. Replying to Henry Yorke's complaint that

... 'you spent far too much time on the trip. You have 348 pages, roughly 100 of these are concerned with Tony running away ... my whole mind is clouded by the Amazon.¹⁴⁰

Waugh asserts that 'the Amazon stuff had to be there. The scheme was a Gothic man in the hands of savages - first Mrs. Beaver etc. then the real ones...'¹⁴¹ It is quite ironic that in flying from the dynamism of British society, Tony should have chosen, in his ignorance, the gasping mouth of demonic dynamism for his static cave of refuge. The nightmarish end of Tony is anticipated, as Stephen Greenblatt suggests¹⁴², in the symbolic meaning of the comic sermons of ^{The} Rev. Tendril who because of his inability to distinguish between the British laity and the troopers serving in India, often refers to 'homes and dear ones far away'.¹⁴³

Like Lear's madness, Tony's nightmarish state does not lack method. His mind flits from one situation in Britain to that in Brazil. With the help of this collage technique, Waugh brings out the similarity of Amazonian life with the British. Tony's nightmarish state, thus, becomes a good objective correlative for Waugh's notion of the futility of secular change. The repeated juxtaposition of a scene in Brazil with a similar one in London suggests in the words of Greenblatt:

The repeated juxtaposition of a scene in Brazil and a similar scene in London makes devastatingly clear Waugh's point that the foul inhuman jungle in which Tony wanders feverishly is London transfigured.¹⁴⁴

The claims of the Enlightenment and Humanist historiographers regarding the progressiveness of modernised secular societies look hollow in the face of this assertion.

It is in his nightmarish state only that Tony perceives the futility of his mistaken search.

'I will tell you that I have learned in the forest, where the time is different. There is no city. Mrs Beaver has covered it with chromium plating and converted it into flats ... Very suitable for base love.'¹⁴⁵

He realises that the dynamic world has made inroads into the static world of his beliefs and destroyed it. Despite this realisation he still nurses hopes of finding at least someone who conforms to the chivalric code of morality. He finds this man in Mr. Todd, an embodiment of all that is the worst in both the cultures. There is a glint of lunacy in him, in that he imprisons Tony merely for the sake of hearing the gothic stories of Dickens, and a gleam of guile, in that he is artful enough in putting Tony's searches of the scent. Both qualities are signs of an individualism that offends the order of nature. Thereby he is a combination of Captain Grimes and the homicidal carpenter in Decline and Fall. Mr. Todd combines with these dynamic traits, the ruthlessness of a savage. In pursuing his objective of holding Tony back, he shows little compassion on his death-in-life existence. It is, therefore, ironic that Tony should have read chivalrous motives in Mr Todd's attempts to restore him to normalcy. By miscalculating Mr Todd's intentions, Tony seals his fate for ever.

In order to reciprocate the false chivalry of Mr. Todd, he reads the gothic novels of Dickens to him. It is ironic that the first novel he reads to him should be Bleak House, the most gothic of all. Commenting on the contradiction between the values upheld in them and the values rejected in Tony's perpetual imprisonment in the bleak house of Mr. Todd, Greenblatt writes perceptively:

Day after day, the readings testify to the ultimate victory of goodness and the sanctity of the personal dream - precisely those values which the hero's life-in-death refutes.¹⁴⁶

The grotesque end of Tony plays up the tragi-comic consequences of the culpable mistake of investing essentially impermanent secular ideals with the significance of permanent religious values. In this respect, as Bernard Bergonzi rightly maintains, A Handful of Dust, looks forward to the Catholic novels of the later period.

It is the first of his essays in 'serious' fiction, and in its treatment of the doomed Gothic hero - not yet a Catholic hero - it points forward to such ambitious later novels as Brideshead Revisited and, in particular, the Sword of Honour trilogy where Guy Crouchback, a more complex and developed version of Tony Last in the early novels (both have appropriately suggestive surnames), realises the insufficiency of the gentlemanly ideal and is stripped of his romantic illusions.¹⁴⁷

The novel, in the serialised form, was also issued with a specially written ending, in Harper's Bazaar. It deleted the South American adventure and ended on the happy note of reconciliation. The alternative ending lacks the

terrifying force of the culpability of trying to substitute the City of God with the Gothic City. This reduces the novel to the level of a mere bed-room farce from which the South American episode salvages the novel with its original ending. Bernard Bergonzi has therefore rightly argued that any interest the novel in its alternative version may have, is more bibliographical than critical.¹⁴⁸

Notwithstanding the aristocratic lineage of the central character, much played up by Terry Eagleton¹⁴⁹ (6), the novel achieves a unified universal tragi-comic vision in its rejection of both the Romantic and the Humanist tendency of endowing life with the significance of false secular ideals.

The quest for the city, in particular, strikes a Christian anti-Humanist and anti-Romantic note. Brigid Brophy, an authority on Ronald Firbank - an object of Waugh's admiration - has very rightly drawn attention to the pre-occupation of the novel with 'the romantic and eschatological' which Waugh, on his own, associated only with the Catholic novels, beginning with Brideshead Revisited.¹⁵⁰

In condemning Tony to the perpetual fate of reading Dicken's gothic novels one after another in a continuous cyclical motion, Waugh tears down the mask that shields from view the grotesque reality of a dynamic mode of existence. Waugh appears to be saying that all efforts directed towards secular change suck man into the grinding and absurd cyclical motion of the whirl pool of dynamic life.

Thus, the comic vision of absurdity revealed in the tragicomic end of Tony jolts the readers out of their complacent attitude to secular change.

SCOOP (1938)

Evelyn Waugh's fifth major novel, Scoop (1938), marks a shift in the exploration of the theme of non-synonymy of secular change with progress. In the novels prior to this, Waugh's comic vision of life emerges out of the circular course of secular change. The central characters in these novels invariably return to their original state of existence despite their best efforts to get away from it. In Scoop, Waugh digs deeper and uncovers the lack of logic in secular change. This is in sharp contrast with the general belief, fostered by progressive historiographers, that secular change follows a logically consistent upward course. It is this incongruity between reality and illusion that generates much of the comic fun in this novel and it is, almost always, directed at those who allow themselves to be deluded by the role of reason in secular change. By pointing out the irrationality of the process of secular change, Waugh hammers at the idea of absurdity, that is central to the comic vision contained in all lesser comedies of Evelyn Waugh.

With a view to crystallising this idea, Waugh adopts a gratuitous plot for narrating the incidents in this novel. Unlike the nineteenth century novels, it has a narrative that appears to have no connecting links other than that of time. This compels a comparison with the eighteenth century novels which too followed a temporal scheme in their narratives. Yet a vital point of distinction exists between them and this novel. While there it is a sign of artistic immaturity, here it is an indication of artistic maturity. A gratuitous plot helps the novelist's concern with showing the lack of logic in secular change to come through more forcefully. Attention may be invited here to the similarity between Hardy and Waugh. Like Waugh, Thomas Hardy also employed an episodic plot for the purposes of focussing attention on the irrationality of change in universal order. Notwithstanding this similarity, there is a basic difference in approach to life between them. While Hardy considers both secular and religious changes fortuitous, Waugh does not. The latter does not share Hardy's pessimism with the loss of religion in life. Waugh places religion at the hub of the wheel of life and not at its orbits. Only secular change constitutes in Waugh's comic view of life a sure means to absurdity and disenchantment.

In keeping with the episodic and gratuitous nature of the narrative, Waugh employs the common comic device of mistaken identity to attract attention towards the basic irrationality of secular life. Waugh's use of this literary

device contrasts sharply with its use by other comic writers like Fielding and Congreve. In none of them is there a suggestion of this kind. It is used only to heighten the comic flavour of their works. Waugh's use of this technique is, therefore, not only appropriate but also innovative.

The comic device of mistaken identity impinges on the life of two characters in the novel. They are John Boot, a popular novelist, and William Boot, an obscure columnist on the daily, The Beast. Waugh adds that both are distant cousins. John Boot wishes to be recruited by Lord Copper, the owner of The Beast for reporting the incidents in the Ishmaelite civil war. Made conscious of Boot's strength as a writer by Mrs. Stitch, Lord Copper directs his Foreign News Editor, Mr. Salter, to call up Boot and recruit him for the assignment in Ishmaelia. By a strange quirk of fate, Mr. Salter calls up William Boot instead of John Boot. Thus, the way is paved for the consequent comedy of mistaken identity.

The sense of improbability implicit in the irrational working of secular life has led critics to the point of bestowing the quality of fantasia to the comic world of this novel. As Rose Macaulay remarks:

With it Mr. Waugh re-entered his peculiar world; it was a relief to those of us who had begun to fear that we were losing him...151

Waugh's own admission in the diary for 6 September 1924 should suffice to set off this impression. He writes:

Rather an amusing incident has happened about the Queen's Dolls' House. One, John Pennell... was allowed ... the honour of inserting some small contribution by himself This innocent work would have gone quite unnoticed had not Her Majesty decided ... to thank all who had contributed to her toy. When it came to Mr. Pennell's turn it was not unnaturally assumed that J. Pennell must be Joseph Pennell and a letter was accordingly sent to him in America.¹⁵²

It is the recurrent pattern of such real incidents that lends an aura of fantasy to Waugh's novels. Otherwise, Evelyn Waugh has attracted criticism for being very matter-of-fact in reporting incidents. As Graham Martin remarks;

He seems admirably careful to submit to the discipline of a faithful report. But the report itself is really serving the rigidities of fixed emotion ... a state of affairs which can obstruct 'meaning' quite as effectively as an over-zealous pursuit of it.¹⁵³

The comic device of mistaken identity has also the consequence of dragging a static character from his native static world into an alien dynamic world. William's static character is suggested by his attachment with an unchanging country life. William cherishes the insignificant job of contributing a half-column, 'Lush Places', to The Beast as it provides him the opportunity of maintaining his link with the country-side. Waugh writes:

The work was of utmost importance to him: he was paid a guinea a time and it gave him the best possible excuse for remaining uninterruptedly in the country.¹⁵⁴

The symbolic suggestivity of countryside needs to be understood in the context of Waugh's concept of change. The brunt of industrialisation has been felt the most in the urban centres of Western civilisation. The rural areas have remained relatively free from it. As a result, the countryside, in sharp contrast with cities, has presented an unchanging face. Change, in Evelyn Waugh, can be felt only on the revolving wheel of dynamic life. The static world of the spectator's gallery remains beyond its pale. Country life thus compares favourably to a static mode of existence and urban life, to dynamic mode of existence.

William's predilection for country life is from this angle a sure sign of his staticity. William's static character invites comparison with the other static characters we have met till now: Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes and Tony Last. Paul Pennyfeather's ignorance of his innate static character, till the end of the novel, renders him comic when he steps into a hostile dynamic world. Similarly, Adam renders himself comic on account of his ignorance of his true nature and that of the dynamic mode of existence. Tony Last meets with an absurd end for being unable to distinguish between the static and the dynamic worlds. Unlike them, William Boot is an enlightened static character. He is very much aware of his static nature and the incompatibility of his nature with the dynamic world of London. William's aversion for urban life and preference for country life flow out of this consciousness. William,

therefore, escapes the fate of his predecessor - static characters even though he is caught in the dynamic world for some time.

David Lodge appears to have overlooked the distinction between the city and the countryside when he remarks:

As Europe is to Africa, so the metropolitan world of The Beast is to Boot Magna: in both pairings a sophisticated modern barbarism is discomfited by a more intransigent and deeply rooted primitivism. 155

Though Europe and Africa represent the same side of the coin, Africa and Boot Magna, do not. Both Europe and Africa are dynamic worlds. The lack of progress in secular change removes all distinctions between a supposedly superior secular civilisation and a supposedly inferior one. The Beast is an essential organ of the dynamic world as it is a product of its quest for secular progress. Boot Magna, William's residence in the countryside, in contrast, is suggestive of the static world's aloofness to change.

"The comedy of mistaken identity sets into motion once William receives the summons from The Beast. In one of his previous contributions, Priscilla had substituted 'the crested grebe' for his 'badger'. This had outraged the veracity of his statement. William suspects that he has, perhaps, been called to give explanation for this lapse. He does not know that the Foreign News Editor, Mr. Salter is waiting to recruit him as The Beast's special correspondent in war-torn Ishmaelia. Set against the background of this reality, William's attempts to discover some

means of defence against Lord Copper's admonition look ridiculous and comic. Waugh writes:

By the time he reached Westbury he had sketched out a little scene for himself, in which he stood resolutely in the board-room defying the doctrinaire zoology of Fleet Street... 'Lord Copper', he was saying, 'no man shall call me a liar unchastised. The great crested grebe does hibernate'.¹⁵⁶

If Waugh renders William comic for his ignorance of the irrational working of the dynamic world, he comes down equally upon Mr. Salter for epitomising in himself the irrationality of the dynamic world. Describing his irrational attitude to life, Waugh writes:

If a psychoanalyst testing his associations, had suddenly said to Mr. Salter the word 'farm', the surprising response would have been 'Bang', for he had once been blown up and buried while sheltering in a farm in Flanders. It was his single intimate association with the soil. It had left him with the obstinate though admittedly irrational belief that agriculture was something highly alien and highly dangerous.¹⁵⁷

Salter's comic behaviour growing out of the mistaken tendency of imposing logic on things connected by no other thread than that of time shows up the lack of causal sequence in secular life.

Each confronts his own illusion in the course of the meeting between them. Salter has been planning for it since long. He has even collected information about things that may possibly interest a countryman. Each of these things is distasteful to Salter. But as he has to win over

William for the assignment in Ishmaelia, he submits to the ordeal. Nervousness is writ large on Salter's face when he opens his conversation with him. Waugh writes:

Mr. Salter planned a frank and disarming opening. 'How are your roots, Boot?' It came out wrong. 'How are your boots, root?' he asked. William glumly awaiting some fulminating rebuke, started and said, 'I beg your pardon?' 'I mean brute', said Mr. Salter. William gave it up. Mr. Salter gave it up. They sat staring at one another, fascinated helpless. 158

Waugh renders Salter comic for his irrational and imagined fear of meeting a countryman. It is only after he learns that William has no outlandish tastes and that he is a normal person like him that he feels at ease in his company. Once he feels composed, he proceeds to shatter William's illusion. Salter broaches the matter of reporting the incidents in Ishmaelia for The Beast. William sees in it the punishment of 'transportation' for his small mistake. He, therefore, tries to explain his defence. It is only after Salter tells him that he would have to work there only for sometime and that too for a substantial salary that William feels easy. In spite of that, William refuses to leave the static world of Boot Magna and go to the dynamic world of Ishmaelia. His stubborn resistance makes Salter desperate. It is at this moment that William discloses unwittingly his vulnerable point.

'Is there nothing you want?'
'D'you know, I don't believe there is. Except to keep my job in 'Lush Places' and go on living at home'. 159

Salter is 'quick enough to exploit this weakness to his advantage. Accordingly, he uses this information as a weapon against William.

'Oh, but Lord Copper expects his staff to work wherever the best interests of the paper call them. I don't think he would employ anyone of whose loyalties he was doubtful, in any capacity.'
 'You mean if I don't go to Ishmaelia I get the sack?'
 'Yes', said Mr. Salter. 160

William surrenders to Mr. Salter in the extreme fear of losing his job. Should he defy Lord Copper's wishes then he would be deprived of writing for The Beast. Without it, William would lose the opportunity of staying uninterruptedly in his static world of Boot Magna. Ironically enough, William's job not only helps William to stay on in his native world, it also exposes him to the irrationality of the dynamic world. Were William willing to give it up, he would have been spared the ordeal of participating in the irrational process of secular change sweeping over the dynamic world. Thus despite his awareness of his true identity, William is drawn into the vortex of dynamic life.

William's elevation to the rank of a special correspondent is a superb act of comedy. The honour that should have gone to John Boot goes to William Boot. More than that, the comedy is enhanced by their contrasting attitudes also. While John Boot is much too eager to have it, William wants somehow, to get rid of it. The cardinal principle of 'logic stands outraged here. So when the reader laughs at this

comic situation, he also ridicules the enlightenment and humanist historiographers who see reason and logic as the guiding forces of change in the secular world. Waugh, however, does not allow our ridicule to fade into condemnation as he constantly engages our sympathy for William and Salter.

Having seen for ourselves the irrational working of the dynamic world, we may now turn our attention to the extent of absurdity implicit in the illogical nature of the Ishmaelite strife. Ishmaelia presents a picture of decadence in that successive missionary groups have failed in civilising its barbaric inhabitants. Even the advanced 'European powers' have, out of their inability to control it, written it off their maps. Such is the degree of instability inherent in it. In Waugh's view of life, such a society occupies a place farthest from the hub of the wheel of life and is, as a consequence, most 'dynamic'. It is pertinent to recall here that the degree of instability is felt the most on the outermost orbit of the revolving wheel of life. Ishmaelia presents an unabashed portrait of dynamism compared to the dynamic societies of the West which hide it beneath the veneer of civilisation.

Left to itself, Ishmaelia has formed into a republic. The lack of any 'tie of language, history, habit, or belief' have left it with no other alternative. The republic of Ishmaelia has been ruled by the Jacksons who have enacted

every year the farce of elections to weather any resistance to their rule from the people. The people of this African state continue to remain as savage as they were before. The disorder within the social fabric of this state assumes international dimensions when one of the Jacksons, Mr. Smiles Soumes, rebels against the family. Only one quarter, Jackson and three quarters, pure Ishmaelite, he presents himself as a champion of the Ishmaelite cause. In order to obtain the support of the Western powers, he concocts a ridiculous racial theory in favour of his claim for the control of the Ishmaelite government. He declares that the savage Ishmaelites were originally white. Owing to constant exposure to the sun, they have grown red. In comparison, the Jacksons are negroes. Accordingly, he starts a White Shirt Movement against their so-called negro government. Traces of Jonathan Swift in Gulliver's Travels are discernible here. Like Swift, Waugh is ridiculing here the idea of democratic politics. However, more than that, he is exposing the inadequacy of logic itself. Waugh is drawing attention here to the idea that logic is a double edged sword which may be used to cut its own self. The excessive faith of enlightenment and humanist historiographers in it is, therefore, ridiculous. This is in keeping with Waugh's Roman Catholic view of things. According to the Roman Catholic Church, reason is not an adequate means of verifying the veracity of a fact. Unaided by divine grace, it leads one astray. Thus, the rejection of the role

of reason is not at all a sign of valuelessness in Waugh. As secular change rests on the edifice of human reason, Waugh draws attention towards the absurdity of achieving progress through secular change.

Aboard the ship bound for Ishmaelia, William acquires his first tips about the dynamic art of journalism from his fellow-journalist Corker. The latter tells him how Wenlock Jakes demonstrated the power of the press, though unconsciously, by starting a war that had not yet broken out by sending concocted reports about it, from a different country. Despite the lack of any real basis for Jake's stories, the faith of the governments of the world and that of the people in the validity of press reports was so great that

Government stocks dropped, financial panic, state of emergency declared, army mobilized, famine, mutiny and in less than a week there was an honest to God revolution under way, just as Jakes said 'There's the power of the press for you'.¹⁶¹

The chain of these irrational incidents does not end here. It continues and concludes most illogically in the award of Nobel Peace Prize to Jakes for his role in starting the war. Once again, Waugh ridicules the Humanist and Enlightenment historiographers for reposing faith in the supremacy of reason. Waugh's persistent preoccupation with the narration of logically inconsistent events resembles, to some extent, that of Kafka. In The Trial, Joseph K., in spite of having committed no offence, is arrested one morning. Upon his persistence with trying to know the cause thereof,

he is warned that it shall make his case more complicated and stern. He must, therefore, concern himself only with defending himself. The difference between Waugh and Kafka is, however, apparent. In Kafka, it is difficult even to divine the cause hidden behind the the irrational pattern of the narrative, but not in Waugh.


The story of William's success as a journalist is another irrational chain of events. William's chance meetings with Bannister, Vice-Consul at the British Legation, and with Katchen, a woman of uncertain nationality, putting up at Frau Dressler's Pension, provide him with clues that initiate his success story. Most of the professional journalists with him have been making frantic efforts to reach Laku where they believe Smiles Saum, the leader of the rebellion, to be. When the Jackson government allows them to go there, they dash for it with comic enthusiasm. Only William does not for he is aware of the non-existence of the place through Bannister who tells him that the word means in Ishmaelite, 'I don't know'. But having been marked once on the maps, it has stayed there unaltered. The professional journalists fall a prey to this distortion of facts and, thereby, look comic in their absurd enthusiasm. By having stumbled on this piece of information, William manages to stay on in Jacksonburg, the locale of future anarchy and reaps profit out of it as a journalist.

That chance not personal merit secures William the fame of a good investigative journalist becomes clear from his inability to follow the hints supplied by Bannister who asks him to watch out for a Russian agent and to keep an eye on Dr. Benito, the man who insists on William's departure for Laku. William does neither. Instead, he whiles away his time in the company of Katchen. He even fails to look up his mail which has been growing insistent. When Bannister tells him that his paper is worried about his safety and silence, he replies most irresponsibly:

PLEASE DONT WORRY QUITE SAFE AND WELL IN FACT
 RATHER ENJOYING THINGS WEATHER IMPROVING
 WILL CABLE AGAIN IF THERE IS ANY NEWS YOURS BOOT. 162

Its impact on Salter who feels vexed by the bantering tone of this expensively long telegram is, in the fitness of things, quite expected.

'Weather improving', said Mr. Salter. 'Weather improving. He's been in Jacksonburg ten days, and all he can tell us is that the weather is improving.' 163

Salter's impatience arises out of his knowledge that William was as unsuited to the job as the trick cyclist  to that of a Sports Editor. The irrational course of events reduces his plight to that of comic helplessness. Waugh shows here that the dynamic character himself at times becomes a victim of the irrationality of his world. In Black Mischief, he has already shown how Seth is victimised ruthlessly by the instability he himself creates.

Lest Salter should derive satisfaction out of having been wise enough to gauge William's true abilities, Waugh introduces a chance breakthrough in the latter's journalistic career. Katchen, the woman to whom William has become attracted, brings news of the President's house-arrest by 'Doctor Benito and the Russian and the black secretaries who came from America'. William's incompetence as a journalist is accentuated by his inability to understand its significance. He despatches the information to his paper only to assuage their demand for some news. Waugh says that

No one observing that sluggish and hesitant composition could have guessed that this was a moment of history ... held up as a model to aspiring pupils of Correspondence Schools of Profitable Writing, perennially fresh in the jaded memories of a hundred editors; the moment when Boot began to make good.¹⁶⁴

Far from being a model worthy of citing, William's first scoop is the saga of incompetence and indifference to duty. He realises little the value of the news he is despatching to his paper. Besides, he has made no effort to obtain it. He has merely stumbled upon it. William's accidental success is an indication of the illogicity of the process of secular change for those who really deserve it are deprived of it. Waugh, therefore, conveys unequivocally the absurdity of secular change as the right logical means to progress.

William's second scoop is again indicative of his incompetence as a professional journalist. As the political unrest in Ishmaelia grows, Katchen is arrested and some men approach William for taking possession of the stones he had bought from her. He refuses to part with them and the men have to go back empty-handed despite their best efforts to gain their possession. For the sake of keeping them in safe custody, he takes them to Bannister's place where William accidentally knows what they actually are. He learns that what he had been mistaking for stones is, in fact, gold. Believing William to have been sacked by The Beast, Bannister acquaints him freely with its role in the political turmoil of Ishmaelia. Bannister tells William:

" It's been between Smiles and Benito now and it looks to me as if Benito had won hands down We stand to lose quite a lot if they start a Soviet state here ... Now you've stopped being a journalist I can tell you these things. 165

William's response to this discovery characteristically is static. While a dynamic character would have thought of exploiting it to his own personal advantage, he does not. He thinks of his country and his lady-love, Katchen. Loyalty to one's nation and rendering help to a woman in distress constitute two essential features of the outdated and ideal chivalric attitude to life. Waugh writes:

? Love, patriotism, zeal for justice, and personal spite flamed within him as he sat at his typewriter and began his message. One finger was not enough; he used both hands. 166

Even the money that he gives to the clerk at the wireless station is not an act of dynamism but one of static nature as it is rooted in William's chivalrous concerns. His action, therefore, is not unlike that of Tony, who unaware of his static nature, is fired by similar emotions when he deprives his wife of the satisfaction of having everything in her own way, even after he accedes to the request for divorce.

When William's despatch reaches Salter's office, his confidence in his ability of judging receives a setback; he no longer regards himself wiser than Lord Copper.

'He's all right. Lord Copper knew best.'

'You know', he said meditatively, 'it's a great experience to work for a man like Lord Copper. Again and again I've thought he was losing grip. But always it turns out he knew best. What made him spot Boot? It's a sixth sense... real genius'.¹⁶⁷

Salter's new-found confidence in Lord Copper's genius is equally ridiculous for it ignores the reality behind William's second scoop. He thus looks comic in the Platonic sense of the word. Yet, it would be too much to say that he has been satirised for satire evokes moral indignation; Salter in his comic plight evokes our sympathy over his ridiculous ignorance of truth. So, the irrational nature of secular change lends a comic glow to the novel. We do not find this in Hardy where the increased role of chance only gives a gloomy and melancholy air to the situations described.

While the professional journalists going 'Lakuward' warm their pates in the African sun for nothing, William, the novice journalist, is an accidental witness to yet another series of cataclysmic incidents, which provide material for his third scoop. The brief spell of super-imposed order in the state of Ishmaelia is over. The barbaric forces within it, with the help of the dynamic world of the economically developed nations, assert themselves in the shape of a revolution against the Jacksons. The thin veneer of civilization that the Jacksons had given to this African state is torn down. Ishmaelia returns to its original state of barbarity and anarchy. Waugh conveys the futility of secular change as a means to progress in the circular history of Ishmaelia. Seeing the shape of things to come, William instinctively sings Uncle Theodore's pet refrain in the manner of a character in the chorus of a Greek drama.

'Change and decay in all around I see', he sang softly, almost unctuously. It was the favourite tune of his uncle Theodore.¹⁶⁸

The revolution is short-lived for Baldwin, the man who arrives on the chaotic scene of Ishmaelia like a deus ex machina, engineers a counter-revolution in a way that mocks at the ideological considerations often attributed to such movements. Eric Olafsen in a drunken state, contrived by Baldwin, goes to the stage from where Dr. Benito is issuing his revolutionary orders. When he lifts the chair

against Benito, the latter jumps down from the balcony to his death on the ground for 'the traditional ineradicable awe of the white man' frightens him too much. With the dethroning of Dr. Benito, the crowd begins chanting the counter-revolutionary slogan of 'Jackson, Jackson, Jackson'. William profits from his accidental proximity with Baldwin, in composing his third despatch. Baldwin is no other than the man who William had helped by granting permission to board the plane which was to carry him on his journalistic mission.

'No', said a gentleman behind him. 'If you would not resent my cooperation, I think I can compose a despatch more likely to please my good friend Copper'.

Mr. Baldwin sat at William's table and drew the typewriter towards himself. He inserted a new sheet of paper ... and began to write with immense speed:

MYSTERY FINANCIER RECALLED EXPLOITS RHODES
LAWRENCE TODAY SECURING VAST EAST AFRICAN
CONCESSION...169

Not only does Baldwin offer him news but he also does his work by proxy. Lord Copper is, however, blissfully unaware of it. When the news of Boot's success in Ishmaelia reaches him, he thinks himself fortunate for having listened to Mrs. Stitch's advice. Poor Lord Copper does not know that the Boot reporting from Ishmaelia is different from the Boot recommended by Mrs. Stitch. Accordingly, he plans to host a banquet in Boot's honour. Besides, he requests the Prime Minister to recommend Boot for knighthood by the Queen of England. Lord Copper's enthusiastic response to

Boot's accidental success makes him look ludicrous. Ignorance of the irrationality hidden in this apparently logical process of Boot's success reduces him to the rank of a comic character and the reader cannot help laughing at his obtuseness to reality.

So while William is on his way back to England, the dynamic world of The Beast is busily preparing for a banquet in honour of its invented hero. The celebration of William's accidental success is comparable to that of Trimmer's invented successes in The Sword of Honour Trilogy.

The novel once again employs the comic device of mistaken identity for showing how the irrational course of events deprives Lord Copper of the satisfaction of doing even that. Lord Copper's request for honouring Boot with knighthood is mistaken in the Prime Minister's office as an indication of John Boot's elevation in status and accordingly, his name, instead of William's, appears in the list of persons to be honoured by Her Majesty, the Queen of England. The mistake is discovered too late to be rectified. Consequently, John Boot steals the place which William had unknowingly stolen earlier from John. The illogical course of secular change revealed here drives home the comic absurdity of seeking the improvement of one's lot through secular change. William is, however, immune to this conspiracy of fate as he has already taken a decision against any more truck with the dynamic world of journalism and London. It is evident from his merciless response

to the handsome offers of employment in big newspaper establishments.

William released them, one by one as he read them, at the open window. The rush of air whirled them across the charred embankment to the fields of stubble and stacked corn beyond.¹⁷⁰

It is also evident from his clever ploy in getting away from the infatuated novice newspaper man sent to receive him by The Beast.

William's refusal to be seduced not only by the blandishments of "wealth and elegance" but also by that of the 'power' of press does not, however, imply a step towards real progress as they do in the case of Charles Ryder and Guy Crouchback for he re-enters the sheltered cocoon of his static world at Boot Magna after his disenchantment with the dynamic world. The Evelyn Waugh hero has not, till now, realised the significance of the cloister in getting away from the dynamic world and forging ahead on the path of progress.¹⁷¹ It is left for his successors to comprehend that vision and carry it out. A.A. De Vitis has rightly pointed out this inadequacy in William Boot thus:

William is incapable of coping with the forces he has come to understand. To invade the world he would need a banner, and the banner that flies over Boot Magna is in tatters. It is left to Guy Crouchback to invade the world under a banner still whole enough to demand the allegiance of the many.¹⁷²

The comic vision of life that grows out of this novel is shaped and structured by the absurdity implicit in the logical inconsistency of secular change. The successive scoops of William indicate that a person need not deserve what he gets. Chance and accident rule the roost in the anarchic dynamic world. Waugh shows that the immense faith reposed in the role of reason in effecting a transformation of human society is comically unjustified. Without divine grace, reason is an inadequate guide to reality, and hence, an ineffective means of achieving real progress. But the enlightenment and humanist historians refuse to see this. Accordingly, their point of view is ridiculed.

Brigid Brophy, whose other remarks on Waugh have been quite illuminating, gives evidence of less than adequate comprehension of the comic vision of absurdity implicit in the illogical process of secular change when she argues:

Scoop has always struck me as a mere, though entertaining, after-flutter of the fine imaginative flight which had produced Black Mischief; it is a Black Mischief without the great Seal set on it, and starting from a spring-board of mistaken identity which is not quite bouncy enough to get the invention into the air.¹⁷³

Like her, Christopher Hollis also shows incomprehension of the abstruse comic vision in this novel. He argues:

Scoop is concerned with how Europeans, who know nothing of their culture except its superficial patter, make use of Africans for their absurd purposes.¹⁷⁴

In contrast, Martin Stannard shows an appreciable grasp of the novel's thematic line of intention. He observes:

The underlying notion of the absurdity of the rationalist viewpoint ... is another rendering of a continuous theme in Waugh's fiction. The world is not, he suggests, as Lucas Dockery or Seth would suppose, a composite of discernible facts; without the dimension of 'spiritual' experience, human behaviour is seen to be unreasonable.¹⁷⁵

The examination of the incidents in the novel reveals an underlying circular pattern in the plot of the novel. A mistake had thrust William, in the beginning of the novel, into the inimical world of dynamic London and Ishmaelia. A similar mistake, at the end of the novel, redeems him from its absurdity. The circular nature of the plot of the novel calls up the central image of the wheel of life. The relentless circular motion of the wheel of life brings one to the original point despite all efforts. That is to say, the circular nature of secular change leaves no room for progress as it brings one back to one's original place. Thus Waugh conveys that life lived at the secular plane does not hold out the promise of progress. There is a sheer temporal movement. Logical movement is conspicuous by its absence for the circular nature of secular change is scarcely amenable to logical evaluation. Thus, the comic vision of life rooted in the logically inconsistent movement of secular change is underlined by the circular plot of the novel. The unique combination of 'form' and 'content'

in the novel speaks of Waugh's artistic brilliance even when he was only in the prime of his career.

PUT OUT MORE FLAGS (1942):

Waugh's sixth major novel, Put Out More Flags (1942), also remains preoccupied with ^{exposing} revealing the comic claims of Humanist and 'enlightenment' historiography that progress inevitably accrues from secular change. Set against the background of the ^{world} Second Great War; the particular comic vision conveyed in this novel, however, grows out of the unequal conflict between the dynamic and static characters. Unaware of the extent of the craft and guile in the dynamic characters, the static characters are rendered comic in the act of trusting them. Thus, Waugh ^{reveals} exposes the ridiculous insufficiency of the 'static' mode of life in the face of the valuelessness of the 'dynamic' world. Appreciation for the dynamic world is, however, withheld as its triumphs are a sign not of progress but of valuelessness and barbarity. The turbulent time of war serves as an appropriate temporal setting to the expression of this idea. The outbreak of war symbolises, in Waugh, a return to the state of barbarity. In the imagery of the wheel of life, it is comparable to the extreme degree of instability, felt on the outermost orbit. Attention may here be invited to the points of

similarity and distinction between Nietzsche and Evelyn Waugh. Nietzsche too sees history as a story of decadence, a falling away from the great into the trivial and finally, into nihilism. But he differs from Waugh in so far as he believes that Christianity has played a leading role in this process of decadence and debility. Waugh's decadent world is the dynamic world which has snapped its ties with religion and has increasingly engaged itself in the pursuit of the mirage of secular progress.

As the comic element in this novel grows largely out of the deception played on the ignorant static characters by the knowing dynamic characters, it is not unexpected that Waugh should have chosen Basil the most 'dynamic' of all the characters he has created till now, as the central protagonist of this novel. Christopher Hollis ignores the significance of this aspect when he complains against his suitability to the world of this novel.

The trouble with Basil Seal is that, if we consider him as a real character, he is too odious to be funny. Had he been content to remain a character in one of Mr. Waugh's earlier novels ... we could have laughed at him as a mere formula of villainy without any attempt to pass a moral judgement on a person. We can tolerate him even in Azania. But in a real world, alongside real and suffering people at a great crisis of our history, he is too horrible.¹⁷⁶

Even when he refers to the novel's predominant concern with Basil's war-time adventures, he makes no effort to uncover their underlying significance. He writes:

The bulk of the novel is concerned with Basil Seal's attempt to extract profit and amusement out of the war. 177

An attempt has been made, in this direction, by Alan Pryce-Jones and Lionel Stevenson. In the opinion of Alan Pryce-Jones:

The English world is neatly, and to some extent justly divided into those who get away with it and those who don't by a judge who has a weakness for the former. 178

Thus, he finds, in Basil's victories, the division of the English world into two segments: those who act with impunity and those who do not do so. In drawing this classification, he comes very near the division of the world into dynamic and static. But when he attributes the victory of the former over the latter to Waugh's sympathy for the former, he appears to disregard the facts recorded in this work. Lionel Stevenson improves upon it in his analysis of this subject. He maintains that Waugh's attitude towards the former group is by no means that of connivance. Rather, the group is indicted for its lack of sincerity towards friends and mercilessness towards the harmless rural residents.

... while in charge of prisoners of war on a troopship, Waugh was able to write Put Out More Flags, an angry expose of civilians who were profiting by the war. Appropriately, the central character is the ineffable Basil Seal, now insidiously reporting innocent friends to the authorities as Nazi plotters and blackmailing rural residents by threatening to billet a detestable family of slum evacuees in their houses. 179

Lionel Stevenson's analysis, however, is confined to a period-interest in the novel and Waugh has been accused of it by Martin Stannard also.

Few would now agree with those who considered it Waugh's finest achievement of the period 1928-42. Although still entertaining, the specific contemporary relevance perhaps leaves it with the flavour of a 'periodic piece' relying for its maximum effect upon a detailed knowledge of events beyond the text.¹⁸⁰

Both the critics adopt an attitude similar to what we can find in Christopher Hollis as they deny the significance of the incidents concerning Basil Seal in projecting the conflict between the dynamic and static characters which in its turn brings about the inconsequence of secular life, whether dynamic or static : an attitude that stems out of Waugh's Christian anti-humanism.

It is Sonia, who anticipates Basil's comic adventures during the period of war: 'I expect Basil will have the most tremendous adventures. He always did in peace time. Goodness knows what he'll do in war'.¹⁸¹ Basil wages his first war against the peace-loving static people of Malfrey when he visits his sister Barbara in order to avoid his mother who is bent upon seeing him recruited as a subaltern. Barbara who has been made the billeting officer for her district is unable to rid herself of the problematic Connolly children. No family in the village is ready to accept them for their destructive potential is notorious throughout the district. Indeed, they are the very epitome of the forces of anarchy,

disorder and irrationality which have been let loose by the outbreak of war in the dynamic world. In the war between the unscrupulous and unpredictable dynamic characters, on the one hand, and the unsuspecting static characters, on the other, the former's victory over the latter springs from the inability of the latter to gauge the extent of their destructiveness. Plato¹⁸² remarks that ignorance is one of the qualities that renders a person comic, and these static people are presented in a comic light for the want of knowledge concerning the real nature of Connolly-children. While we laugh at their ignorance, we also sympathise with them. This prevents them from becoming the objects of our satiric scorn.

One of the first families to fall a prey to these agents of the destructive dynamic world is Mr. Mudge's who returns with them to Barbara not long after they have been sent to him. Seeing Mr. Mudge kill a goose one day, Michy, the second Connolly child, kills all six of them and also, the old cat. Besides while Marlene, the third child, goes about soiling every place in the house, Doris, the eldest, tries to seduce not only young Willie but even Mr Mudge.

'If you ask me, mum, she's (Doris) the worst of the lot Soft about the men she is, mum. Why she even comes making up to me and I'm getting on to be her grandfer. She won't leave our Willie alone not for a minute, and he's a bashful boy our Willie and he can't get on with the work, her always coming after him'.¹⁸³

Mr Mudge's old woman shuts herself up and refuses to come down until they are despatched from their home. Such is the terror struck in her mind. Mr. Mudge's horrified response to the Connolly children renders him and his 'old woman' comic, not satiric, for when we laugh at their discomfiture, we do not condemn them; there is an overtone of sympathy for their ignorance of the barbarity of the dynamic world all the time.

Only a person as dynamic as they themselves are, can control them effectively, and such a person arrives at Malfrey in the person of Basil Seal. Instead of feeling perturbed with their persistent presence, he sees in their destructive capability, an opportunity of beginning his warlike work and translating his 'Nazi diplomacy' into a self-satisfying palpable reality.

Like Nazi diplomacy it (Basil's 'system of push, appeasement, agitation and blackmail') postulated "for success a peace-loving, orderly and honourable world in which to operate."¹⁸⁴

The world that his diplomacy needs for success is the static world which is already there before him in Malfrey's remoteness from the change that is sweeping across the dynamic world of London or, for that matter, any urban centre of human society. In his first war-effort, Basil employs the Connolly children as grenades against unwary static characters such as Mr. Harkness. The episode deepens the comic contrast existing between a dynamic character like Basil

and a static character like Mr. Harkness. The latter's static predisposition is presented in the following words:

... his years of waiting had been haunted by only one fear; that he would return to find the place 'developed' But modernity spared Noth Grappling; he returned to find the place just as he had first come upon it, on a walking tour, late in the evening 185

Mr. Harkness's response to change is indicative of the outlook shared by all static characters. Unfortunately, he is unaware of the inroad made into the static world by the dynamic world in the persons of Basil and the Connolly children. He is, therefore, unable to understand the real import of the word, 'evacuees', uttered by Basil and mistakes it to mean simply townsfolk in search of sanctuary. He is, therefore, ready to accept the rent, quoted by him, in the local paper.

'May I ask what are your friends?'
 'Well, I suppose you might call them evacuees.'
 Mr. and Mrs. Harkness laughed pleasantly at the little joke.
 'Townsfolk in search of sanctuary, eh?;
 'Exactly'.
 'Well, they will find it here, eh, Agnes?' 186

The reader cannot help laughing at the couple's ignorant mirth over the seemingly 'little joke' and yet there is an element of sympathy for the painful ordeal they are to undergo for this error of judgement. It does not take them long to understand that their 'little joke' is in fact a trap out of which there is no easy escape.

'Eight shillings and six pence?' said Mr. Harkness.
 'I'm afraid there's been some misunderstanding.'
 Five, six, seven. Here it comes. Bang!
 'Perhaps I should have told you at once. I am the
 billeting officer. I've three children for you in
 the car outside.' It was magnificent. It was war.¹⁸⁷

The authorial comment sheds light on the nature of war being fought by Basil and his 'dynamic' accomplices. Basil is enacting here, on a small scale, the war waged by Nazi forces against the other unsuspecting European powers. While Hitler is annexing countries, Basil is busy in fleecing the unwary static characters. The Harknesses rid themselves of the children by paying thirty pounds to him. More victims follow and his earnings from the war keep on swelling. The problem-children become means of profit in his hands. The repeated victories of Basil show how in war it is the dynamic character who triumphs odiously over the static character. To be static, therefore, is a particular disadvantage in such a chaotic world. Waugh does not, however, appreciate Basil's triumphs for they lack mercy and humanism, qualities that Christianity wishes to foster. Thus, the success of the dynamic character, by no means, implies upholding of the lack of principles and values that dynamism stands for. As Waugh himself once said, it is better to be static than dynamic.

It is better to be narrow-minded than to have no mind, to hold limited and rigid principles than none at all. ... to put up with what is wasteful and harmful with the excuse that there is "good in everything" ... means an inability to distinguish between good and bad.¹⁸⁸

The incidents concerning the Connolly children also substantiate it as Waugh makes us sympathise with the victimised static characters repeatedly rather than the dynamic ones, who despite their success are presented in a lurid light. Christopher Hollis appears to have underestimated the importance of these episodes concerning Connolly children in furthering the novel's thematic intention when he expresses doubt about their validity and use.

But Basil's antics-his dodge of selling the Connollies _____ though ingenious, is not, to tell the truth, especially amusing. It is a little bit the kind of thing that curates do in novels by George A. Birmingham.¹⁸⁹

The second string of Basil's comic adventures begins in London with his success in befooling Colonel Plum who is made to believe his story of the lunatic carrying bombs. The Colonel does not know that it is Basil himself who has brought the lunatic inside despite the heavy security at the gate. Made a second Lieutenant for this war-effort, the Colonel promises to fulfil his aspirations for a higher post provided he catches a fascist for him: 'Not for watching communities. Catch a fascist for me and I'll think about making you a Captain of Marines'.¹⁹⁰ The incident brings out the lack of rationality in the concatenation of events in secular life. Reward does not necessarily follow after one's personal merit: a view that Waugh has explored deeply in Scoop. Waugh's antipathy to 'humanist' and 'enlightenment' emphasis on a rational

interpretation of secular progress does not remain concealed here. In drawing our attention to his aversion to progress through reason, Waugh, in fact, probes the second level of reality which does not in any way invalidate the first. What we need in fiction is a devoted fidelity to an acceptable technique which will help us to discover and evaluate our subject matter. It is understanding to realise that the author's concept of change and progress, leaning more towards faith and disavowing reason, provides this much needed fidelity: a measure of judgement more satisfying than what we come across in contemporary critical writings concerning his novels.

The man Basil chooses to be his 'fascist' prey is his own old acquaintance, Ambrose Silk. He occurs in the long line of static academic characters like Paul, Adam and William Boot. That Waugh associates the scholarly profession with staticity is clear from Basil's habit of taking to writing when he feels exhausted and tired of keeping apace the world of change; though such periods of hibernation are very short-lived, owing to his resilient 'dynamism'. As Waugh writes:

- For years now, whenever things were very bad with Basil, he had begun writing a book. It was as near surrender as he ever came and the fact that these books - two novels, a book of travel, ... - never got beyond the first ten thousand words was testimony to the resilience of his character.¹⁹¹

Apart from his scholarly profession, Ambrose, like Tony Last, is attached to the past. In his own words:

But Ambrose, thought Ambrose, what of him?
 Born after his time, in an age which made a
 type, of him, a figure of farce 192

He is a man born after his time and thus a fit object of ridicule for his staticity. Unlike Boot, Ambrose himself plunges into the dynamic world by joining the Ministry of Information as a writer committed to the cause of Britain and communism. Ambrose deliberately gives up the privileged position of an objective spectator and willingly takes part in the action of the changing world. He, thus, exposes himself to the predatory dynamic characters stalking around fearlessly in the war-torn dynamic world. Besides, he has imposed upon himself the role of a dynamic character, which runs counter to his real static personality. This imposition, just as in the case of Paul Pennyfeather, has robbed him of his reality; he has become a 'shadow' character. It is on account of this contradiction within himself that he suffers from persecution-mania, both from the fascists and the public. Waugh writes:

... there were only a few restaurants, now, which he could frequent without fear of ridicule and there he was surrounded, as though by distorting mirrors, with gross reflections and caricatures of himself. 193

Even his voice has lost its seriousness, because of the diminution of his real personality to the state of a shadow.

Mine is the brazen voice of Apuleius' ass, turning its own words to ridicule. 194

Basil makes Ambrose undergo precisely what he thinks of here. He proves the latter a fascist to Colonel Plum. Basil gets started on this trail by Poppet Green's casual reference to Ambrose as a fascist.

'Did you say "fascist?"
'Didn't you know? He's gone to the Ministry of Information and he's bringing out a fascist paper next month.' 'This is very interesting', said Basil.
'Tell me some more'.¹⁹⁵

The paper that Ambrose is planning to publish is actually a literary journal entitled 'Ivory Tower', a name that also suggests Ambrose's state of mind. As Ambrose's attitude to art rejects the idea of art for art's sake, so the paper begins with stating its aims. In doing so, he sows seeds of controversy in it which does not even escape the notice of his publisher, Mr. Bentley.

'It's all very controversial', said Mr. Bentley sadly. 'When you first told me about it, I thought you meant it to be a purely artistic paper'. 'We must show people where we stand,' said Ambrose. 'Art will follow - anyway there's 'Monument to a Spartan'. 'Yes', said Mr. Bentley. 'There's that'. 'It covers fifty pages, my dear. All pure Art'.¹⁹⁶

The essay that Ambrose considers an example of pure art is everything but that. It centres around his old friend Hans who in the first flush of youth was taken in by Nazi ideals but later on discovered their fatuity. It thus purports to show the hollowness of Nazism. Ambrose's assessment of his own committed writing as pure art is an error of judgement, arising out of his inability to sift truth from fiction.

Basil pounces on this vulnerable trait. The essay, 'Monument to a Spartan', needs only a slight modification which Basil with his superior talent can turn into a really fascist article. Chance helps him in doing so. When Ambrose absents himself from his room where he has kept the essay, Basil happens to drop in. Upon discovering the galley-proofs, he steals one with him. After reading it thoroughly, he chooses his points of alteration. He makes Ambrose believe that the second part which deals with Hans' awakening, robs the story of its value as pure art and lends it instead an air of propaganda. He suggests to him that the essay should end 'with Hans still full of his illusions, marching into Poland'. What Ambrose fails to see is that an ending like this would make the readers mistake Hans' illusions for reality and thereby inculcate him as a fascist.¹⁹⁷ His inability to see the point renders him comic. Because of this ignorance on his part we sympathise with him even when we laugh at his foolishness. This comic episode is, therefore, precluded from the scope of satire.

If Ambrose by his association with the past is the opposite of Basil, Angela Lyne, by her true contemporaneity with him, parallels him in more ways than one. Her dynamism is reflected not only in her American appearance and general deportment but also in her descent: she is the daughter of a Glasgow millionaire who rose to heights from the 'life in a street gang'. 'Angela', Waugh says, 'is a decadent modern woman'. In other words, she is thoroughly steeped in the

decadent spirit of the constantly changing modern secular world. The impact of mechanisation, the means of secular change, is writ large on her face.

But the face was mute. It might have been carved in jade, it was so smooth and cool and conventionally removed from the human.¹⁹⁸

The narcissistic tendencies, manifest in Basil and Barbara,

Narcissus greeted Narcissus from the watery depth as Basil kissed her (Barbara).¹⁹⁹

can be detected in her too.

For seven years she had been on a desert island; her appearance had become a hobby and distraction, a pursuit entirely self-regarding and self-rewarding...²⁰⁰

She owes her proximity with Basil not to any sensual reason but to the 'other bonds' of dynamic qualities. In Basil's absence, when she shuts herself in, she falls sick and suffers from insomnia. Her sickness results from her decision to impose a static self upon her essentially dynamic self. It is only after Basil's arrival and in his company that she gradually recovers. It is, therefore, quite likely that she should get married to him after the death of Cedric, her previous husband. Marriage, however, does not represent stability and permanence in their case. It only means a short-lived arrangement.

'What's the sense of marrying with things as they are? I don't know what there is to marriage, if it isn't looking forward to a comfortable old age.'
'The only thing in war-time is not to think ahead. It's like walking in the blackout with a shaded torch. You can just see as far as the step you're taking.'²⁰¹

In the flux which followed world war II, it was futile to expect permanence even in the bond of marriage. The instability suggested here is felt on the outer orbits of the wheel of life where it is difficult for a person to maintain his balance.

Basil's decision to join the war near the end of the novel has been interpreted by critics as a sign of hope, a sort of regeneration of the decadent aristocracy. As Lionel Stevenson opines:

In the dark early months of the war, Waugh apparently almost succumbed to a delusive hope that it might bring regeneration to the effete aristocracy.²⁰²

Our preceding discussion has revealed that the outbreak of war in the dynamic world implies the unleashing of the forces of destabilisation which push human society to an extreme form of dynamism like what we can find in the barbaric circles of humanity. In the terminology of Decline & Fall, it implies a rapid movement away from the hub of the wheel of life. The war cannot, therefore, offer the hope that Lionel Stevenson speaks of concerning the effete aristocracy: The Sword of Honour trilogy, written much later, further explains the evils of war and its inability to provide any such hope. Guy Gouchback sees in the war an expression of the unchristian desire of killing each other and thereby satisfying one's manhood. Basil Seal too joins the war not with any holy intention or for that

matter for the sake of any ideal; he joins it only to satisfy his irrepressible desire of putting to sword hordes of Germans. The importance of holy intention or the desire to highlight some ideal is very closely connected with the concept of change and progress in Waugh's novels.

Christopher Hollis too appears to have ignored the sadistic motives which work in Basil's mind before he joins the war when he writes of his reformation in the war-torn world.

We are indeed left at the end of Put Out More Flags with a vague impression that in the new atmosphere of the Churchillian Renaissance even Basil Seal is going to behave decently.²⁰³

The character who really reforms himself in this novel is Alastair Digby-Vane-Trumington. He does so, however, by joining the war in order to express his penance for his unruly and wasteful past. A.A. De Vitis has rightly perceived the future artistic potential of Waugh on the basis of this change in Alastair.

Here is Waugh tenuously moving into the penance prescribed by the Catholic Church, although his outlook in Put Out More Flags is specifically secular. But the introduction of the religious note indicates more strongly than ever before the direction he will take in Brideshead Revisited.²⁰⁴

In spite of it, A.A. De Vitis is right in saying that war is no solution to the ills of the dynamic world.

Yet war is no solution, and Waugh is conscious of the fact.²⁰⁵

In the words of Lionel Trilling we may therefore assert that Waugh was making 'a perpetual quest for reality, the field of its research being always the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as an indication of the direction of man's soul'. The holy intention, suggested by the panorama of change and progress, is thus very nearly what we mean by Catholicism in his novels. Catholicism in his novels, it will be seen, stands for the principle of unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual and that is also the principle of Classicism in literature.

Apart from these episodes which indicate a general trend away from the hub and towards greater chaos and consequent instability on the periphery of the wheel of life, the novel also brings out the circular nature of life in the fate of the people who stalk the corridors of the Ministry of Information, and fail to meet the right person who will listen to them. They keep moving from one office to another until they end up in the same office from where they had begun their circular journey. They have the feeling that a person on the wheel of life has when he reaches nowhere despite all his efforts.

The 'new spirit' that Sir Joseph sees 'on every side' has no foundation in the grim prospect that dynamic life holds out. Whatever comic fun we find in the novel owes not to the regeneration of life or the epiphany that

occurs after resurrection, (he presents this view of life in a clearer manner in the so-called Catholic novels) but to absurdity, in the way Ionesco defines this term:

// 'Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose....
Cut off from his religion, metaphysical and
transcendental roots, man is lost; all his
actions become senseless, absurd, useless.²⁰⁶

The absurd attitude, by its very nature, frightens while it regales. Basil's comic adventures may please but they also reveal the vacuity of his purpose in life. The aim that he discovers at the end is nothing more than a satisfaction of irrational and senseless desire of killing, a wish that brings him closer to his barbaric forbears.

Conceived on board a troopship carrying prisoners of war, the novel, in the words of Waugh, is 'a minor work dashed off to occupy a tedious voyage'.²⁰⁷ Critics appear to have taken a cue from it to appraise it unsympathetically. Alan Pryce-Jones, Waugh's friend and reviewer, considers the plot of the novel too fragile to act as a controlling agent of the incidents described in it.

The plot does not matter; it imposes a vague pattern on selected instances of incompetence, lying, theft, graft, fornication, unkindness, ineptitude, snobbery, cowardice, drink and unnatural vice during the first year of the war.²⁰⁸

Even David Lodge sees signs of structural and thematic disunity in the novel.

Though Put Out More Flags (1942) certainly has its moments ... the novel has neither structural nor thematic unity But one should not judge Put Out More Flags too harshly for it was written on a troopship, partly to relieve the author's own boredom.²⁰⁹

The criticism is, however, tempered with an extenuating reference to its peculiar mode of composition.

Notwithstanding Waugh's own unsympathetic assessment of his sixth major novel, the theme of inverse relationship between secular change and progress does recur in it as a unifying bond of apparently disparate episodes which lends the novel an aesthetic wholeness.

Just like his previous novels, Put Out More Flags follows the basic structural pattern of a circle and it is suggestive of the wheel of life. The action of the novel unfolds in 'Autumn' with three rich women thinking of Basil in terms of his suitability for the war. Barbara Sothill, Basil's sister, thinks that '... Basil needed a war. He's not meant for peace'.²¹⁰ Angela Lyne, his mistress, and Lady Cynthia, his mother, too picture him as a subaltern leading an action. Basil, however, eludes attempts to get him recruited. It does not, by any means, falsify the assessments of these three rich women for the reasons that make him do so, are in no way pacific. It is the discipline that the armed forces demand which repels him. As he is a true dynamic character, he wishes to have a taste of irrational and impartial killing from the war. At this stage

of the war, he feels, these are precisely what he would be unable to realise.

'Conscription has rather taken the gilt off that particular gingerbread', said Basil. 'Besides, this ain't going to be a soldier's war'.²¹¹

The desires of the three women, close to him, materialise only towards the end of the novel. Basil's reasons for joining the war, however, remain true to the ideals of dynamic life.

'There's only one serious occupation for a chap now, that's killing Germans. I have an idea I shall rather enjoy it'.²¹²

His anticipation of the relish in killing the Germans is comparable to the homicidal carpenter's relish in exterminating heathens like Prendergast in Decline and Fall (1928). In depicting the situation in both the novels there is a fear that the unrestrained irrational impulses must be tamed by imposing religious order or otherwise our civilisation will perish. In this respect, Basil stands in sharp contrast with

Guy Crouchback who returns to England at the beginning of the Second Great War in order that he may defend the honour of his country. While the resemblance with the homicidal carpenter emphasises the common bond of dynamism, the contrast with Guy Crouchback reveals the dynamism of Basil against the backdrop of Guy Crouchback's static life. Basil's entry into the war thus completes the framework of the novel and lends it a circular nature by bringing the action to

the point from where it began. Even the movement of time in the novel reinforces this impression, for the operation of seasons, within which the action is contained, is itself cyclical.

By manifesting a concern with the absurdity of secular change, the novel falls in line with Waugh's previous other fiction in which he upholds a similar view of life. To the discriminating readers of his novel the inference is palpable that the events are carefully patterned and deliberately organised: over and over again Waugh dwells on the theme of change and progress in life and time and again he is disillusioned by the ridiculous nature of dynamic life that he finds around him. In our analytical study of the next novel, we shall see the same trend depicted with a firmer grasp of manners and material.

THE LOVED ONE (1948):

In Decline and Fall, the critique of civilisation unfolded itself against the backdrop of modern Britain and the idea of attaining progress through secular change was there held up to ridicule. In The Loved One (1948)²¹³, notwithstanding the change in setting from Britain to America, the same theme finds a vigorous expression once again. The change in setting is, however, significant for America compared to Britain is a far more 'dynamic' society. In the words of Waugh himself:

She is the child of late eighteenth-century 'enlightenment' and the liberalism of her founders has persisted through all the changes of her history and penetrated into every part of her life.²¹⁴

The 'enlightenment' and liberalism that have guided American society have introduced a stupendous rate of change into it so that from the status of a mere colony of Britain it has come to be regarded now as a society far more developed and civilised than even Britain. Waugh's anti-'enlightenment' attitude does not allow him to subscribe to the progressive view of American society. He believes that the high rate of secular change noticeable in it is the cause of its undoing and for this reason American society is placed on the outermost orbit of the wheel of life. Britain with its slower pace of secular change finds a berth on a comparatively inner orbit. It is significant that Waugh measures progress not in terms of the cyclical motion of a society on the wheel of life but in terms of its distance from the Roman Catholic hub of life. The idiom of expression is clear and categorical in Decline and Fall:

'You see, the nearer you can get to the hub of the wheel the slower it is moving and the easier it is to stay on'.²¹⁵

Britain, by virtue of its nearness to the hub has a far more stable society than America which is farther from it. In consequence, an interaction between the two exposes America, in all its vulnerability, to the buffetings of Britain. Waugh has voiced this view quite clearly in the "Commentary for The Private Man". He remarks:

The more uprooted they are from their essential loyalties, the more the control of their own lives and families and the pride in their possessions are taken from them so much the more readily will they fall victim to attack from nations which have not been so enervated. 216

The defeat of America at the hands of a British intruder also helps to highlight the American illusion of progress as comically false and delusive. The novel stops short of being a satirical attack on American society as the shattering of this illusion elicits our sympathy and admittedly, it is one of the cathartic emotions created by comedy. The Times Literary Supplement appears to have overlooked this basic distinction by labelling the novel as a satire:

It is as an Old Testament prophet exposing our festering sores, as a flayer of society that he excels. The Loved One perhaps indicates that he has finally accepted his métier. At any rate, he has given us a satire, witty and macabre, ominous and polished, which strikes straight at the heart of the contemporary problem. 217

Waugh's choice of Hollywood as the backdrop to the action of this novel is not without reason. The home of cinema in English, Hollywood is, to Waugh, the very epitome of futile secular change. In "Why Hollywood is a Term of Disparagement", he remarks,

As far as the home of a living art is concerned, Hollywood has no importance. It may be a useful laboratory for technical experiment. 218

By distinguishing between 'living art' and 'technical experiment', Waugh tries to draw a line between quintessential

and superficial change. While the first is of a religious kind, the second is of a secular kind. Hollywood represents a secular world in flux. Accordingly, it is a very appropriate background for showing the absurdity of secular change. In Waugh's philosophical terminology, we may, therefore, call it the dynamic centre of a dynamic society. Two categories of artists are shown converging on this dynamic heart of America. The first is comprised (of) those who have allowed art to give up its quest for the aesthetic expression of permanent values. The second is comprised (of) those who have been true to their artistic calling.

Waugh's anguish and pain for the first type of artists is neatly formulated in these words:

The great danger is that the European climate is becoming inclement for artists; they are notoriously comfort-loving people. The allurements of the modest luxury of Hollywood are strong. Will they be seduced there to their own extinction?219

The answer to this question is implied in the downward sloping curve of Sir Francis Hinsley's artistic career. He has joined initially as a chief script-writer in Megalopolitan Pictures, after his arrival in Hollywood. By the fag-end of his career there, he has come down to the Publicity Department where his job is to endow actors and actresses with saleable identities. Change in the dynamic world is so rampant that even the tastes of the people keep on changing. Sir Hinsley's job is to fashion and re-fashion

the identities of the actors and actresses with a view to catering to these changing tastes. Waugh's art thus imitates life in this respect as in so many others. Assuredly, his novelistic writing is not marred by the impression that he has created in the character of Sir Hinsley on dishonest scales. The final impression depends not on whether the novelist explicitly passes judgement but on whether the judgement he passes seems defensible in the light of the dramatised facts associated with the fashioning and refashioning of the identities of the actors and actresses with a view to catering to these changing tastes.

By making art serve the ends of the dynamic world, Sir Hinsley has not only reduced himself to the rank of an apostate artist but also exposed himself to the possibility of 'extinction' of which Waugh is never tired of writing. The Megalopolitan Pictures retrench him as they find his approach outdated. The fact of his retrenchment, however, escapes his notice as the company does not even inform him. When it does come to his notice, he refuses to accept the reality, for he cannot believe that he has finally fallen a victim to the denigration and debasement of his trade. The illusion concerning the supremacy of impure and corrupt art in a way renders his position comic, though he does not fail to draw the sympathy of the sensitive readers.

'I've just found a Mr. Medici in my office,'
 'Why, yes, Frank. Only he says it "Medissy",
 like that; how you said sounds kinda like a wop
 and Mr. Medici is a very fine young man with a
 very, very fine and wonderful record, Frank, who
 I'd be proud to have you meet.'

'Then where do I work?'

'Well, now see here, Frank, that's a thing I want
 very much to talk about but I haven't the time
 right now. I haven't the time, have I dear?'

'No, Mr. Baumbein,' said one of the secretaries.

'You certainly haven't the time.'²²⁰

It is only after Sir Erikson tells Sir Hinsley in blunt
 Nordic terms about his retrenchment that he realises that
 he has been added to the long list of 'has-beens' in the
 ever changing world of Megalopolitan Pictures.

He had seen the rooms filled and refilled, the
 name-plates change on the doors. He had seen
 arrivals and departures, Mr. Erikson and Mr.
 Baumbein coming, others whose names now escaped
 him, going.²²¹

Significantly, when he leaves the building of Megalopolitan
 Pictures, he leaves the question of the girl at the desk -
 'Did you find who you were looking for?'²²² unanswered;
 Sir Hinsley has found out his own real self and the fact of
 its discovery stares him in the face now.

Waugh presents a just and lively image of human
 nature by playing up the passions and humours of the charac-
 ters depicted, and also by representing the changes of for-
 tune to which men are subject. If Hamlet's father had not
 been murdered by his uncle and his mother had not married
 the same uncle, Hamlet would never have been driven to

exhibit the true image of human being and thus hold the mirror up to nature. The wisdom with which Sir Hinsley recognises the reality of the situation following his retrenchment provides the acid test that illuminates his character. A grim note is added to the comic situation that obtains in Sir Hinsley's retrenchment by his death which imparts particularity to one of his own comments on life in America:

'Did you see the photograph ... of a dog's head severed from its body which the Russians are keeping alive ... by pumping blood into it from a bottle? It dribbles at the tongue when it smells a cat. That's what all of us are, you know, out here. The studios keep us going with a pump. We are still just capable of a few crude reactions - nothing more. If we ever get disconnected from our bottle, we should simply crumble.'²²³

Despite his awareness of the nature of life found in America, Sir Francis Hinsley meets with the same fate, he speaks here of. His death illustrates the tragic potential of a comic situation that Northrop Frye refers to in his essay on comedy.²²⁴

The other kind of artists who have flocked at Hollywood are represented in Dennis Borlow who despite going 'native' always maintains an intellectual detachment from the dynamic world. In fact, we get flashes of it in his alert artistic sense which refuses to stoop the way Sir Hinsley's did. Having won fame with his book of poems published during the last war, he comes to Hollywood to

write the life of Shelley for the Megalopolitan Pictures. Three months of his stay there convince him of the decadent nature of secular art encouraged there. He, therefore, prefers the job of an assistant at the Happier Hunting Ground after the expiry of his period of contract. This introduces him to the ultimate stage of decadence, death, that the dynamic world is prone to. Besides it saves him from the ordeal of subserving his artistic perception to the ends of a decadent dynamic world. Barlow's work as an assistant at the Happier Hunting Ground decides Sir Ambrose's choice for the person who can look to the funeral preparation of Sir Hinsley at Whispering Glades: an opportunity that brings him into contact with the most vulnerable area of the dynamic world of America. Being a person nearer to the hub, by virtue of his inner stability reflected in his artistic rectitude, he becomes a good medium for exposing the American notion of progress as comic and false.

Waugh's art of novelistic writing may rightly be regarded as our storehouse of recorded values in so far as they spring from and perpetuate hours in the lives of exceptional people. In depicting the character of Dennis Barlow, the author underlines the varying possibilities of existence and the discriminating reader can easily understand that the habitual narrowness of interests in his acts and activities are replaced by an intricately wrought composure because he is endowed with an artistic rectitude. In the "Conservative Manifesto" to Robbery Under law, Waugh has clarified this

point beyond doubt. He opines:

There is no more agreeable position than that of a dissident from a stable society. Theirs are all the solid advantages of other people's creation and preservation, and all the fun of detecting hypocrisies and inconsistencies. There are times when dissidents are not only enviable but valuable.²²⁵

Barlow fulfils the needs of a 'dissident' far better than Paul Pennyfeather or for that matter Adam Fenwick Symes or William Boot does. He neither suffers from the bewilderment of a static character nor from the pointless dynamism of a dynamic character like Basil Seal whose deep sense of participation in the world of change prevents him from viewing his world with a detached wisdom that Barlow brings to bear on the follies of the dynamic world. Barlow may, therefore, be said to occupy a place near the hub of the wheel of life.

The notion of progress that the 'enlightenment' and humanist historiographers have fostered judges, as a matter of general rule, the development of man and his world through the acceleration of the pace of secular change. Men upholding such a view show a culpable disregard for the mortality of man and the transience of his achievements. The insignificance of man's achievements in the face of death compelled Marlowe's Doctor Faustus to abandon the study of subjects that would not alter his condition of 'but Faustus and a man'. While he evaded a suitable answer to this problem by succumbing to the

delusive super-human pleasures of evil necromancy, the dynamic society of America has gone a step further. With a view to preventing death from undoing its quest for secular progress, it has launched a frontal attack on the very significance of death as an eye-opener of the insignificance of secular human efforts through the ages. Referring to this tendency, Waugh records his conviction in "Death in Hollywood" in these words:

They are gently spinning the cocoon which will cover their final transition. Death is the only event which can disturb them, and priests of countless preposterous cults have gathered round to shade off that change until it becomes imperceptible.²²⁶

Thus, the American society has burrowed itself deeper into the comic delusion of investing mortal life with the permanent values of spirituality. This contradiction manifests itself in the comic unreality of Whispering Glades, a cemetery of great repute for the Americans. Nothing here is what it seems to be. Like Iago's, here there is a tacit proclamation, 'I am not what I am'. The unreality of the place is accentuated in its being the product of a dream. The dream-like quality can be found around most of the objects of art installed here. Here are the Kaiser's stoneless peaches, the buzzing sound of non-existent honeybees, three-dimensional houses that look artificial and two-dimensional facades that look natural. Besides, most objects of classical art and architecture here are debased

replicas of their originals found elsewhere. Waugh did not have to strain his imagination much for creating the fantastic environs of Whispering Glades. Waugh makes use of the events associated with the Whispering Glades usually as references which are involved as conditions for, or stages in the ensuing development of attitudes. It matters not at all in such cases whether the references are false or true; their sole function is to bring about and support Waugh's dominant attitude towards change and progress: ideas which provide an acceptable and irrefutable measure of judgement for reading his novels in a rewarding manner. Still, it would be rewarding to know that the material was readily available in the cemetery of Forest Lawn which he visited while he was on a tour of California for discussing the filming of Brideshead Revisited. In his diary for this period, he says, 'I found a deep mine of literary gold in the cemetery of Forest Lawn'.²²⁷ Again, we find few changes between its description in the novel and the one given in "Half in Love with Easeful Death" which serves to show the richness of this particular experience of his.²²⁸ The letter to Cyril Connolly, written on 2 January 1948, also leaves no room for doubt about the impact of this experience on his fecund imagination.

" 'The ideas I had in mind in writing were: 1st & quite predominantly overexcitement with the scene of Forest Lawn' ²²⁹

The contradiction that renders the physical facade of Whispering Glades comic does not stop here; it extends even to the practices adopted. The dead bodies brought for burial here are called the loved ones. Large scale operations are undertaken, in case of injury, to bring them back to their original beauty and appearance. Only after that are the corpses sent to their respective burial spots. Even then, no effort is spared to avoid the body getting mixed up with earth and decaying. The burial place of Whispering Glade thus tries to arrogate to itself the spirit of blissful eternity that is the foundation of Heaven according to Christian conception of life. Commenting on a similar inversion of values in Forest Lawn, Waugh writes perceptively in "Half in love with Easeful Death" thus:

We are very far here from the traditional conception of an adult soul naked at the judgement seat and a body turning to corruption ... In those realistic times Hell waited for the wicked and a long purgation for all but the saints, but Heaven, if at last attained, was a place of perfect knowledge. In Forest Lawn, as the builder claims these values are reversed. The body does not decay; it lives on, more chic in death than ever before ... the soul goes straight from Slumber Room to Paradise, where it enjoys an endless infancy... 230

The travesty of Christian truth in Whispering Glades is well illustrated by Evelyn Waugh in these words about its apotheosis:

Forest Lawn has consciously turned its back on the 'old customs of death', the grim traditional alternatives of Heaven and Hell, and promises eternal happiness for all its inmates. Dr. Eaton (the founder) is the first man to offer eternal salvation at an inclusive charge as part of his undertaking service.²³¹

The eternal salvation sold at Whispering Glades contravenes the Catholic stand that Waugh takes in "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church" :

The Christian believes that he was created to know, love and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him in the next. That is the sole reason for his existence.²³²

Thus, in the words of Lionel Stevenson, this novel 'conveys an abhorrence for the blasphemous parody of religion practiced in the modern materialistic world'.²³³ Edmund Wilson, who had reacted to the overt expression of Catholicism in Brideshead Revisited, finds fault with the emphasis on the Catholic viewpoint in Waugh's ironic presentation of American attitude to death:

To the non-religious reader ... the patrons and proprietors of Whispering Glades (the cemetery in the book) seem more sensible and less absurd than the priest-guided Evelyn Waugh. What the former are trying to do is, after all, merely to gloss over physical death with smooth lawns and soothing rites; but, for the Catholic, the fact of death is not to be faced at all: he is solaced with the fantasy of another world.²³⁴

John Farrelly of Scrutiny, however, finds Wilson's approach rather 'depressing'.

If Mr. Wilson finds the attitude to life implicit in Whispering Glades more congenial than that explicit in the traditional 'Christian myth, that should prove' disturbing; as I said above ... Rather, 'depressing', would be the more sympathetic term.²³⁵

What Edmund Wilson failed to notice while criticising the Catholic slant of the book may be summed up best in the words of Desmond Mac Carthy who points out:

The book is a ruthless exposure of a silly optimistic trend in modern civilisation which takes for granted that the consolations of religion can be enjoyed without belief in them...²³⁶

The comic fun that Waugh arouses here emerges from the incongruity between the real value of death, as defined by Roman Catholicism, and the false one, superimposed on it by the American notion of progress. The latter is held up to ridicule for its delusive attempt to assert the supremacy of man by trying to conquer even death. In his book Evelyn Waugh, A.A. De Vitis has, therefore, rightly pointed out:

Waugh lamented the fact that the traditional concepts of the soul standing naked at the judgement seat, of the mystery and enormity of death ... were minimized and replaced by an infantile and imbecile idea of the permanence and beauty of life.²³⁷

Yet, the imbecility of the American attitude to life and death also makes us sympathise with them. So when De Vitis calls the novel a 'caustic condemnation of the American way of life',²³⁸ and when Cyril Connolly calls it a 'Swiftian satire on the burial customs of Southern California',²³⁹

they ignore the importance of sympathy in the creation of the comic world.

Observing the self-delusion evident in the American attitude to death with his 'literary sense' alert all the while, Barlow feels an urge within him to translate this into a work of art.

In that zone of insecurity in the mind where none but the artist dare trespass, the tribes were mustering. Dennis the frontiersman, could read the signs.²⁴⁰

But as his experience of the depravity and illusions of American life is not yet complete and as he has still a duty concerning the burial of his deceased host to perform, he lets the impulse lie low. He engages himself, instead, in writing an elegy on Sir Hinsley. The poem suggests Barlow's disenchantment with the so-called progressive American society, despite his active participation in its circular and pointless 'dynamic' life.

They told me, Francis Hinsley, they told me
you were hung
With red protruding eye-balls and black-
protruding tongue;
I wept as I remembered how often you and I
Had laughed about Los Angeles and now 'tis
here you'll lie;
Here pickled in formal dehyde and painted
like a whore,
Shrimp-pink incorruptible, not lost nor gone
before.²⁴¹

The two kinds of women that Barlow meets at Whispering Glades are indicative of the degradation that

human life has undergone in the highly dynamic atmosphere of America. Those who belong to the first kind are no more than the 'standard product' of an industry.

A man could leave such a girl in a delicatessen shop in New York, fly three thousand miles and find her again in the cigar stall at San Francisco, just as he would find his favourite comic strip in the local paper; and she would croon the same words to him in moments of endearment and express the same views and preferences in moments of social discourse.²⁴²

The sameness that permeates them is a sign of their servility to the mechanical order of things that they themselves have given precedence over all else under the false impression that it would lead them ahead on the path of secular progress. In the "Commentary" for The Private Man, Waugh says: 'Men are not naturally equal and can only be so when enslaved'.²⁴³ The servility to a mechanical order of things is here conveyed through the act of denaturing life. While depicting Thomas Gradgrind, Charles Dickens gave a similar example of life. In his novel, as in this, it grows as a sequel to the mechanistic approach to life.

We recall here that Waugh made oblique criticism concerning individuality in Decline and Fall, and considered it the root cause of the disorder prevalent in the dynamic world, and hence the critical account of sameness in human life presented here may be construed as a departure from views originally held. In his book The Picturesque Prison, Jeffrey Heath²⁴⁴ has analysed this problem at length.

He argues that Waugh believes, with St. Augustine, that every individual nature is God-given and good so long as it keeps man 'in the place assigned by the order of nature'. It is only when man relinquishes his ordained place that his nature assumes barbaric potential and threatens the stability of human society. The presentation of events in which the essential humanity of man is denied is, therefore, only an apparent contradiction in Waugh. The comic laughter that Waugh elicits over this self-contrived situation is saved from being satiric by the element of sympathy which pervades all along, for the folly committed by the dynamic characters is an unconscious one and is rooted in the delusive faith in secular progress cherished by them.

The second category of women that one comes across in America, is of those whose individuality has a streak of barbarity. They fall in the long line of dynamic characters beginning with Captain Grimes and Prendergast in Decline and Fall. Dennis Barlow discovers such a kind of woman in Aimee Thenatogenos.

But the girl who now entered was unique. Not indefinitely; the appropriate distinguishing epithet leapt to Dennis' mind the moment he saw her: sole Eve in a bustling hygienic Eden, this girl was a decadent.²⁴⁵

Her uniqueness, as Dennis detects, lies in her decadent nature and is, therefore, not a sign of her superiority. The parallel drawn with Eve underlines this fact. The

'rich glint of lunacy', that he finds in her plays up the wildness of her individuality that is ever ready to upset the established order of things. Her heathen parental lineage also reinforces the idea of this dangerous quality in her. As a student she had wished to take up art as her first major subject. But because her father had lost money in religion, another sign of perversity in American life, she was forced to give that up and learn beauti-craft instead. The choice is guided by monetary considerations than any high ideals and the alternative chosen is accordingly one which lacks the permanent values of the fine arts. Aimee's choice therefore sheds light on her growing conformity to the dynamic world where the quest for secular progress robs all things of a permanent value. She suffers another fall when she willingly opts for working on dead corpses as a cosmetician tha on living faces. This makes her subserve her false art to the furtherance of the pseudo-religion of Whispering Glades, and this is clearly indicative of the travesty of truth found in the dynamic world.

" Dennis wins her admiration not by reciting his own poems which she does not like but by reading out the poems of Keats. This is illustrative of the fact that Aimee who prefers the heathen values celebrated in the poems of Keats rather than the Christian ones in Dennis' poems is an out and out dynamic creature. Wishing to gain greater insight into this decadent world, Dennis keeps up her interest in

him by making her believe that he is the author of those heathen poems. Besides, unlike the apostate artists, Aimee and Sir Hinsley, he cannot make his art stoop to the level of self-deception practised in the dynamic world.

That was not what the Muse wanted. There was a very long, complicated, and important message she was trying to convey to him. It was about Whispering Glades, but it was not, except quite indirectly, about Aimee. Sooner or later the Muse would have to be placated. She came first. Meanwhile Aimee must draw from the bran-tub of the anthologies.²⁴⁶

Aimee contrasts the transience of her work (the paint she applies on the dead face flakes off after some time) with the permanence of the Hellenic poetry supposedly written by Dennis and thereby, begins to feel for him in a way she has never felt for Mr. Joyboy, the Chief Mortician at Whispering Glades. His arrival minimises the impressiveness of Mr Joyboy who till now has reigned in her mind as an epitome of artistic excellence.

The courtship of Mr. Joyboy in the sombre setting of the mortuary is not only an inversion but also a perversion of all sacred values of life. Death which is a grim reminder of the transience of human joys and life is itself used as a love-broker to further and celebrate the impermanent pleasures of life implicit in human love. Mr. Joyboy expresses his admiration and love for Aimee through the smiles that he imparts to the dead faces under his care. The contradiction between what should be and what is makes the entire process of courtship look repulsive and ridiculous.

'It's true, Miss Thenatogenos. It seems I am just powerless to prevent it. When I am working for you there's something inside me says "He's on his way to Miss Thenatogenos" and my fingers just seem to take control. Haven't you noticed it?'
 'Well, Mr. Joyboy, I did remark it only last week. "All the Loved Ones that come from Mr. Joyboy lately", I said, "have the most beautiful smiles".'
 'All for you, Miss Thenatogenos.'²⁴⁷

Aimee confides the vicissitudes of her love-life to a fake spiritual guide, Guru Brahmin, who is not one person but two. In the dynamic world of America where religion has been robbed of its eternal significance and made to come to terms with secularism on a dubious note, there is no dearth of 'preposterous cults' and commercialised religiosity. Similar events and trends occur in other novels; we have already mentioned them in Decline and Fall where Mr. Prendergast sets up as a Modern Churchman and in Vile Bodies where Mrs Melrose Ape uses religion for personal aggrandisement. Wishing to take up a respectable job, Dennis asks Mr. Bartholomew how he can become a non-sectarian clergyman. He expects that some bishop may be responsible for ordaining such priests. Mr. Bartholomew, however, disagrees with him. He discounts the need of a bishop as anyone 'who has received the Call has no need for human intervention'. The dangers of such an attitude to religion have already been referred to in Decline and Fall where the homicidal carpenter becomes a potential source of menace to the social order by virtue of the call he supposedly receives from the angels of God. Waugh re-emphasises here the dangers of an individualistic approach to religion and suggests his preference for the

collective approach manifest in the concept of Church as a body of believers in Christ. By pointing out the absurdity of an individualistic approach to religion, Waugh ridicules the impermanence associated with its essentially humanistic and thereby, temporal outlook. Waugh's religious attitude is appreciable in the light of Freud's discoveries. Sigmund Freud clearly demonstrated in his theory of mind that the so-called rational decisions of man were basically cast in the mould of his hidden emotional desires. The power of the unconscious revealed by him put a big question mark on the objective validity of man's rational decisions. The kind of religious change advocated by Evelyn Waugh steers clear from this dubiousness as Roman Catholic Church hinges on the decisions taken by the collective group of the college of bishops. Waugh's emphasis on Roman Catholic Church is, therefore, not a simplistic one.

The spiritual life of America is dominated not only by the pseudo-Christian cults but also by non-Christian faiths. The Guru Brahmin and the Hindu Love-Song are cases in point. As the dynamic world is founded on a secular approach to life, the exponents of progressive ideology here take pride in their atheism. They do not realise that by depriving the wheel of life of its religious hub, they are exposing themselves to the Sisiphean absurdity of an endless and meaningless circular motion. Aimee admittedly is a representative figure of this type. Upon having been informed by Dennis of his desire of being a priest, she

writes to Guru Brahmin, her confidante.

He says he is going to be a pastor 'Well as I told you I am progressive and therefore have no religion but I do not think religion is a thing to be cynical about because it makes some people very happy and all cannot be progressive at this stage of Evolution248

Waugh is ostensibly referring to this erosion of religious stability in the dynamic world in his essay 'Tolerance' where he prefers narrow-mindedness to mindlessness, rigidity to senseless elasticity of opinion.²⁴⁹

Dennis exploits this false progressiveness in Aimee. When she learns the truth about the real authorship of the poems he has addressed to her till now, she tries to get away from him and get married, instead, to Mr. Joyboy. Dennis who knows the extent of her foolish faith in the inverted secular ideals of Whispering Glades, wins her back by reminding her of the oath of living together they had taken in the Lovers' Nook at Whispering Glades.

"It may be that by the Dreamer's standards there are defects in my character ... So what? You loved me and swore to love me eternally with the most sacred oath in the religion of Whispering Glades Sanctity is indivisible. If it isn't sacred to kiss me through the heart of Burns or Bruce, it isn't sacred to go to bed with old Joyboy'.²⁵⁰

The false religion of Whispering Glades has so overpowering a hold on her mind that she can hardly ignore its demand for obedience. She, therefore, comes down to requesting Dennis to release her from that oath. As Dennis has discovered

its effectiveness, he is unwilling to do so for fear of losing her to his rival, Mr. Joyboy. The episode heightens the comic contrast between Dennis and Aimee. The former with his awareness of the fallacy of secular ideals renders the secular ideals followed by Aimee ridiculous and preposterous. Aimee's ignorance of the retrogressive character of Whispering Glades' secular ideals, however, deserves our sympathy, as well. Thus the Anglo-American encounter in this novel is essentially of a comic character rather than being satiric.

In her bewildered condition Aimee turns for guidance to none but the fake Guru Brahmin. The situation that develops out of this decision may be best explicated in Waugh's own words:

A people who have forfeited their privacy will easily succumb to rogues and charlatans who promise a change of condition.²⁵¹

Indevitably, the advice that Aimee receives seals her fate for ever. The man who has till now been replying to her letters is in a drunken condition as he himself is in a quandry after his retrenchment from the paper for which he wrote as Guru Brahmin. Irritated by Aimee's phone call, he thoughtlessly asks her to jump off a building. Soon after this Aimee repairs to the mortuary at Whispering Glades where she takes her life in Mr. Joyboy's room. The wild spontaneity that Dennis had noticed in her 'rich glint of

lunacy⁹ suddenly gains complete control over her and consumes her in her own destructive passion. The heathen gods she has abandoned get her at the end. Waugh writes appropriately:

Her mind was quite free from anxiety. Somehow, somewhere in the blank black hours she had found counsel; she had communed perhaps with the spirits of her ancestors, the impious and haunted race who had deserted the altars of the old Gods, had taken ship and wandered, driven by what pursuing furies through what mean streets and among what barbarous tongues!²⁵²

Apart from highlighting the tragic end of the dynamic world's false sense of progress in abjuring fixity of opinion, the incident sheds light on the incompatibility of British and American cultures. At this point, it is worthwhile to remember that Waugh's novel under discussion is not seriously flawed by careless intrusions. In fact, he strikes a happy balance between artful showing and inartistic telling. Indeed, his fruitful ideas associated with the false sense of progress in the dynamic world grow effortlessly out of this happy balance and provide a valuable yardstick in interpreting his novels. Waugh referred to this incompatibility in his letter to Cyril Connolly:

The tale should not be read as a satire on morticians but as a study of the Anglo-American cultural impasse with the mortuary as a jolly setting.²⁵³

This statement of Waugh and the tragedy of Aimee connote that a culture which lacks stability because of having pushed itself to the fringes of the wheel of life cannot

withstand the incursion of a more stable culture which is found nearer the hub of the wheel of life. In other words, secular change introduced through greater industrialisation may increase the acquisitions of man but so far as achieving real progress is concerned, it has a marginal impact. A really progressive culture should be able to withstand and resist all attempts aimed at its destruction. The victory of a more stable culture indicates that progress can be achieved not through liberalism and 'enlightenment' theories of life, but through greater acceptance of a religious attitude to life. A.A. De Vitis has rightly stressed the significance of this point of view for a proper understanding of the novel.

The Loved One is interesting, too, because it shows clearly the position from which Waugh criticizes the world In The Loved One the Christian context from out of which Waugh creates his people and devises his situations is so completely conveyed by the indignant tone that his fundamental humanity is apparent. The beliefs of Christianity so pervade the novel that unless they are appreciated the novel cannot be understood.²⁵⁴

Though John Bayley does not like the Christian predisposition of Evelyn Waugh, he does not overlook the Christian standpoint either. In his own words:

Both Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene are writers who use their Catholicism as a weapon and a probe; they explore vice and anarchy from a definite standpoint.²⁵⁵

The assertion of the Christian standpoint in this novel owes not only to the travesty of truth Waugh saw in

the construction of Forest Lawn but also in the conscious artistry Waugh adopted for the first time in composition. The record of his diary entry of 2 June 1947 illustrates this method well.

I have decided to try a new method of work. When I began writing I worked straight on into the void, curious to see what would happen to my characters, with no preconceived plan for them, and few technical corrections. Now I waste hours going back and over my work. I intend trying in The Loved One to push straight ahead with a rough draft, have it typed and then work over it once, with the conclusion firmly in my mind when I come to give definite form to the beginning.²⁵⁶

The 'conclusion' that Waugh evidently had in mind while ridiculing the achievements of the American society, is quite clear: true progress can be achieved only by striving for the permanence implicit in the Roman Catholic hub of an otherwise absurd wheel-like life. Mrs. R.D. Smith appears to have overlooked this thrust in the thematic pattern of events narrated in the novel when she condemns it for its seemingly hackneyed themes,

Hollywood, funeral hypocrisy and the adman's domain of nutbergers, Jungle Venom perfume, and peaches without stones are themes that have been well worked over before, more effectively indeed, by Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Sinclair Lewis, and by various hands in the 'New Yorker', notably Mr. S.J. Perelman.²⁵⁷

and for the 'contradiction between what Mr. Waugh intends us to understand are his values, and what the 'feel and texture of his writing reveal'.²⁵⁸ The inability of most reviewers in perceiving the underlying 'thematic line of

intention' in the novel owes partly to Waugh's own sense of pleasure in keeping his critics always guessing. His letter to Nancy Mitford is quite revelatory in this regard. He writes there:

Loved One is being well received in intellectual circles. They think my heart is in the right place after all. I'll show them. 259

The comic vision of life in Waugh thus develops out of the mistakes in accepting the apparently progressive secular change in place of the truly progressive religious change. Concepts concerning change and progress are thus the recurrent themes in a Waugh novel; admittedly the author achieves his effects by the kind of silence he maintains and also by the manner in which he leaves his characters to work out their own destinies or tell their own stories. We realise it also for certain that Waugh could not have brought out his preoccupation with ideas of alteration and advance in life and living if he tried to become a reliable spokesman, speaking directly and authoritatively to us. When at the end of the novel, Dennis leaves with his artist's load of experiences for England, Waugh seems to be dramatising the concept of comedy signified in regeneration which he has portrayed brilliantly in the character of Charles Ryder in Brideshead Revisited. Still, the absurd vision implicit in the inverted ideals of the dynamic American society retains a dominant impression.

THE ORDEAL OF GILBERT PINFOLD (1957):

In The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold (1957), Waugh's persona, Pinfold, is of the opinion that 'most men harbour the germs of one or two books only; all else is professional trickery of which the most daemonic of the masters - Dickens and Balzac even - were flagrantly guilty.'²⁶⁰ True to it, this novel, eighth in the series of lesser comedies, refocusses attention on the theme that has been seen to shape and structure his other novels falling in this category. While revealing there his disagreement with the humanist and enlightenment view of history as a rising curve of secular change, he neither accepts the 'dynamic' way of life which he considers ridiculously absurd nor the static way which he ridicules for its inadequacy in coming to terms with an ever changing secular world. In The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold (1957) Waugh again comes down upon both ways of life while psychoanalysing its central character, Gilbert Pinfold.

But before any analysis of the comic vision manifest in this novel may be undertaken, attention must surely be invited to its 'confessdly autobiographical' quality.²⁶¹ In his diary for this period, Waugh remarks at its personal quality thus:

I have worked hard and easily, seldom writing less than a thousand words a day. The book is too personal for me to be able to judge it.²⁶²

Again the letter dated October 2, 1956 to Daphne Fielding does not conceal the relation of the novel's action to his own personal experiences.

I say, talking of mad, I am fully in the middle of writing an account of my going off my rocker.²⁶³

However, it is the letter of 15 August 1957, addressed to Robert Henriques, that elaborates the similarity.

Mr. Pinfold's experiences were almost exactly my own. In turning them into a novel I had to summarize them. I heard 'voices' such as I describe almost continuously night and day for three weeks. They were tediously repetitive and sometimes obscene and blasphemous. I have given the gist of them.²⁶⁴

In order to see how far Pinfold's experiences 'almost exactly' resemble Waugh's own, we have to rely on the letters as the diary for this period is completely silent. Michael Davie, who has collected and edited the diaries, says:

In the second half of January 1954 Waugh left England on the voyage to Ceylon that produced the hallucinations described in The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold The existing MS has no entry between January 1954 and June 1955.²⁶⁵

One of the instances that finds an echo in the letters concerns the copper tap. In the novel, Mr. Pinfold is highly agitated over the conspicuous absence of 'a prominent, highly ornamental, copper tap in the centre' of 'a wash-hand stand of the greatest elaboration' which has been sent to him by a friend in London who shares his 'tastes in furniture' (p.24). Only after his friend,

James Lance informs him of the truth, does Mr. Pinfold realise that his memory has played a trick with him. There had never been 'any tap such as Mr. Pinfold described'. Waugh was a victim of a similar capricious working of memory. This is clear from one of his letters to John Betjeman, dated 29 Dec. (1953).

As I remember the G.B. there was an ornamental bronze pipe which led from the dragon's mouth to the bowl below Did I dream this or did it exist.²⁶⁶

Another similarity concerns the B.B.C. radio programmes. Aboard the ship S.S. Caliban, Pinfold thinks mistakenly that he is listening to a B.B.C. radio programme on his artistic merit and also some noise which he attributes to faulty wiring. Placed in a similar situation, Waugh responded similarly. In the letter dated 3 Feb. (1954), Waugh writes to Laura Waugh:

The chief trouble is the noise of my cabin. All the pipes and air shafts in the ship seem to run through them. To add to my balminess there are intermittent bits of 3rd Programme talks played in private cabin and two mentioned me very faintly and my p.m. (persecution mania) took it for other passengers whispering about me.²⁶⁷

Pinfold's imputation of his hallucinations to telepathy and the Box at Upper Mewling figures in another letter of Waugh, dated 8 Feb. 1954, to Laura.

I must have been more poisoned than I knew. Then when I was beginning to rally I found myself the 'victim' of an experiment in telepathy which made me think I really was going crazy. I will tell you when I got home. It has made me more credulous about Tanker's box.²⁶⁸

The voices that haunt Pinfold even after his disembarking abruptly at Port Said and reaching Colombo by air, persecuted Waugh too. The letter of 12 Feb. 1954, addressed to his wife, Laura, reveals it. He writes there:

It is rather difficult to write to you because everything I say or think or read is read aloud by the group of psychologists whom I met in the ship. I hoped that they would lose their art after I went ashore but the artful creatures can communicate from many hundreds of miles away. Please don't think this is balmy, I should certainly have thought so three weeks ago, but it is a fact & therefore doesn't worry me particularly But it is a huge relief to realize that I am merely the victim of the malice of others, not mad myself as I really feared for a few days.²⁶⁹

Pinfold also thinks in a similar vein and accordingly counsels his wife not to be perturbed by his madness.

The parallels indicated above create an impression that the novel holds no more than an autobiographical interest. But that is not so. Such an impression is misleading as it detracts attention from the artistic significance of the novel. Gustave Flaubert, the noted nineteenth century French novelist, says in a letter to Mlle Leroyer de Chantepie:

It is one of my principles that a writer should not be his own theme. An artist must be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen.²⁷⁰

Waugh's persona, Gilbert Pinfold also holds similar views:

He regarded his books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself to be used and judged by others.²⁷¹

Waugh himself once said, 'I am not interested in myself, it is these works I make that interest me',²⁷² thereby falling in line with those artists who have upheld the impersonality of art. Though materials with which Waugh has composed this novel were such as had occurred in his own life, yet they contained within them elements that were amenable to an artistic rendering of the attitude to change and progress. I contend that Waugh saw in his madness; after his recovery, the conflict between a natural and inherent static character, on the one hand and a superimposed dynamic facade of personality, on the other. By grafting his madness on his artistic creation, Pinfold, Waugh sought to expose the ridiculous inadequacy of both attitudes to life in comparison with the religious one. The artist within him, therefore, seized the opportunity of transmuting his personal experiences into an impersonal work of art and thereby also achieve an artistic transcendence of his own limitations.

We have seen that in Waugh's comic vision of life, a static attitude to life implies withdrawal from the absurd

motion of the world of change, and a dynamic attitude, participation in the world of change under the delusive impression that secular change fathers progress. Very early in his life, Waugh showed a 'static' tendency in himself. Waugh's preference, as a child, for the things of the past clearly demonstrates it. In his own words:

This cellar and this wilderness I took as my special province, thus early falling victim to the common English confusion of the antiquated with the sublime, which has remained with me; all my life I have sought dark and musty seclusions, like an animal preparing to whelp.²⁷³

The confusion of the antiquated with the sublime is a typical static trait that Waugh himself explored in the tragi-comic end of *Tony Last*. The confusion, therefore, sheds light on Waugh's dual attitude to life. Though, at the emotional level, he chose to withdraw from the high action of a world in flux, yet, at the intellectual level, he realised his folly in mistaking the placidity of a withdrawn static life for the stability of the transcendental hub-reality of Roman Catholicism. It is the latter that shapes his artistic works and in consequence, he is able to transcend his personal limitations, as well. In work after work, Waugh rejects both the static and the dynamic ways of existence, while keeping himself firmly anchored in the sub-specie aeternitatis vision of the hub of life. Interestingly enough, while he is able to transcend his staticity in the creative process of art, it is precisely because of

his artistic calling that he is also able to suckle his staticity. What is being attempted here is a differentiation between the artist and his art, one that Pinfold and Waugh themselves admit. The trade of an artist, being more of an observant and retiring nature than an active one, the artist can easily slip into the life of a recluse. Not unexpectedly, therefore, Waugh took to a sort of semi-feudal life towards his middle age when he shifted to the country side. Jeffrey Heath has rightly said that "Essentially, Waugh's love of the artistic life was a love of solitude..."²⁷⁴. Unfortunately, critics who mistake the artist for his art have criticised him for being a conservative reactionary in trying to glorify and play up redundant values of the past. They overlook that in Waugh's fiction it is these very values which are shown obsolete and culpably inadequate. When Waugh ridicules his static characters who are invariably men of letters, he is in a way condemning his own personal prejudices, Dennis Barlow is the one exception who like Carl Van Vichten is the 'one man of letters who is also a man of the world'.²⁷⁵

While writing The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold (1957), Waugh grafted his staticity on Pinfold, a middle-aged novelist, passing his 'long, lonely, tranquil days at Lychpole, a secluded village some hundred miles from London'.²⁷⁶ In this respect, Pinfold is a precise replica of his creator. A little ahead, Waugh elaborates the reasons for his staying away from London at a remote place and he attributes them

to his concern for privacy: "Since the end of the war his life had been strictly private".²⁷⁷ In his static concern for privacy, Pinfold fully resembles his creator who too shunned public life on account of his static character. Lest Mr. Pinfold's seclusion should be mistaken for mere friendlessness, Waugh says: "But Mr. Pinfold was far from friendless and he set great store by his friends".²⁷⁸ Pinfold thus occurs in the long line of static-artistic characters and is a sign of Waugh's growing artistic genius which could now turn inwards.

Paradoxically enough, the trade of an artist not only helped Waugh's static personality to flourish but also exposed it to the dangers of the dynamic world of his audience. In the words of Waugh,

There is no art or profession, except possibly higher mathematics, which one can practise without exposing oneself to amateur criticism and interference.²⁷⁹

In the essay, 'People Who Want to Sue Me', he goes on to elaborate how his readers have many a time tried to drag him into public controversies by imputing motives of caricaturing real-life persons in the depiction of his characters. Some would go to extent of suggesting to him about the people he could put into his books. To one such proposer Waugh retorted that he did not put real-life people into books; instead they 'take themselves out'.²⁸⁰ To keep the incursion of the dynamic world at bay, he put off

such sneakers into his privacy by not only disallowing people to meet him but also by a snobbish and ogreish front specially assumed for the purpose. Martin Stannard has rightly said that

The real Mr. Waugh, however, would never stand up before the microphone or camera. There was always a melodramatic disguise, a parodied prejudice, to defend his privacy.²⁸¹

By behaving thus Waugh was in effect employing the dynamic world's own weapons against it. Jeffrey Heath who has analysed this split between the static and the dynamic in Waugh's self says:

At Heath Mount School Waugh was both aggressive and artistic. The same divided temperament is apparent in Waugh at Lancing College, which he attended on 17 May 1917. Waugh's diaries for the period (they do not begin until 1919) are the product of a public self concerned with advancement and prestige, but there is at the same time a persistent preoccupation with art and the need for privacy.²⁸²

In fact from an early age, as Heath's analysis also shows, Waugh's preoccupation with the furtherance of his public self was a means to protecting his own insecure and retiring self from the unjust censure of a dynamic world.

Just as Waugh transferred his static character to Pinfold, so did he his dynamic facade. Pinfold too has imposed on his static self, a dynamic front which has lent him a dual personality, thereby. Outlining the nature of this superimposition in his personality, Waugh writes:

He was neither a scholar nor a regular soldier; the part for which he cast himself was a combination of eccentric don and testy colonel and he acted it strenuously, before his children at Lychpole and his cronies in London, until it came to dominate his whole outward personality ²⁸³

What, therefore, started as a protective guise came to dominate his entire personality, after sometime. The 'adult shell' of dynamism that he has raised round himself protects his 'modesty' from intrusive interviewers and the young men and women who were employed to write (his) 'profiles' on account of his being a reasonably famous novelist. Just as the trade of a novelist exposed Waugh to the dangers of the dynamic world, so does it in Pinfold's case. Both concoct a similar remedy or should it be said that Pinfold borrows his creator's way of escape.

The co-existence of the two irreconcilable attitudes of static and dynamic human natures has led to the creation of a schizophrenic divide in the personality of Pinfold as it has in Waugh's own. Thus the novelist succeeds in translating his madness into one of his protagonists in a way that prunes the experience of all extra-literary associations. Waugh illustrates the division within Pinfold's personality in these words:

When he ceased to be alone, when he swung into his club or stumped up the nursery stairs, he left half of himself behind, and the other half swelled to fill its place.²⁸⁴

In Put Out More Flags, Angela Lyne's insomnia, an anticipatory symptom of madness, had resulted from the superimposition

of a static facade on an essentially dynamic self. In Pinfold, Waugh has reversed the process. Pinfold's insomnia and later madness arise from the superimposition of a dynamic front on a quint-essentially static personality. The hallucinations that Pinfold has, are not mere nothings but an outward projection of his own superimposed dynamic self. In being pitted against them, he, who is essentially a static person, is fighting his own superimposed dynamic self. His madness thus becomes an allegorical device that creditably externalises the psychological conflict between the static and the dynamic halves of his personality.

Lionel Stevenson has, therefore, rightly pointed out the uniqueness of this 'excursion into psycho-analysis' in Waugh's work.²⁸⁵ Even when Priestley accepts the psychological nature of the conflict in the novel, he fails to apprehend the true nature of the divide in Pinfold's personality. He maintains wrongly enough:

He is not a Catholic landed gentleman pretending to be an author. He is an author pretending to be a Catholic landed gentleman. But why, you may ask, should he not be both? Because they are not compatible. And this is not merely my opinion. It is really Pinfold's opinion too.²⁸⁶

Priestley appears to have overlooked the fact that the roles of an author and of a Catholic country gentleman, far from differing with one another, aid one another as both roles are symptomatic of a static attitude to life. Waugh was therefore quick to retaliate to this interpretation, in his famous essay 'Anything Wrong with Priestley?'

in which he imputed Priestley's harsh criticism to his socialist aversion for the aristocracy. Waugh opines:

No, what gets Mr. Priestley's goat (supposing he allows such a deleterious animal in his lush pastures) is my attempt to behave like a gentleman. ²⁸⁷

David Lodge is nearer the truth when he maintains that Pinfold's hallucinations are the displaced and distorted projections of Mr. Pinfold-Waugh's public and private life.

What is fascinating about the hallucinations is that they are "displaced" and distorted projections of Mr. Pinfold-Waugh's public and private life The "ordeal" is therefore a kind of identity crisis and the writing up of the experience a therapeutic exercise in self-analysis. ²⁸⁸

Having seen how elements within Waugh's own harrowing experience of madness were amenable to an artistically objective treatment, we may now safely consider the novel, in its own right. A dual narrative scheme helps Waugh to unfold his unique comic vision of life. Within the circular narrative framework of Gilbert Pinfold, the split-personality, falling sick, voyaging to Ceylon to recuperate his failing health and recovering only after his return from Colombo, is inset the allegorical narrative framework of Gilbert Pinfold, the static man, confronting his superimposed dynamic self, being ridiculed and tormented initially but triumphing in the long run, over his 'dynamic' adversary.

As has already been emphasised, the countryside represents the static world in Waugh. As the chief protagonist of this novel, Gilbert Pinfold, is a static character, so, he prefers the calm placid and unchanging life of the village of Lychpole. Accordingly, towards the end of his career, he has set up his house here in the manner of feudal lords. His preference for this obsolete style of life, like Tony Last's, is a sign again of his 'static' character. Pinfold endangers the unchanging placidity of his life when he resolves to quit Lychpole and make for Ceylon. The life on board the ship, bound for Ceylon, is unlike that of Lychpole. While the life there is completely public, the one at Lychpole is private. Pinfold's decision, thus, exposes him to the dangers that beset a static character in the dynamic world. His mistake is not unlike that of other static characters in Waugh. Paul Pennyfeather, Adam Fenwick-Symes, Tony Last, William Boot and Ambrose Silk all suffer in their own ways for taking such a rash step. Waugh suggests the dynamism of the public world aboard the ship, by naming it after one of Shakespeare's most queer and repulsive characters, Caliban. He is neither complete man nor a complete monster. He, therefore, combines in himself the guile of man and the barbarity of beasts. By naming the ship after him, Waugh gives us an idea of the deep-rooted dynamism in modern secular society in a most artistic and non-committal way. Pinfold shall have to battle, like Tony Last, against such a barbaric world. The first narrative

ends with Pinfold embarking the ship S.S. Caliban.

The narrative framework set within the first, begins with Pinfold's going off his mind on board the ship . Pinfold's madness externalises his superimposed dynamic self in the shape of hallucinations and thus begins the hilarious comedy of static Pinfold's conflict with his superimposed dynamic self. Pinfold's hallucinations people the world of the ship, S.S. Caliban, with the most unabashed and brutal persons and the atmosphere of the ship soon acquires the nature of its apotheosis in Shakespeare's The Tempest. Pinfold, however, does not realize that the supposed monstrous characters stalking on board the ship, are a manifestation of his own ogreish front. Ignorance of the true character of this battle and his own personality, renders him ridiculous and Waugh draws much fun at his expense. The allegorical conflict between the real self which is static and the false self, which is dynamic, becomes, therefore, a perfect objective correlative for Waugh's idea of the rejection of both the static and the dynamic worlds as both tend to ignore the significance of the Roman Catholic hub of life in the progress of mankind. The rejection is cast in a comic mould for while the static man is ridiculed for his helplessness in combating the dynamic world, the latter itself does not escape comic censure for its caddishness. The two narratives, however, are not disjoint. While the second narrative unfolds itself, the first narrative does not cease altogether. It continues to hang about

like the halo of a saint, manifesting itself in the split-personality - Pinfold's comically abortive attempts at knowing the truth about his hallucinations.

The allegorical conflict begins with the introduction of the static Pinfold to the dynamic world of his hallucinations. In the state of hallucination, the static Pinfold over-hears some bright young people playing jazz and causing nuisance by its uproarious noise. Later, he overhears about a Lascar crew member getting hurt in work and the Captain's cold and merciless attitude towards him. Still later, he overhears a conversation full of recriminations against a man who appears to have seduced the woman who Pinfold names Goneril. The Captain of the ship beats him so much so that he dies and is consequently thrown overboard. The static Pinfold is horrified by this frightening barbarity of the dynamic world. The first narrative intrudes here in Pinfold's attempt to know the nature of his hallucinations. When Pinfold tries to gauge the reaction of the other passengers to these disconcerting events, he discovers, to his dismay, that none of them is aware of them. Not ready yet to realise the reality of his madness and the identification of the dynamic self, he circumvents the truth by attributing these bizarre happenings to defective wiring in the ship. Persisting with illusions renders Pinfold comic in the Platonic sense of the term.

The microcosmic conflict between the static Pinfold and the dynamic world acquires a threatening note when the supposed hooligans, acting out plays near his cabin, warn him of a physical assault. When Pinfold tries to confront them by coming out, he finds no one outside. So he returns disappointed to his cabin. Immediately afterwards, the girls in this group rob Pinfold of his peace of mind with a loud bawdy song. The central protagonist in Kafka's Trial is confronted with a similar problem in the court room where he has been summoned unexpectedly. The hero finds the table of the jury covered with obscene photographs and one man in the court-room trying to seduce a woman. The world that baffles Kafka's hero also perplexes Waugh's protagonist. In both cases, however, this world is in actuality that part of the hero's own self which is being denied. Waugh makes Pinfold look comic as does Kafka, for his inability to tear down the veil of ignorance and see the reality clearly. While this illusion lasts, the microcosmic struggle of the static Pinfold continues.

The static Pinfold now finds himself in a world deprived of order, a trait that likens it to the highly dynamic world of savagery and barbarity. He can neither rid himself of these hooligans nor seek remedy against them as the Captain of the ship is, himself, no more upright than those hooligans. The Captain, however, gets exonerated soon after Pinfold overhears a supposed B.B.C. programme. By

chance the programme happens to be discussing him only. Its unjustified censure and personal vendetta infuriates him and he comes round to the inference that the episode involving the Captain, Goneril and the murdered man must have been a B.B.C. play.

Now it was apparent that many of the sounds in his cabin emanated from the Broadcasting House, he became certain that what he had over-heard was part of a play. The similarity of June's voice and Goneril's seemed to confirm it.²⁸⁹

Pinfold's cocksureness in having lighted upon the reality of the conversation involving the Captain renders him comic for it is no nearer the reality than his previous conclusion. Fortified thus, he sees an ally in him in his war against the dynamic world of the hooligans.

The next episode that brings out the conflict between the static Pinfold and the dynamic world is entitled the International incident. He overhears a conspiratorial plot that involves the forcible substitution of the dark little old man, on 'H.M.G.'s secret service', by him so that the former may be protected from the Spanish officials hunting for him. Pinfold, like most static characters, is patriotic, an ideal that has become obsolete in the age of mercenaries. He would, therefore, have gladly agreed to perform this arduous task, if consulted and taken into confidence. What infuriates Pinfold is that the Captain wishes to force him into doing it without trying to seek his cooperation even once. The concern for his country,

however, prevails upon his rage and Pinfold resolves that he would perform this substitute role but that only after making his adversaries aware of his willingness in doing so. When the time arrives, Pinfold saunters out to carry out his resolve. At this point, the first narrative blends with the second. That is to say, the macrocosmic action coalesces with the microcosmic conflict here. The split-personality Pinfold is thoroughly disappointed to find the deck deserted and no Spanish officials holding the ship captive. For the first time, he fears that he may be going mad. His piteous outburst makes him a person deserving of our sympathy despite being the butt of ridicule for his ignorance about the real nature of his adversaries.

He had been dauntless a minute before in the face of his enemies. Now he was struck with real fear, something totally different from the superficial alarms he had once or twice known in moments of danger, something he had quite often read about and dismissed as over-writing. He was possessed from outside himself with atavistic pain; 'O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven', he cried.²⁹⁰

The pearls of laughter that he overhears from Goneril convince him wrongly that it must have been a trick played by the hooligans to persecute him. However unpalatable this idea may be, Pinfold finds it still soothing as it means that he has not gone mad.

He might be unpopular; he might be ridiculous; but he was not mad.²⁹¹

Once again Pinfold fails in comprehending the real nature of his hallucinations which alone can redeem him from the ordeal of persecution.

Upon approaching the captain with the complaint against the young men and women, supposedly belonging to one family, that have continuously been harassing him, he learns that no family travelling by the ship matches his specifications. Instead, there is a quiet family of Angels. Upon hearing the name, Angel, Pinfold is reminded of the Angel who had once come to interview him for the B.B.C. and soon concludes that this family must include that man from the B.B.C. Having made himself believe that, the static self of Pinfold finds itself facing an inquisition, which is staffed by Angel, Goneril and the other hooligans. His cross-examination resembles that of Joseph K. in Kafka's The Trial where the jury that accuses the hero is itself culpable.

With a view to escaping from his persecutors, Pinfold leaves the ship, makes for Cairo from where he flies to Colombo. But he gets no respite from persecution. It is only when Pinfold is on his way back home that these persecutors soften and even adopt a plaintive note in their speech. They plead that he should not divulge their identity to anyone in England. The static Pinfold refuses to oblige them for he neither trusts their word nor wishes to shield them from censure and just punishment. Angel's threat,

"All right, Gilbert. You'll pay for this", lacks strength as the static personality in Pinfold has at last asserted its supremacy over the dynamic self whose projections these persecuting hallucinations are.

With the successful resolution of this microcosmic conflict between the static and the dynamic selves of Pinfold, the path becomes clear for him to tread back to normalcy. Upon learning from his wife that Angel had all along been in England only, he begins to understand the true nature of the hallucinations. When therefore Doctor Drake, his medical attendant, considers his hallucinations as a 'simple case of poisoning', Mr. Pinfold's reaction is different from his wife's.

'That's a relief', said Mrs. Pinfold, but Mr. Pinfold accepted this diagnosis less eagerly. He knew, and the others did not know - not even his wife, least of all his medical adviser - that he had endured a great ordeal, and unaided, had emerged the victor.²⁹²

Priestley appears to have overlooked the significance of this passage, apart from distorting the nature of the psychological conflict in the novel, when he says:

Let Pinfold take warning. He will break down again, and next time may never find a way back to his study. The central self he is trying to deny ... will crack if it is walled up again within a false style of life.²⁹³

In fact, Pinfold is very much aware that the pills were not to blame so much as the false self he had superimposed

on himself. Fortified with this knowledge, Pinfold cogitates to transmute his harrowing experience into a work of art; an action that echoes Waugh's own. The novel therefore ends on a note of self-discovery. John Raymond appears to have overlooked the neat culmination of Pinfold's identity -- crisis in his self-discovery at the end, while coming down unjustly upon it for lacking a proper denouement.

My only criticism is that the book lacks a satisfactory denouement. This, however, is the fault of all case-histories.²⁹⁴

But what Northrop Frye in his 'The Argument of Comedy' (1949) calls epiphany is not effected here for the simple reason that though the protagonist discovers his true self and thereby gets reborn, his rebirth lacks significance as it does not lead him ahead towards the nerve-centre of the wheel of life which alone can guarantee real progress. Pinfold's journey of self-discovery ends up in his burrowing into a static world that is far from the hub of life. Jeffrey Heath appears to have ignored the thematic thrust of this novel while considering all novels after Brideshead Revisited to be displaying the acceptance of the correct refuge from the dynamic world.

In the novels before Brideshead Revisited Waugh's protagonists typically find solitary refuges which are false ... while in the fiction of later date they discover the correct refuge which has been adumbrated by the false ones: the Household of the Faith.²⁹⁵

What Heath enunciates here applies more aptly to the Sword of Honour Trilogy, and Helena, the only two books that carry out this thematic pattern after Brideshead Revisited. The thematic pattern of this novel is well reinforced by its unique structure. Waugh conveys the absurdity of the world into which Pinfold thrusts himself by the circular pattern of the narrative concerning his voyage. Pinfold begins his voyage from England and like a man struggling on a wheel, returns to it, at the end of his voyage. Pinfold's return to Lychpole, after his circular trip, is suggestive of the return of a spectator to the spectator's gallery after jumping off a circular wheel. The step is regressive rather than progressive for Pinfold does not pierce through the absurd circular motion of the wheel to its transcendental hub. Waugh's comic vision of life thus unfolds itself with the subtle and implied use of the symbolic imagery of the wheel of life both at the thematic and structural level.

The artistic coherence that Waugh has lent to his own experiences while transmuting them into an artistic work speaks of Waugh's mature artistry in handling a theme so intractable by reason of its personal character. What Waugh said of Firbank may very rightly be applied to him as well.

His introduction of his own name in The Flower Beneath the Foot and Prancing Nigger is intolerable vieuxjeu; perhaps Firbank's sense of humour had reached a degree of sophistication when it could

turn on itself and find the best fun of all in the doubly banal; if so it was a development where few will be able to follow him.²⁹⁶

Even Philip Toynbee concedes that Waugh showed maturity in handling a theme that turned upon his own self. He says that Waugh has begun to explore depths of experience which were previously beyond his reach - or at least beyond his desire.²⁹⁷ However, both the Times Literary Supplement

He is a light weight who has suffered from being bracketed with completely different writers like Mr. Graham Greene.²⁹⁸

and Donat O' Donnell

... he has chosen to make 'a light novel' out of material fundamentally unsuited to such treatment. It may be said that the comic treatment of the grimmest themes ... is precisely where Mr. Waugh excels. That is true when as a satirist he allows himself a free hand ... but not when he is treating sacred subjects such as himself²⁹⁹

would seem to betray an insensitivity to the thematic pattern underlying the novel while mistaking the comic element in it for a sign of its lightness. In fact, the comic mould of Waugh's novel is a measure of his superior artistic ability in rendering a profound vision of life in an artistically agreeable manner.

Thus, an analysis of Waugh's comic vision of life in the lesser comedies reveals the absurdity of seeking progress through secular change.

CHAPTER-3GREATER COMEDIES

The comic vision of life unfolded in the greater comedies reflects Catholic optimism in the gradual emancipation of the central character from the shackles of error and illusion associated with the static and the dynamic modes of existence to the realm of wisdom and truth associated with the ever-stable Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life. Accordingly, the image of the wheel of life continues to play a dominant role both in making this optimistic view of life vivid and in imparting a suitable aesthetic form to them.

BRIDESHEAD REVISITED (1945):

In Brideshead Revisited (1945)¹, the nature of change and its relationship with progress once again overshadows other considerations. However, while it was secular change that was examined earlier, it is religious change that is being studied here. That is why, the warning on the dust-jacket of the first edition reads:

... Brideshead Revisited is not meant to be funny. There are passages of buffoonery, but the general theme is at once romantic and eschatological. It is ambitious ... nothing less than an attempt to trace the workings of the divine purpose in a pagan world, in the lives of an English Catholic family, half paganised themselves, in the world of 1923-1939.²

When Waugh deprives the novel of the element of fun, he means to say that its fun is unlike that of the comedies discussed in chapter 2. In the lesser comedies, characters try to improve their lot or that of the society through participation in and furtherance of secular change. It comes through their revolving round the wheel of life which emphasises the lack of any meaningful change or progress. The mistaking of apparent progress for the real renders them and their actions comic in the Platonic sense of the word. Comedy here stems from self-ignorance and sterile repetitiveness of life which makes the readers not only laugh at the foolish capers of man but also sympathise with his predicament. But as Waugh is concerned, in this novel, with religious change, the characters who people it are not exposed to comic ridicule. Instead of mistaking the apparent progressiveness of secular change for that of the religious, these characters try to uplift themselves through a spiritual transformation of their personality. That is to say, they discover significance and meaning in directing their efforts towards the hub of the wheel of life which is representative of sub specie aeternitatis vision of the world. The warning that appeared on the dust jacket of the first edition of the novel did not conceal this.

... (to) those who look to the future with black forebodings and need more solid comfort than rosy memories I have given my hero, and them, if they will allow me, a hope, not, indeed, that anything but disaster lies ahead, but that the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters.³

It is in the sense of the resurrection and redemption of human life that Brideshead Revisited lays claim to the appellation of comedy. Such an approach is fully supported by F.M. Cornford's 'The Ritual Origins of Comedy' (1914) and by Northrop Frye's 'The Argument of Comedy' (1949).⁴ As the characters here trace their movement from an 'absurd' and vegetative state of existence to a higher and meaningful one, the comedy enacted in the novel may be termed a divine one, after the manner of Dante's Divine Comedy.

The novel is concerned primarily with the change that Charles Ryder, the narrator of the story of the Flytes, undergoes. It goes to the credit of Waugh's artistic genius that he should make his point clear by externalising the process of Charles Ryder's spiritual progress through the shifts in his association with the different members of the Flyte family. One is reminded of Shakespeare's King Lear where the process of Lear's madness and consequent recovery is allegorically conveyed in the extent of his nearness to each of his three daughters. Waugh has, therefore, in a way dramatised the process of Charles Ryder's religious change and progress. This helps him retain his classical poise of objectivity without sacrificing at the same time the thematic value of his work. Bernard Bergonzi, it seems, has been unable to understand this significance of making Charles Ryder, the narrator of the story when he argues:

Certainly the story suffers from being filtered through the consciousness of Ryder; the events can scarcely transcend the personality of their narrator.⁵

In order that the graph of Charles Ryder's gradual religious change be plotted, it is essential to have a look at the members of the Flyte family who individually mark the various stages of his development. In the account that Waugh submitted to the directors of MGM Film Company, he wanted that the 'Flytes should be represented as one of the English noble families which retained their religion throughout the Reformation period'. But in the novel, it is only Lady Marchmain's side of the family which is "old Catholic"; Lord Marchmain's side of the family having given up Roman Catholicism long ago and become Anglican, a form of neo-paganism that suited the 'dynamic' spirit of the times. It is the marriage with Lady Marchmain that restores the family to the faith of its forefathers. The children born of this wedlock embody this schism. While the neo-pagan spirit is inherited by Sabastian and Julia, the Catholic spirit is imbibed by Brideshead and Cordelia. The schism within this family takes its toll soon: Lord Marchmain deserts his wife, runs away to Italy and seeks the protection, not love, of his mistress, Cara, against his wife. Sabastian and Julia follow suit, impelled by their wild neo-pagan spirit. The errant members of the Flyte family harbour in themselves the 'dynamic' spirit that we have seen already in characters like Captain Grimes and Basil Seal. It is the whirlpool of dynamic life that sucks them in and thus prevents their progress towards the transcendental hub of the wheel of life.

Charles Ryder who is himself a romantic at heart and thus in the 'static' phase of his life feels fascinated by these dynamic characters. Accordingly, he draws closer to them, one by one. His proximity to these dynamic characters represents an effort on his part to plunge into the world of secular change. In other words, it signifies giving up of the static mode of existence and participation in the dynamic world's futile quest for secular progress. But by virtue of his nearness to these dynamic characters, he also comes across the spiritually inclined characters like Cordelia, Brideshead and Lady Marchmain. As he is, at this moment, far from the realisation of the value of religious change as a means to true progress, he is unable to comprehend their attitude to life. As Harry Blamires has observed:

... the religious view of life differs so fundamentally and comprehensively from the secular view of life that it seems scarcely possible for the Christian to communicate intelligibly with the modern secularist.⁶

Yet Charles Ryder's inability, at this stage of his progress, to comprehend the Roman Catholic way of life has irked Nancy Mitford, a close associate of Waugh. In one of her letters to Waugh, she writes:

... I can't explain why but he seemed to me a tiny bit dim.⁷

Waugh's reply to Nancy Mitford imputed, quite justifiably, Charles' dimness to the fact of his telling someone else's story,

Yes I know what you mean; he is dim, but then he is telling the story and it is not his story.⁸

V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, without being defensive like Waugh, rather commends Waugh for having made Charles, a non-Catholic, tell the tale of a Catholic family's reaffirmation of its old faith.

The story he has to tell is that of a Catholic family's apostasies and repentances, and it is a brilliant stroke of Mr. Waugh's to tell that story through the mind of a non-Catholic.⁹

While Waugh's reply is explanatory, Clinton-Baddeley's is adulatory. Doubts concerning Charles' capability as a narrator emerge out of a critical approach that overlooks the primacy of Charles' conversion studied in comparison with the return of the Flyte family to its old Catholic fold. Ryder's increasing familiarity with this family not only helps him overcome his incomprehension of the Catholic view of life but also convinces him of the need of accepting such a standpoint. Salaman Rushdie, in Midnight's Children (1980) has adopted a similar technique for displaying simultaneously the development of Salim Sinai and the country of his birth, India. Charles Ryder's conversion, however, is not so smooth. The pagan spirit of the world of change restrains him at every step. Jeffrey Heath has rightly said:

It would be wrong to say that Ryder struggles toward his vocation; in fact he struggles violently against it, repeatedly refusing to conform to the plan God has made for him.¹⁰

The struggle in his case follows a violent course because he is a pagan through and through while Sebastian and Julia are not; they are only 'half-heathen'. His redemption must therefore follow that of the errant members rather than precede it.

The first of these children to come across Charles Ryder is Sebastian. The meeting has so overpowering an impact that Charles sheds all his old friends and is drawn into the vortex of the Flyte family's fortunes by Sebastian's charm. Unwittingly, he is drawn into a plan that affects both him and the Flyte family. He, however, is struck more by Sebastian's queer habit of carrying a teddy-bear, Aloysius, than by his conspicuous beauty. One other thing that strikes strange to Charles is Sebastian's behaviour during their first joint visit to Brideshead. While Sebastian feels free in introducing Charles to his nanny, Hawkins, he takes precaution against his meeting any other member of the family. Infact, Ryder notices that

The farther we drove from Brideshead, the more he seemed to cast off his uneasiness - the almost furtive restlessness and irritability that had possessed him.¹¹

Also, Sebastian shows an unusual lack of feeling concerning the possession of his house. Pointing towards Brideshead House, he says, 'It's where my family live'. Sebastian's attachment with the teddy-bear and nanny, Hawkins, shows his deliberate refusal to outgrow the fancies of childhood. They

also provide him with a protective garb against the Catholicism of his family. From this standpoint, it is a regressive measure: it takes Sebastian not nearer but farther from the hub of the wheel of life. He is not unaware of this fall as he fully believes in the truth propounded by Roman Catholicism. The only obstacle in his trying to achieve that is the heathen part of his own self which has gained complete authority over his actions. The heathen part of his self makes him drink hard. As most of the members of his family observe, he is not happy when he takes to drink. It is, for him, a means of psychological escape from the domineering personality of his mother, Lady Marchmain who he hates with all his strength, for she epitomises the Roman Catholic values not only in his eyes but in the eyes of others as well. Excessive drinking turns out to be hazardous for his stay at Oxford twice. Each time Lady Marchmain manages to dissuade the authorities from rusticating him. Her attempts to reform him prove futile. Rather, they goad Sebastian to take to his inordinate life with a greater vigour and zest. Drinking also makes him deceitful so that when he is sent with Mr. Samgrass to the Continent for a change, he escapes from the tutelage of his guardian-ship. Again, when Rex Mottram, his brother-in-law, takes him to the Continent for a cure, he not only loses track of Sebastian but also his money which the latter has taken from him. The life of depravity culminates in Sebastian's eventual departure from Brideshead for good. Following

the example of his errant father whom he likes very much, he leaves for the Continent to stay there for ever, free from the interference of his mother. Sebastian's decision symbolises man's misuse of free will and consequent distance and departure from the hub of stability and eternity. Waugh's recorded account of the misuse of free will is analogous to Dostoevsky's who has depicted in Crime and Punishment, how man sometimes makes a wrong use of his free will and how in consequence, he suffers from fear and mental instability. Sebastian is not happier than Raskolnikov after he takes this step. In the idiom of expression often used by this philosophy of life, it represents a fall and hence, turns out to be a tragedy.

The story of Sebastian's fall follows the same course as his father's does. Both of them choose drinking as a sort of escape from Lady Marchmain whom they detest with all fervour. Like his father, he suspects anyone who is close to his mother. When Charles Ryder's meetings with Lady Marchmain become a more frequent phenomenon, he first grows wary of his friend and then accuses him of conspiring along with his mother against him. Sebastian and his father have even personal resemblances. The two have similar voices. He has therefore been cast in the mould of his father.

The second errant member who is introduced to us and who attracts the novelist's attention very much is

Julia Flyte. Sebastian who dominates the earlier portion of the book seems in consequence to have been consigned to oblivion. Critics have been unhappy over this apparently sudden shift in the novelist's interest in the creation of his characters. David Lodge in his remarkable book Evelyn Waugh considers the treatment of Sebastian artistically faulty as he is given disproportionate attention in the first and the second parts of the book.

The book is quite unbalanced by the long and leisurely treatment of Sebastian, who then drops almost entirely out of the picture. Rather clumsy second hand reports of his progress to an unorthodox kind of sanctity, and the attempt to identify him as the "forerunner" of Charles' passion for Julia, do not solve this problem.¹²

A.E. Dyson has also written in a similar vein against Waugh's artistry.

Birdshead Revisited, which begins like a masterpiece, ends with the most explicit of Waugh's evasions.¹³

V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, Waugh's reviewer, however, differs on this issue. In his opinion, Julia's supersession of Sebastian is justifiable as the story of the novel is not concerned merely with Sebastian but with the entire Flyte family itself.

But the theme ... is not the story of Sebastian, but the reclamation of the whole family, whose most important member is Julia. Her story is told to perfection.¹⁴

While there is some segment of truth in what V.C. Clinton-Baddeley has written, but the remark does not contain the whole truth. The novel is much more than a story of Flyte family. It is the story of Charles Ryder's gradual progress towards comprehending the hub-like value of Roman Catholicism and subsequent conversion. The supersession of Sebastian by Julia should thus be viewed in the light of this thematic intention. Sebastian represents that adolescent phase of Ryder's life which the former has imposed on himself and the latter has never lived fully because of an inimical and unsympathetic father. After Ryder quits Brideshead House and Sebastian's company for good, he is undecided about what he has left behind.

I had left behind me - what? Youth? Adolescence?
Romance?¹⁵

Notwithstanding his personal inability to single out the phase he has outgrown, it is decidedly by adolescence that he has left behind. Having matured, Ryder must surely taste the life of youthfulness before he may be in a position to distinguish between human and divine love. It is therefore natural that Julia should now enter Ryder's life to fill in the gap left by Sebastian. As he himself confesses,

... as Sebastian in his sharp decline seemed daily to fade and crumble, so much the more did Julia stand out clear and firm.¹⁶

It is, therefore, clear that Ryder regards Julia the successor of Charles. She resembles her brother so closely

that sitting beside her Ryder feels 'confused by the double illusion of familiarity and strangeness'. Not only does she possess her brother's charm but his voice and manner of speech also. Like Sebastian, she is aware of her 'waywardness and wilfulness'. But unlike him, she does not hate her mother and is also not so close to her father; Sebastian is the only member of the family who maintains close contact with Lord Marchmain. The pious aspect of Julia's self is thus not so meek and submissive as that of her brother. But in the conflict that ensues between the sacred impulse towards the Roman Catholic hub of life, which means progress and the profane impulse towards the wheel-like dynamic life, which signifies decline, the latter appears to be victorious in the beginning. Waugh, in suggesting with delicate touches the conflict between human love and divine love or the perilous co-existence of the concepts of decline and progress was really providing an aesthetically pleasing sense of a work that is an integrated whole. Brideshead Revisited undoubtedly has an overall plan and a goal; it is constructed. The novel appeals to our innate delight in beholding and appreciating the skill and proportion that go in shaping characters like Julia and Sebastian. When we forget the cross-currents of events, we brood over ideas. What do we really mean by progress, change and decline: ideas which are woven into the texture of a Waugh's novels in an intangible and deft manner. Her downward journey begins with her search for

a husband outside the Roman Catholic community. For some time past she has been dreaming of having a fashionable husband whom she has not been able to find in her own community. Such a man looms up in her life in the person of the flashy and hollow Rex Mottram. She steps out of the sacred confines of her Church even before she gets married to him. She drifts into a pre-marital sexual relationship with him, even when the Church denies her that choice

'Surely, Father, it can't be wrong to commit a small sin myself in order to keep him from a much worse one? But the gentle old Jesuit was unyielding. She barely listened to him; he was refusing her what she wanted, that was all she wanted to know. When he had finished he said, 'Now you had better make your confession'. 'No, thank you', she said From that moment she shut her mind against her religion.¹⁷

Julia's refusal, despite its urbanity, betrays her defiance of the Church. Her disbelief in the chief world religion connoted by Roman Catholicism is therefore responsible for her fall. As she strays away from the hub of the wheel of life, she is thrown into the meaningless circular motion of life. The fact that her marriage with Rex is not going to last long is clear from the very beginning. Rex is too brazenly worldly and unethical. Before they are to get married, it comes to light that he is a divorcee. The Roman Catholic Church prohibits marriage with such a person. Annulment of the previous marriage, the only way

out, is a lengthy and uncertain process. So the two get married according to Protestant rules. Julia thus draws herself away from the Roman Catholic hub which alone can promise true happiness by virtue of its unchangeability.

The lady most affected by these desertions, Lady Marchmain represents to a great extent the Roman Catholic hub of life in the novel. Unable to prevent the fall of her husband, son and daughter, she gets bed-ridden and dies eventually. Her death, however, makes her more potent. The heathen spirit of the errant members of her family may have killed her in body but in spirit, she continues to goad them to their true and eternal refuge, the Roman Catholic hub of life. Her death is followed by all the errant members' reversion to faith in succession. Even Charles Ryder gets converted. It may therefore be said to have acted like the 'invisible line' and 'unseen hook' of Father Brown. Julia compares her death to that of Christ and she believes that like Christ her mother died on the cross of their sin. Thus, Lady Marchmain is martyred for the sake of the sinful and regressive members of her family. Just as the martyrdom of a saint opens the eyes of the sinful, she, though no less saintly, awakens her sinful children and husband to the life of sin they lead and thus makes them return to their true and eternal home, the Roman Catholic Church. The comedy of their lives must be viewed in this context and the profundity of Waugh's comic vision

should be appreciated from this viewpoint.

Sebastian is the first person to be twitched back to the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life. Once he is in French Morocco, he shows signs of outgrowing his imposed adolescence which is an essential preliminary step for the resurrection of his fallen spirit. The teddy-bear Aloysius disappears and his affection, rather mercy, is directed towards a deserving German soldier, Kurt, who is lame and cannot support himself. The devotion with which he serves Kurt is no less than that of a true Christian. Instead of squandering his affection on a toy, he attains Christian humility in the service of the meek and the gentle. With this change, he ensures for himself true progress and prosperity. Even though he continues to drink as hard as he did earlier, he is no longer deprived of the blessings of his Church as it is no longer, for him, a means of escape from the reality of God. Drinking, as Brideshead observes, is good as long as it leads to human fellowship but when it becomes an end in itself, it turns out to be bad. As wine is no longer an end in itself for Sebastian, so it does not come in his way of being a true Roman Catholic. When Lady Marchmain had tried to dissuade him from taking wine, it was then a means of escape for Sebastian. Some time after his mother's death, Sebastian applies for entry into a monastery as a lay-brother. This signifies the ultimate triumph of the pious part of Sebastian's self over the heathen and also his success in

progressing towards the true goal of all human endeavours, the Roman Catholic hub of life. Waugh's comic vision of life reveals its profundity in showing how man, however fallen, can still reclaim himself by attaining the hub of the wheel of life where he is liberated from the meaningless and tiresome circular motion of the wheel which represents fallen life.

Soon after the death of Lady Marchmain, Julia too begins to feel the pangs of conscience that tries to drive home to her the depth of her moral culpability. She believes that it is she who is responsible for the hastening of her mother's end. Her belief is strengthened by the miserable experience of her unhappy and sinful marriage with Rex Mottram. It does not take Julia much time to realise that the selection of her husband was a wrong step. Far from being a complete man, Rex is 'a few faculties of a man highly developed' which give the false impression of a whole man. Julia tells Charles about this late discovery of hers on board the liner.

'You know Father Mowbray hit on the truth about Rex at once, that it took me a year of marriage to see. He simply wasn't all there..... I thought he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny bit of a man pretending he was the whole'.¹⁸

The marriage with Rex, however, helps Julia to understand the wasteful influence of the world of change on man.

A marriage like this can never attain fulfilment and Waugh lends particularity to this idea by making Julia give birth to a dead child. Realising that God's vengeance is upon her, she wishes to put her life in order. Unfortunately, the corrective step she proposes to take is equally or perhaps more sinful; she reflects on the possibility of marriage with Charles Ryder, a man who is already married.

Hereafter, Julia's attempts at progressing towards the hub of life signified by Roman Catholicism, though misdirected in the beginning, get intertwined with Charles Ryder's search for meaning and significance in earthly life. As discussed earlier, Ryder's association with Julia follows that with Sebastian as a sequel. This enables the novelist to give evidence of how Charles comprehends and accepts the immutable truth of life embodied in the Roman Catholic Church. Notwithstanding the fact that he is an artist, Ryder is completely steeped in the world of change. This is evident from the subject of his paintings. The 'symptom of decline' that characterises the dynamic world, is an important feature of his paintings as well. In his own words:

... I was called to all parts of the country to make portraits of houses that were soon to be deserted or debased; indeed, my arrival seemed often to be only a few paces ahead of the auctioneer's, a presage of doom.¹⁹

If the subject of his paintings is 'change and decay', the style of his painting is no less unexalted.

... my work had nothing to recommend it except my growing technical skill, enthusiasm for my subject, and independence of popular notions.²⁰

If art helps the artist to realise his own self, then what Ryder has achieved is decay and retrogression. Ryder's paintings register a new low in his life when he goes to paint in the jungles of Mexico and Central America. The jungle signifies anarchy and disorder and is the most prominent quality of the world of change. Change is depicted in quite a different fashion in Proust. The hero-narrator of his novel often remarks on how they have altered physically and also in character traits. We all have identical experience of meeting people after months or years have gone by, and noting with shock and surprise how time has affected them. The recurrent theme of change and growth in Waugh's novels provides the necessary overtone and the understanding of these novels would be most definitely incomplete if we do not realise the nature of change and progress in them. To understand the nature of change in his novels is like overhearing the tick of a clock in a man's soul. In order that Ryder may discover his true self, he must again come in touch with the Flyte family. This happens on board the ship to England. He meets Julia, who too is trying to find her way towards the hub of life. Julia and Ryder drift into an intensely personal and sacrilegious relationship, mistaking it to be a step towards the right goal. Yet they have doubts about their love, right from its inception.

'Oh, my darling, why is it that love makes me hate the world? It's supposed to have quite the opposite effect. I feel as though all mankind, and God, too, were in a conspiracy against us'.
'They are, they are'.²¹

A shadow hangs over their love. Jeffrey Heath explains how Sebastian moves into the 'shadows' as he runs away from his vocation. The same may be said of this love. Their love always finds consummation in the dark. Sunlight rends them apart.

'Oh dear', said Julia, 'where can we hide in fair weather, we orphans of the storm?'²²

At Brideshead, Julia is made aware of the mistake she is committing by the harsh remark of her fervently Catholic brother, Brideshead. He reminds her that what she is mistaking for an ordered life is the quagmire of sin. Ryder who still does not understand Roman Catholicism, tries to comfort her, but is unable to do so. He explains her feeling of guilt, in the manner of psychologists, as springing from 'the nonsense you were taught in the nursery'. Julia's reply - 'How I wish it was!' shows her loss of confidence in a life of depravity.

Ryder feels himself a stranger to these moods of Julia. He has the foreboding that their love cannot last long.

'... perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols; vagabond - language scrawled on gate-posts and paving-stones along the weary road that others have tramped before us; ... each straining through and beyond the other, snatching a glimpse now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us'.²³

Ryder seems to have a premonition of the goal to which he is forging ahead. He therefore regards the human love with Julia as only a stepping stone towards a higher reality signified by the hub of life and the Roman Catholic faith. One other image that comes to his mind at this stage is that of an arctic hut within whose interior the trapper feels warm and cosy so long as the weight of the snow piling on the hut and the heat of the sun do not make it open and splinter and disappear, rolling with the avalanche into the ravine'.²⁴ The hut that Ryder thinks of is no other than the shell of self-preservation that the worldly man constructs around himself. The snow and the sun, breaking it down, are the forces that make him aware of the eternal reality around him. As Harry Blamires has rightly pointed out in The Christian Mind

For all teaching of Christian revelation deals with the breaking-in of the greater supernatural order upon our more limited finite world. That conception is at the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is at the heart of every claim to individual experience of God's love and power. The Greater breaks-in upon the Smaller.²⁵ (p.68)

Ryder and Julia are on the threshold of a religious transformation now and it is hastened by the arrival of the ailing and errant Lord Marchmain at Brideshead. He is afraid of the dark and loneliness. So he keeps the lights of his room on and also makes someone sit in his room. These are the signs of Lord Marchmain's fear of death. With the burden of sin that he carries on his shoulders without

repentance, he finds it difficult to reconcile to the idea of passing away to the other world. Ryder mistakes it for his love of life because he has still not understood the significance of Roman Catholicism. Brideshead's attempt to make his father repent for his sins so that he may be at peace with God and overcome, thereby, the fear of death meet with negative results as Lord Marchmain turns the priest out. The heathen spirit within Lord Marchmain holds him back from marching ahead to the hub of life. Ryder sees in this attempt, a threat to his imminent marriage with Julia. If Lord Marchmain accepts the Last Sacrament, Ryder and Julia's love shall stand condemned as sacrilegious, as it is not permitted by Roman Catholic Church. So he is very happy when the attempt is aborted by Lord Marchmain himself.

I felt triumphant. I had been right, everyone else had been wrong, truth had prevailed; the threat that I had felt hanging over Julia and me ever since that evening at the fountain, had been averted, perhaps dispelled for ever....²⁶

But Ryder is wrong in thinking so. The failing health of Lord Marchmain and the fear of an unavoidable death make him feel sinful. Even though the room he is in, has all windows open, Lord Marchmain feels stifled to death in his own cellar of sin. The air that he breathes flows through a pipe; it is not free. Lord Marchmain notices the similarity between the state of his soul and that of

the air when he whispers to himself:

'Free as air; that's what they say - "free as air".
Now they bring me my air in an iron barrel'.²⁶

The obsession brings to his mind the struggle that he waged against his wife and God, for the anarchic freedom found in a 'dynamic' way of life.

'... They said we were fighting for freedom;
I had my own victory. Was it a crime?'²⁷

It is in this state that Julia fetches Father Mackay to him. Ryder, sensing in it the danger to his love-life with Julia, enlists the support of Cara and the doctor in her absence. When she arrives, he makes them speak out the dangerous consequences such a step may have. The doctor forbids it as 'the shock of seeing a priest might well kill him'. Cara thinks similarly; though she is not against the idea of having a priest by his side when he is asleep and oblivious to whatever the priest does. As Lord Marchmain seems to be in a stupor at that time, so she does not object. Julia leads the priest in who administers the last sacred religious rites to him. The priest asks Lord Marchmain to make a sign in recognition of his being sorry for all the sins of his life. When the priest does so, Charles Ryder, who till now had been resisting it finds himself praying to God to make Lord Marchmain make the sign. In the beginning, his prayer is tinged with doubt.

'O God, if there is a God, forgive him his sins,
if there is such a thing as sin'...²⁸

The second time, his prayer is 'more simple' but full of faith.

I prayed more simply; 'God forgive him his sins' and 'Please God, make him accept your forgiveness',²⁹

The result of these prayers, the earlier martyrdom of Lady Marchmain and the mysterious efficacy of the Sacrament is that Lord Marchmain at last makes the sign of the cross with his hand and thus secures the blessings of the Lord he had abjured throughout his life. Yet it is not so abrupt a change as has been alleged by critics. Lord Marchmain has, before taking this step towards the Roman Catholic hub of life, already realised the extent of his sin which only the Lord's blessings can wash off. The administering of the Last Sacrament, however, acts as a catalyst in this process as no rational realisation not aided by divine grace can claim comprehension of truth. Charles Ryder understands for the first time its significance and is therefore impelled to reward the priest for his great service. The priest, however, knows that it has not been possible by virtue of his personal abilities; he has only acted as an agent through whom Divine Grace could descend on the sinner. So he refuses it. That Ryder gives it for the parish now signifies his acceptance of the spirit of fellow-service that the priest exemplifies by his selfless dedication to his holy office. Ryder is not the only person affected by this change for the better in Lord Marchmain; Julia too is. Both realise that their ungodly and decadent love must now come to an

end in order that it may be replaced by divine love. The death-bed scene sees three people forging their way ahead to the Roman Catholic hub of life from the hellish wheel of life. It is one of the most significant scenes in the book as in the successful journey of three characters from the low dynamic world to the stable hub of Roman Catholicism, Waugh suggests the broad parameters of his comic vision of life. The repetition of motifs closely following the changes in the scale of values is purposive and definitive. The change for the better discernible in Julia and Lord Marchmain and the endeavour to reach the Roman Catholic hub of life provide a means of gaining an aesthetic unity. Ideas like change and progress, decline or betterment appear over and over again, often varied a little in rhythm to avoid monotony but gloriously rising to a climax somewhere. The transformation in Lord Marchmain is really the translation of the baser self of a man to a higher self, the forward movement which provides an additional touch of unity to the novel and determines the direction usually found in a novel composed by Waugh.

The ease and care with which Lord Marchmain and the other errant members of the Flyte family progress towards the Roman Catholic hub of life appears, however, to have received less than adequate attention: Edmund Wilson unjustly criticised Waugh's ability to find his way out 'in this more normal world', while commenting:

What happens when Evelyn Waugh abandons his comic convention ... turns out to be more or less disastrous. The writer, in this more normal world, no longer knows his way ...³⁰

He further elaborates by adding that the novelist has supplied 'mere romantic fantasy'³¹. That the final scene of the novel is not 'mere romantic fantasy' is not only clear from the logical inevitability with which the scene and the story reach the climax but also from its having grown out of Waugh's observation of such a scene in real life. In a letter to Ronald Knox, written from Pixton Park, Dulverton, on March 14, 1945, Waugh explains the genesis of this scene.

I am delighted that you became reconciled to B.R. in the end. It was, of course, all about the death bed. I was present at almost exactly that scene, with less extravagant decor, when a friend of mine whom we thought in his final coma and stubbornly impenitent, whose womenfolk would only let the priest in because they thought him unconscious, did exactly that, making the sign of the cross. It was profoundly affecting and I wrote the book about that scene.³²

Stephen Spender, however, chooses to find the real fault not merely in the concluding scenes but also in characterisation of Charles Ryder. He upholds the view that Waugh has failed in delineating his development from agnosticism to an acceptance of Roman Catholicism.

The real failure of Brideshead Revisited is not confined, however, to these concluding scenes. It really lies in the character of Charles Ryder. Within his sensibility is the meeting of the minds of his Catholic friends and the agnostic views he supposedly represents. His development should record the emergence of the pattern of the true religion from the unsatisfactory lives of the Marchmains, and also from his own agnosticism.³³

The discussion preceding the death-bed scene makes it amply clear that Spender's critical analysis is not supported by acceptable arguments. The critic is oblivious to the gradual development of true religious feeling in Charles Ryder, a process that finds its ultimate and conclusive culmination in Ryder's attitude towards the administering of the Last Sacrement to Lord Marchmain. A.A. De Vitis has, therefore, rightly observed:

It does not come as a surprise to the reader that Ryder is converted to Roman Catholicism by the novel's end. It is Waugh's subtlest point of artistic merit that he makes his hero, his observer, the one on whom the events of the narrative leave the imprint of faith. Charles' conversion is not explained in words; it is explained by the action of the novel as he moves towards a keener understanding of the family with which his life is inextricably bound.³⁴

De Vitis is clearly drawing attention here to the allegorical frame of Charles Ryder's development. Inability to discern this has led critics to overlook the graph of Ryder's gradual upward movement. Ryder's success in touching the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life ensures for him freedom from the pointless and decadent nature of

change as represented well by the circular motion of the wheel. It also signifies the resurrection of his life which had till then been deadened by the 'cultural water-wheel' of secular existence. The journey from incomprehension to comprehension of Roman Catholicism, follows the pattern of a greater comedy as enunciated by Northrop Frye and Eric Bentley. Thus Evelyn Waugh reveals his sublime and ultimate comic vision of life through the successful spiritual odyssey of Charles Ryder.

Brideshead Revisited has, however, had to face adverse criticism even for its professedly religious purpose. Rose Macaulay who had praised the so-called lesser comedies for no important merit than a seeming fantastication of life, criticised this novel for its Catholic exclusiveness.

No purpose can well have greater importance; no faith can be more asserting than that 'the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters'. But Mr. Waugh seems to equate the divine purpose, the tremendous fact of God at work in the universe, with the obedient membership of a church; the human spirit, if redeemed, must loyally confirm to this church and its rules it seems to reduce the formidable problems of universe and the human spirit to a level almost parochial.³⁵

Undoubtedly Evelyn Waugh measures the progress of mankind in terms of only one church, the one which he accepted, but he never fails to pay attention to the artistic quality in depicting the comic vision of life associated with the liberation of humanity from the shackles of constant meaningless motion, a theme that finds recurrent expression not

only in the lesser comedies of Waugh but also in the plays of the Absurd Dramatists and early poetry of T.S. Eliot. Moreover, its exclusiveness does not violate the taste and refinement of discriminating readers. In John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, there is open and oblique criticism of all denominations other than the one professed by its hero, Christian. Evelyn Waugh, on the other hand, has pitted Roman Catholicism here not against any other sect but against chaos that is a characteristic feature of the dynamic world. His own words in this context prove revealing in more ways than one:

It seems to me that in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos. It is much the same situation as existed in the early Middle Ages.³⁶

In his narrative the Protestant Rex Mottram is presented in an ugly light, because Waugh felt that the unrestrained freedom in Protestant faith was helping the growth of a spiritual crisis. It is in this context that 'the universal validity of his (Catholic) message, as pointed by A.A. De Vitis³⁷, must surely be understood. In a letter to his mother, Catherine Waugh, dated 5 Feb. 1945, Evelyn himself succeeded in diagnosing the reason for the hostility of the critics to the underlying Catholic message.

The general criticism is that it is religious propaganda. That shows how opinion has changed in 80 years. No one now thinks a book which totally excludes religion is atheistic propaganda. 80 years ago every novel included religion as part of the normal life of the people.³⁸

In fact, what Waugh attempts by bringing in religion in this novel is the portrayal of his ultimate comic vision of life as opposed to the comic view of life revealed in the lesser comedies. Waugh distinguished between a life lived according to secular principles and the one lived according to religious principles. He finds the former's emphasis on secular change as a means to progress not only deceptive but also ludicrous. The desire to progress by undergoing religious change is however venerated and celebrated as it leads man from the world of deception to that of wisdom and reality. Thus this novel completes the comic view of life that Waugh has presented in the lesser comedies. This development is as remarkable as that of Eliot in the composition of poetic plays after poems like The Wasteland. This process of development did not escape the notice of one of Waugh's reviewers, John K. Hutchens. In the 'New York Times Book Review' of 30 December 1945, he maintains:

For Mr. Waugh is very definitely an artist, with something like a genius for precision and clarity not surpassed by any novelist writing in English in his time. This has been apparent from the very beginning of his career - a career in which 'Brideshead Revisited' differs in setting, tone and technique from all his earlier creative work, is yet a logical development.³⁹

The development of Waugh from the lesser comedies to the greater ones is reflected in the structure of this novel. Two kinds of plots co-exist in this novel, one that of the lesser comedies, already discussed and the other, that of the greater or divine comedies. The image of the wheel of life referred to earlier, explains this most fittingly. Just as the rotating portion of the wheel hems in its hub, so does the plot of the lesser comedies contain within it the plot of the greater comedies. The wheel of life with its rotatory motion brings Charles Ryder back to the place, Brideshead that he had known once very intimately. Even the chapter classification is made to underline this fact. The novel begins with a 'Prologue' that is entitled 'Brideshead Revisited' and closes with an 'Epilogue' that is entitled similarly. This circular plot provides the secular frame of the novel, reflecting the themes of stagnation and absurdity of secular change so successfully portrayed in the lesser comedies. Except for this, the narrative primarily indicates the progress of the hero, Charles Ryder who is also the narrator of the progress of the errant members of the Flyte family from the degrading absurdity of dynamic life to the eternal stability of religious life. The motion described is similar to that of a person moving from the circumference of a rotating wheel to its stable centre. While the earlier portion of the novel shows the drift of the characters away from the hub, the later portion shows a resurrection of hope in the renewed effort to reach the hub.

Waugh's architectonic skill in the work of encasing is illustrated by the use of Brideshead House itself. The gaunt and overwhelming facade of this house represents the fate of all secular efforts. Like Hetton Abbey, it is a reconstruction of an older prototype, dismantled for this purpose and like it, Brideshead House has also grown in size over the ages. Every generation of Flytes has added its mite to the enhancement of its grandeur. In the days when the present generation of Flytes live here, it enjoys a splendour and architectural beauty of its own. But when Charles Ryder revisits it, the house appears useless, as Hooper too observes, and the efforts that have gone into its making appear futile.

'The builders did not know the uses to which their work would descend; they made a new house with the stones of old; 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 all work brought to nothing; Quomodo sedet sola civitas. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'.⁴⁰

In fact, it meets with the same fate that most of the other ancient buildings in the novel are depicted to have suffered from. Waugh's novel is thus a storehouse of recorded values. It springs from and perpetuates hours in the lives of exceptional people who lived in abodes like those of Brideshead House and Hetton Abbey when their control and command of experience was at their highest. Brideshead Revisited is unique in recording the changing facade of life lived by

the Flytes through the ages and the author has the varying possibilities of life clearly projected. The evaluation of this novel and for that matter of subsequent novels will be rewarding when we take into account this measure of change and progress as very greatly desirable and definitive.

Within the secular edifice of Brideshead House is however the changeless and eternal flame burning in the chapel. Notwithstanding the changes undergone by the house, it has remained unchanged over the years. The changing nature of Brideshead House is therefore comparable to the changing nature of the revolving wheel while the unchanging flame in the chapel compares well with the unchanging transcendental hub of the wheel of life. Ryder in his redeemed and elevated state is quick enough to notice this.

'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 - 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 Aire of Jerusalem....'41

The flame therefore metaphorically plays up the significance of the 'eternal perspective' without which life has no value and which, in the words of Harry Blamires, is a 'prime mark of the Christian mind'.⁴²

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it can be safely inferred that Waugh has presented Ryder's "sacred"

memories in a "profane" frame and not, as Jeffrey Heath maintains, "profane" memories in a "sacred frame".⁴³

The rejection of the secular way of life is clearly manifest in the plot of the novel and it should have itself absolved Waugh from the charge of snobbery levelled by Donat O' Donnell in the article, 'The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh' published in Bell.

In Catholic countries Catholicism is not romantic, not invariably associated with big houses, or the fate of an aristocracy But the Catholicism of Mr Waugh, and of certain other English converts, is hardly separable from a personal romanticism and a class loyalty.⁴⁴

T.J. Barrington, another reviewer of Waugh's novels, disputes this claim of Donat O' Donnell as he finds it wanting in evidence.

It is patent that Donat O' Donnell's article fails to prove the existence in Waugh's mind of a necessary connexion between snobbery and Catholicism. To lead us to believe, then, on the evidence produced that there is implicit in 'Brideshead Revisited' an heretical private religion is to attempt to bamboozle us. Waugh's pieties have not been shown to have mingled with Catholicism to produce a private religion, 'a highly personal system of belief and devotion'.⁴⁵

Donat O' Donnell's arguments appear substantially fabricated and he succeeds in twisting the facts recorded in the novel. Not without reason Waugh responded to it in right earnest and recorded his reaction thus:

I think perhaps your reviewer is right in calling me a snob; that is to say I am happiest in the company of the European upper-classes; but I do not think this preference is necessarily an offence against Charity, still less against Faith. I can assure you it had no influence on my conversion.⁴⁶

Waugh is justified in making the remark as his decision to join the Roman Catholic Church was not, as Father D' Arcy admits, emotional but intellectual. It is the emotional part of his self which enjoyed the company of the upper-classes and not the intellectual or rational part which saw through this folly and accordingly, steered Waugh away from secular change to a religious change in the act of his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Waugh writes appropriately:

Nor does this preference unduly affect my writing. Besides Hooper there are two characters in Brideshead Revisited whom I represent as worldly - Rex Mottram, a millionaire, and Lady Celia Ryder, a lady of high birth. Why did my reverence for money and rank not sanctify these two?⁴⁷

Waugh here suggests that life lived at the secular level of existence, however, resplendent and glorious apparently, is a prey to time and absurdity whereas life lived religiously is alone progressive and significant. In conveying this vision of life Waugh has used characters borrowed from the upper strata of life because they alone, and not the poor, have reached a stage of existence where self-realisation and not self-preservation can dominate the thoughts of men. D.H. Lawrence in his 'Study of Thomas Hardy', published in the collection of his posthumous papers, Phoenix, has

supported the use of aristocratic characters in Thomas Hardy in a similar manner. Quite justifiably Waugh took offence about a similar accusation levelled by a close friend like David Pryce-Jones who in his Time and Tide had written:

His essential view of society is indeed based upon a belief in the inherent superiority of one section at the expense of all others.⁴⁸

Upon knowing, however, of Waugh's displeasure over it, he later on regretted his stand in the matter.

In Brideshead Revisited therefore Waugh said what he had left unsaid in the lesser comedies: true progress constitutes a change in the very perspective of man. It is the carving of a path towards the stability of the Roman Catholic hub of life that is free from the delusion of secular progress induced by secular change. It is this message or theme that forms an inseparable and essential part of his comic vision of life, and it is very vividly reflected in the greater comedies. Furthermore, the use of a highly suggestive plot succeeds in shaping his thoughts in an aesthetically satisfying way. Waugh here sees life freed of irrelevancies and his task, we may safely conclude, is to clear away the ordinary trivia, and distractions of our existence and lay bare the core of meaning concerning change and progress in an entertaining manner.

HELENA (1950):

In Helena (1950) Waugh expresses his firm conviction that progress lies not in secular growth but in religious transformation in such a way that his thought creates a kind of compulsion upon the mind of the reader. Progress, as Frank J. Yarts has also maintained, 'involves breaking the cycle // (of secular life) with novelty'.⁴⁹ Waugh's protagonist in this novel achieves it by realising first the futility of secular change and then rejecting it for the Roman Catholic hub of life which promises eternal novelty in 'the Easter sense in which all things are made new in the risen Christ'.⁵⁰ As the dark recesses of her mind keep on getting enlightened with the flame of religious devotion, Helena forges ahead on a linear path towards the hub of the wheel of life which by its intrinsic nature not only transcends the relativism of the wheel but also supports that. In the triumphant conclusion of her progressive journey, not only does she elevate herself to the rank of a spiritual elite but she also gives expression to a fundamental tenet of Roman Catholicism: the historicity of the eternal Christian truth. Helena's transformation for the better is anticipated and conveyed through symbols and images which occur less frequently in Brideshead Revisited. In fact the poetic richness of this novel is unparalleled compared to Waugh's other novels, not excluding Brideshead Revisited. As the novel charts a movement from the insignificance of 'dynamic' existence to the significance

of religious life, the novel may either be termed a divine comedy or a greater comedy and thus forms a parallel to what we can find in Dante and Shakespeare.

In order that we may study the cohesiveness of the events narrated and also their relevance to the novel's thematic line of intention, a careful consideration of its plot becomes imperative. After the manner of the eighteenth century 'histories' in English literature, the novel indicates a temporal movement in its plot. The loss of causality in such plots is made up by the close connection of the incidents described with the central character in whose life they invariably occur. As this novel has a 'plot of character', to use Northrop Frye's terminology, sheer temporal progression does not come in the way of the novelist's thematic intention. Besides, Waugh's novel is decidedly superior to its apotheosis in its selective narration of incidents and in the use of symbolic imagery. The unique aesthetic form, that is lent to the novel thereby, abjures logical argument even when it reveals the author's comic vision of life in the gradual emancipation of Helena from the yoke of sterile 'dynamic' existence. The novel should, therefore, be read not as a spiritual case-history of Helena's development but as an aesthetic expression of the theme of inevitability of progress through religious change. The recurrent image of the wheel of life plays as always a dominant role not only in conveying this theme but also in defining Waugh's ultimate comic vision of life. When the

story opens we are told that Helena is the daughter of the British King Coel, Paramount Chief of the Trinovantes. The words of Christopher Sykes, Waugh's friend and biographer, are quite illuminating in this context.

Among the many unreliable accounts of St. Helena's origin, one of the most dubious is that she was a British princess, a daughter of the possibly historic King Cole after whom Colchester is said to be named. Evelyn decided that she should be a daughter of this British King.⁵¹

Waugh was a student of history at Oxford and it is curious that his historical sensibility was not offended in selecting a doubtful anecdote. In the 'Preface' to the novel, the reasons for it are mentioned thus:

Where the authorities are doubtful, I have often chosen the picturesque in preference to the plausible ...⁵²

The reasons stated here hardly satisfy standards which one expects in historical exploration. That Waugh's statement is meant to mystify rather than clarify is obvious from his assertion in one of his letters to Nancy Mitford.⁵³ In fact, the idea of declaiming on one's works never gained favour with him.⁵⁴ For him, as for Eliot, a work of art is its own spokesman. It therefore becomes imperative to hunt for reasons responsible for Waugh's choice within the aesthetic framework of the novel itself. Waugh also tells us that none of Helena's father's family 'had died naturally' and that one had gone crazy and died in a fit of abnormalcy.

These details hint at the irrationality and chaos that have so often been seen to characterise the secular world of change or the dynamic world in Waugh's novels. It invites comparison with the backyards of civilization to be met with in the other novels, prominent among them being, the jungles of Brazil. In fact, to the Romans of that time, Britain was a culturally backward country. By granting a British origin to his heroine, Waugh has therefore placed her in the barbaric environs of the dynamic world. It is essential from the thematic point of view as the novelist has to show Helena's rejection of the cramping dynamic confines not only of Britain, which is obviously barbaric, but also of Rome, in which dynamism is clad in deceptive urbanity, in order that she may break the cycle of the world of change by stepping out of it and make for the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Waugh thus traces the stages of growth in culture and refinement, though there is no such thing as pure thought in this novel. His ideas projecting the endeavour to reach the Roman Catholic hub of life are here always used as handmaids of emotion and become habitual till they attain the dignity of conviction. In making an analytical study of Helena we have, therefore, now no doubt that progress through phases of changes in temporal and spiritual life becomes for the author the major measure of judgement and our study of events becomes rich and rewarding when we identify ourselves with this panorama of change in every possible way.

Helena's father's family traces its descent from the Trojans. But while her father is content with listening to songs that celebrate his proud pedigree, her imagination is fired with the desire to see Troy, the original home of her valiant ancestors. Therefore, often in her conversations, she refers to herself as an 'exile'. With the help of irony, Waugh evokes one of the major Christian symbols in the book. It is a matter of common knowledge among the Christians, but not for Helena who is still a pagan, that man's true home lies in the transcendental City of God. It was because of man's transgression of the will of God that his fall from the Grace of God was precipitated and his exile from the Garden of Eden took place. The pagan world in which Helena is born is the fallen one and her exile gains significance from the Christian context, unknown to her at this stage of her life. The imagery of the wheel of life aptly embodies this distinction between the world of appearance and reality. While the revolving wheel, with its relative states of motion and rest, represents the former, the hub of the wheel with its transcendental Absoluteness represents the latter. Therefore, while Helena's quest for her true home holds, in the Christian context, the potential of the Christian quest for the prelapsarian world, it has a universal significance in the context of the wheel-imagery as it mirrors man's quest for the Absolute Transcendental Reality. As the Bible makes it possible for man to do so by entering into the Church, which

in Roman Catholicism is the temporal representative of God after the resurrection of Christ, so Helena's progress lies in understanding the significance of Roman Catholicism in satisfying her yearning for her true home.

The other symbols that presage Helena's quest for the Roman Catholic hub of life include her sexual reveries and fancies. Helena often pictures herself as a horse struggling for supremacy over its rider and then falling in line with the latter's wishes.

Helena had galloped thus in solitude hours without number, but of late years, as her womanhood broke bud, a keener excitement infused the game. Two played it now. There was the will of the rider that spoke down the length of the rein, from the gloved hand to the warm and tender tongue under the bit; articulate, coaxing, commanding, now barely sensible, light as an eyelid, now steel-hard and compelling; that spoke in the stab of the spur and sudden double smart of the whip. And there was the will of the animal to shrink and start, to toss aside the restraint of the bridle and saddle and the firm legs across her, to shake the confident equipoise ... Then at the height of the play, in sweat and blood-flecked foam, came the sweet moment of surrender, the fusion, and the two were off together, single, full-stretched over the resounding earth ... with none but the wind to oppose them. She took some handling, the chestnut.⁵⁵

The symbolism evoked is overtly sexual in the kind of imagery employed for the purpose and Waugh took pains, as is evident, to give a graphic and detailed account of it. It would not perhaps be out of place to mention here Waugh's indebtedness to Penelope Betjeman who upon his request supplied his imagination with the details given in the book.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding its sexual overtone, the imagery invoked here has a

deeper symbolic significance hidden in the cloak of irony. The rider stands for the will of God and the horse for the unrestrained and blind human will. While God tries to lead man to the right goal which alone guarantees progress, the will of man, out of its ignorance, struggles against its good and tries to lead man towards false goals. Unconscious of this spiritual struggle, Helena relishes its overtly sexual value alone. The surrender of the horse to the will of the rider signifies the subjugation of Helena's wild desires to the supreme will of God. Thus the reader can easily anticipate Helena's conversion.

The story of Helen of Troy illustrates to good advantage the Christian symbolism contained in the horse imagery. The parallel between the two Helenas is established by casual references and the naming of the second chapter, 'Fair Helena Forfeit'. While Paris abducted the Greek Helen to Troy, leaving her husband, Menelaus fuming and deceived, Constantius wins the hand of the British Helena, with her father's consent though that is given very reluctantly. The naming of the second chapter thus, intends to keep the parallelism between the two stories alive. The story of Helena's abduction is the story of carnal desires, let loose and the comparison serves to highlight, on the surface, the grossness of the love between Constantius and Helena. But the significance of this comparison does not end here. Dr F.J. Stopp has rightly remarked in his essay, 'Grace in Reins' :

When Aphrodite first plucked at Helena's gown, it was in the guise of her natural love for Constantius. But the invitation to the mystical marriage of the soul was not for long able to disguise itself under the 'steadfast and bruised passion' of which Helena thought that Constantius was the only object.⁵⁷

Thus the Hellenic parallel evokes the deeper Christian symbolism of the mystical marriage of the individual soul with the spirit of Christ and prepares the readers as the other symbols employed in the novel do, for Helena's spiritual odyssey.

In order that the symbolism inherent in the ironic value of these images may be unfolded to her, she must first outgrow the static opinions of her adolescence. Until these are shattered, she cannot get attuned to the path of progress which in terms of the wheel-of-life imagery must begin from the highly unstable and capricious fringes and end at the hub; a static attitude towards the world restrains her from leaving the stands from where the spectators can only watch the action of people standing on the wheel. The static opinions Helena nurses have grown out of her cloistered life in the nursery and school-room. These are embodied in her nurse's sapper-sergeant father and Longinus. While the former represents the chivalric ideals which have little authenticity in the dynamic world of the Roman empire, the latter stands for secular learning which bestows on man no immunity from the dangers that beset ordinary men. Dr. Frederick J. Stopp has rightly called them, 'powerful

forerunners in the mind of Helena,⁵⁸ Lionel Stevenson's⁵⁹ attempt to compare her to the static characters like Paul Pennyfeather, Scott King and William Boot is therefore unjustified for the obvious fact that while they do not outgrow their static personality, Helena does. Besides, her story is not the comedy of ignorance but of victory over ignorance and earthly considerations. Once in Roman confines, the unscrupulous politics and treacherous warfare that characterise the degraded world of the Roman empire, appear in a threatening way and get hold of her illusions. Helena comes to know of the fall of Tetricus at the hands of her husband who has used all his guile and deception for doing so. Unlike the nurse's sapper-sergeant father, her husband, Constantius, scarcely reflects the ideals of chivalry. She realises that the world of Roman empire has no regard for the obsolete code of chivalry. Of necessity she must reject the inadequate and obsolete code of chivalry. Helena must look for ideals which are more permanent and real than these static ones, nurtured in her by her nanny. John Raymond's remark that

. . . Waugh's converts generally get to Heaven
the back way, through having had the right kind
of Nanny.⁶⁰ //

is partial and he largely ignores this change in Helena's mental outlook. Some time later she learns about the death of Longinus. The excellence achieved in secular learning is

hardly able to save him from his death. His learning scarcely raises him above the level of the ordinary mankind. Besides, with his death, all his scholarship comes to nought. With the death of Longinus, all her static opinions are shattered. Helena now finds herself in the wilderness of the dynamic world of Roman empire. As it is itself devoid of order, it fails to provide her with an alternative code of conduct. No sooner is a person established as a king than news arrives that he has been killed by his own men. Moreover, every time an emperor dies, an internecine war for the crown rages which takes toll of life and property. The instability of Roman empire scarcely remains concealed from her and she no longer takes pleasure in the facade of Roman glamour that takes her husband, Constantius, in. So when her husband expresses his desire of becoming an emperor, she is not impressed. She is intelligent enough to realise that their paths are divergent. While her husband's lies round the wheel of life which promises no substantial progress, her lies straight towards the hub of the wheel, a goal that promises permanence and freedom from mere appearance. Even when Constantius turns to religion, he does so not for acquiring any permanent ideals but for earthly considerations which fall within the realm of capricious appearances. Thus, not even for once does he make an attempt to set his feet on the real path of progress as Helena does. Helena's estrangement from Constantius is felt necessary in order to further the mechanics of the plot. In order that she may realise

the significance of the Mystical Marriage with Christ, she needs to eschew the pleasures of the Flesh. Pointing out their tempting nature, Harry Blamires observes:

The magnitude and variety of the evil forces waiting to ensnare the human soul are hinted at in the triple formulation, the World, the Flesh and the Devil.⁶¹

Helena's ability to surmount them is anticipated in her decision to go hunting the very next day after her first nuptial night with Constantius.

Next day, while Constantius despatched the advanced-party and distributed the pack-loads, Helena went hunting once more for the last time over the familiar country.⁶²

Hunting here may be rightly interpreted as a metaphor for man's pursuit of the immutable values of life treasured in Roman Catholicism. While Helena like the hounds has to pursue Reality, God like the hunter puts the hounds on the right track. The comparison is appropriate from the Roman Catholic point of view because it believes that the reality of God is unattainable to human reason unaided by Divine Grace.⁶³ The parting of ways between Constantius and Helena reaches the climax in their divorce and Constantius' second marriage.

Her disenchantment both with the secular splendour of Roman state and with her husband's obsession with temporal gains is reflected by what Waugh himself once experienced.

Those who have read my works will perhaps understand the character of the world into which I exuberantly launched myself. Ten years of that world sufficed to show me that life there, or anywhere, was unintelligible and unendurable without God.⁶⁴

With the rejection of static as well as dynamic ideals Helena is forced to explore the meaning of purposeful life elsewhere. She is aided in it by her common-sense. In one of her meetings with the Gnostic Marcias who spins a long yarn about the truth of existence in the manner of Sophists, she demands answers to three simple questions. When did the events occur? Where did they occur? and how does he know them? By asking these questions she wishes to be sure about the reality of the supernatural. Marcias, who is really her old tutor, evades and discounts them as 'a child's question'.⁶⁵ Lanctatius, the Christian tutor of her grandson, however, answers them without any hesitation. He tells her where and when God was incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. Upon being asked how he knows about it, he replies that he had got this information from the Church which is the custodian of Christian truth and is therefore responsible for handing it down to posterity. He voices here the Roman Catholic belief in the 'body of truth transmitted to the church through the college of bishops preserved by oral tradition (meaning that it was not written in the Scriptures)'.⁶⁶ Satisfied with the authenticity of the Christian truth, Helena is eager to know whether Jesus Christ was a mere historical figure or he transcends the limitations of Time and Space

so as to testify to the eternity of the Christian truth. She therefore asks him whether He has been seen thereafter. To this Lactantius replies that saints and martyrs have seen him in their visions. To be sure that Lactantius is not hood-winking her, she asks him to name one such saint. Fearing for the safety of such a saint, he refuses to divulge this information to her. As the Church had not yet come out into the open, this information was reserved only for the baptised. Helena's discourse with Lactantius thus convinces her of the reality of the Christian truth. Unlike that of the speculative philosophers, it is one which is real and verifiable historically despite its supernatural dimensions. It is analogous to the hub of the wheel of life which despite transcending the limitations of relativity produced by the circular motion of the wheel, is palpable and real. The exile finds her true home in the reality of Christian Revelation and the conversion to Catholicism anticipated in the symbolism of banishment materialises now. Helena is redeemed from the sinful life of earthly quests in her conversion to Catholic faith and she achieves an important victory in her progressive journey.

Helena's acceptance of Christianity needs to be distinguished from that of Constantine, her son by Constantius. Though Constantine allows the Church to operate without any persecution and even accords an honourable place to the Pope, he himself remains deprived of the Church's redemptive power. In fact, Constantine's benevolent decision stems not out of

any proper understanding of the Church but out of his fear of it as an adversary. The reconciliatory approach towards it is thus born out of political expediency. Besides, he owes it to Pope Sylvester who has cured him of an incurable disease. Even the Cross in whose name he wins his battles against his foes is a Labarum, seen in a vision, which is far from being a Cross. His misunderstanding of the redemptive power of baptism and admission to the Church is such that it prevents him from being baptised; he only places himself under the protection of Christ. Constantine postpones his baptism to the last hours of his life because of the misconception that if he gets baptised earlier than that, he shall have time to sin and will thus become unworthy of Christ's mercy at the time of taking leave of this world. If he gets baptised just a few minutes before his death, then he shall die as a purified soul and be eligible for the mercy of God. He, therefore, perverts the significance of Christianity, the way Mrs. Melrose Ape does in Vile Bodies. In this sense, he continues to be as far from the Roman Catholic hub of life, as his father Constantius was.

Again, the official recognition of Christianity scarcely has any impact on his mode of running the government. His kingdom is run by his pseudo-Christian wife, Fausta, who makes him kill anyone who earns her ill-will by suggesting that the person poses a threat to the stability of his crown. Constantine, as we know, had once told Helena that he must rule if he wants to live. The determination to rule for the

sake of self-preservation is indicative of Constantine's exclusion from the Grace of God. When Fausta tries to incriminate even his mother, Helena, he realises her Mephistophilean grip over his haunted mind. In a true spirit of savage ruthlessness, he has her roasted alive in her much-favoured bath. It contrasts with his mother's forgiving attitude and indicates his inability to comprehend the essence of Christianity. Even the house where he lives is a sort of Kafkaesque world. People do not speak each other's real name and disappearance of the members of the royal household is regarded as a regular phenomenon. He is therefore an epitome of Power without Grace and the world over which he presides continues to be deprived of the stability and order that would have emanated from the spread of Christian zeal in the true spirit. Unable to see his mistake, Constantine is of the opinion that Christianity is not meant for the heathen-blooded Romans and he decides to shift his capital from Rome to a place which is free from the dark past of Rome. His decision is like that of his father who had wished to fence Rome from the onslaught of the marauding barbarians from the north. He fails to understand the significance of the Incarnation of Christ. Helena and Pope Sylvester, on the other hand, are aware that Christ came to redeem the fallen. Besides the Biblical parable of the clean-swept house, infested with devils, shows the magnitude of Constantine's ignorance of the basic spirit of Christianity.

Rome occupies a significant place in Christianity, as it has been a witness to the long and militant history of the Church. It was here that men chose to part with their lives for the sake of devotion to the eternal truth contained in the arrival and resurrection of Christ. While the religious significance of Rome is unknown to Constantine, it no longer escapes Helena's notice who is near the Roman Catholic hub of life now. It is suggestive of Helena's spiritual development from the time when she began to consider Rome no more than a secular centre of human civilisation. Yet it is not altogether unexpected. Even when Helena as a pagan was making for her new home in the Roman Empire, she had questioned Constantius about the necessity of fencing Roman civilisation from the onslaught of the marauding barbarians living in the north. A truly advanced society would indeed throw its doors open to all and sundry rather than shutting itself in for the test of civilisation lies not only in the ability to withstand barbaric assaults but also in the ability to reform and sublimate the barbarism in man. Roman Catholicism by virtue of its transcendental orientation is capable of doing both and hence a Christian society does not shut its doors upon the fallen who are no others but the barbarians or 'dynamic' people. The philosophical background of Waugh's comic vision of life is, therefore, not exclusive but all inclusive.

Though Helena has found her true home in the transcendental City of God as represented in its temporal form

by the Church, she has not yet attained elevation to sainthood that accrues from her mystical marriage with the Holy Spirit. The quest for the real Cross helps her attain this highest of ranks among the mortals. The person she meets in course of her search for the Cross is Bishop Macarius, a person as simple as she has been yearning to meet for a long time. In him can be found embodied the true spirit of Christianity. He can distinguish between church as a community of the pious in communion with the Holy Spirit and the church as a mere temporal edifice in the shape of well constructed and architecturally splendid edifices. While the former acts as a rock of faith, the latter is a victim of the depredations of time and perverse human will. The Bishop in his enthusiasm for restoring the see of Aelia Capitolina, the birth place of Jesus Christ, to its original glory and also to save the laity of his see from the malefic influence of the Bishop of Caesarea, under whom Macarius' see is a suffragen see, had asked the Emperor to make it a full-fledged see. Impressed by the reality of the Christian truth, Constantine shows his devotion in the only way known to his secular mind: the excavation of the holy places and their decoration in the modern style by a new-fangled architect. The poor bishop is dismayed by this invasion of the secular spirit as it strips the holy places of their private purity and throws open the doors of desecration by the casually-interested tourist public. The humility and concern for truth embodied in him is matched only by Helena which shows the distance

she has covered ever since she started moving away from the world of intrigue and savagery. It is to his see that Helena repairs for discovering the Cross, unknown even to Pope Sylvester. It is interesting to compare her shift in interest from the excavation of Troy to the Cross, with Tony Last's fateful static quest for the lost City in the jungles of Brazil. Though both of them are explorers, Tony is incapacitated in his quest by his static opinions but Helena, who has outgrown them, is aided by her understanding of the Roman Catholic nature of her goal. So while the former meets with a tragic end, Helena meets with success. Unable to find out the exact spot for the excavatory work from the speculative thinkers, Helena resorts to the best means of knowing it. She undertakes fasting during the Lent with a view to purifying her body for the descent of Divine Grace without whose aid revelation of truth is impossible. With this Helena takes the final step towards acceptance by God. Renouncing the pleasures of the flesh, she perfects herself for the union with the Divine, a conclusion already foreshadowed in the parallel drawn with the Helena in Greek mythology. The mystical marriage with the Divine grants her an insight into the working of nature and she is able to transcend the barriers of time and space an idea deftly conveyed by Waugh in her dream about the Wandering Jew. The discovery of the Cross raises her to the ranks of the highest among mortals. In fact, she enters the select community of saints who form a vital link between mortals and God. In addition, her

discovery bears testimony to the historical authenticity of Christian truth. Its significance is better expressed in Waugh's own words:

Everything about the new religion was capable of interpretation, could be refined and diminished; everything except the unreasonable assertion that God became man and dies on the Cross; not a myth or an allegory; true God, truly incarnate, tortured to death at a particular moment in time, at a particular geographical place, as a matter of plain historical truth.⁶⁷

But the discovery also opens the possibility of an obsession with relics (which would not only commercialise but also erode their significance) in drawing attention to the historical veracity of Christian beliefs, for the teeming majority often ignores the essence, and not unoften substitutes the ritual for the essence. This is the warning Helena too has to consider in taking the help of the avaricious Wandering Jew who has an eye on practical purpose in the discovery of the Cross and the consequent popularity of Christian relics, whether real or fictitious. Finding that the supernatural context of these relics outweighs their temporal value, she goes ahead with the work of unearthing it. Waugh thus brings out the dual nature of the relics. As mere earthly things, they have no significance. But as participants in the historical basis of Christianity, they are significant. If man gives undue importance to the former, it does not inculcate them but degrades the stature of man himself. Christopher Sykes under-estimates this significance while

he writes about it with somewhat less than adequate perception in his book.

I think the book's weakness throughout lies in expression of a false estimate. Unlike Islam, another down-to-earth religion, Christianity does not depend on relics. They are regarded, and even in decadent times have always been regarded as 'aids to devotion', nothing more than that. Jerusalem is a holy city to Christians, but its total destruction would not disturb Christianity as the total destruction of Mecca and the Kaaba would disturb Islam.⁶⁸

Waugh's own assertion of the point that has been made in our analysis of the novel also amply answers the charge made by Sykes.

It is not fantastic to claim that her discovery entitles her to a place in the Doctorate of the Church, for she was not merely adding one more stupendous trophy to the hoard of relics which were everywhere being unearthed and enshrined. She was asserting in sensational form a dogma that was in danger of neglect.⁶⁹

Christopher Sykes has faulted the book even for the introduction of the Wandering Jew in the dream sequence of Helena.⁷⁰ The first objection to it concerns his characterization and Waugh's inability to make him rise 'above the music-hall original.' He goes on to say that it 'was not a type of comedy in which he was equipped to compete with the old hands'. His second objection to it stems out of a deeper cause. He maintains that 'the intrusion of the Wandering Jew seriously weakens the dominance' of the admirable theme concerning the literal reality of the Cross. While his first argument is plausible, we have reservation about the

second. The introduction of the Wandering Jew¹ instead of weakening⁰ the theme, strengthens it, for it points to the dangers of an attitude giving precedence to the Cross as a material object, over its significance in paying attention to the historicity of the Christian Revelation.

The development of Helena from a static girl with romantic notions to a saint with sub specie aeternitatis vision is accomplished by Waugh not with direct authorial comments and exposition but with the help of images and symbols used sparingly and purposefully. The discriminating reader does not fail to trace different stages of her progress. There is no wobble in the line of development and the character of Helena has been depicted much more meaningfully than Charles Ryder's. It is somewhat intriguing that A.A. DeVitis should have been impressed by the latter's development and not by Helena's.

In Brideshead Revisited it had not been necessary to describe the actual moment of Charles Ryder's conversion, though Waugh had done so subtly, meaningfully. In Helena, however, he asks his readers to accept the fact that an intellectually curious girl develops into a middle-aged woman who seeks a meaning to the riddle of life and through the grace of God is allowed to find religious conviction as well as the wood of the True Cross. These points are not consistent within the portrayal of her character.⁷¹

John Raymond's dissatisfaction with the content of the novel, however, is indicative of his inability to see Waugh's deft artistry in developing the plot along the line of Helena's development.

A Christian saint and empress is not perhaps the most suitable theme for a satirist who is irrevocably on the side of the angels.⁷²

Like him, the correspondent of the Time complained that not only Helena but even Brideshead Revisited was an unfortunate aberration from Waugh's normal vein of satiric fiction and he hoped that Waugh would return to his so-called original style.

Several times in his writing life - in his study of Jesuit Edmund Campion, in 'Brideshead Revisited', and now in 'Helena' - Author Waugh has tried to clear the satiric brambles out of his literary field, and to plant in their stead the herb of grace. He has had no very impressive crop so far, but most Waugh's readers don't mind. They can be pretty sure another season will bring forth a bucketful of raspberries on the old Waugh briars.⁷³

Its unsympathetic response smacks of its obliviousness to the skilful portrayal of the relationship between religious change and progress in drawing the character of Helena.

The study of the novel's narrative pattern shows the consistent development in the character of Helena and also the discarding of any incident that may have weakened the framework. It would have in consequence detracted attention from the coherent development of the theme. A.A. De Vitis has, however, castigated the novel for its loose construction. He maintains:

Helena is more valid as an historical commentary and as an apology for Roman Catholicism than as a novel which creates an experience of life. The religious theme is, of course, the controlling one; but it does not sustain the characterization or the plot incidents. Individual scenes are sharply drawn- Fausta's murder, Constantine's sermon- but the elements of the novel remain disparate. The theology underlying the structure is too apparent - too dogmatic, if possible. The religious theme fights for prominence, and it achieves it at the expense of art.⁷⁴

His argument ignores the pivotal role played by the imagery of the wheel of life in shaping the novelist's comic vision of life and also in endowing its aesthetic expression with structural cohesiveness. Most of the characters and episodes, as has been made clear from the preceding analysis, help in the movement of the plot from the dynamic fringes of the British and the Roman societies, represented in the wheel-imagery by the revolving wheel, to the immutable reality of Roman Catholicism, represented by the hub that both transcends the relativistic duality of the wheel and also supports its existence. Dr. F.J. Stopp has rightly appreciated the movement of the plot along the thematic line of intention which culminates in Helena's supreme act.

But the special interest of this book is that, by choosing as the central character one about whose life almost nothing else is known but this one supreme, final and yet constitutive act, the author has a clear field in which to build up the total rounded picture of a life and a social and historical setting whose every line of development converges on to that point.⁷⁵

David Lodge's criticism²⁸ of the novel's structure springs out of according wrong priority to the themes inherent in

in this work. Though, the novel does intend 'to honor St. Helena, and through her to emphasize the historicity of the Incarnation and the common-sense reasonableness of Christian revelation',⁷⁶ but that is not its central theme and any attempt aimed at judging its structure by this yardstick is bound to mystify the nature of its plot and consequently, lower Waugh's mastercraftsmanship in it. The theme which structures the all controlling comic vision of life implicit in the novel is that through religious change alone can an individual hope to progress and resurrect life groaning in the grinding mill of the dynamic world. That Divine Grace is made to aid the intellectual efforts of the protagonist in achieving this change is because of the Roman Catholic nature of the religious change intended. Besides, in order that this theme may be plotted graphically, in the literal sense of the term, the protagonist has to be shown rejecting the dynamic world before she may realise the urgency of religious change. This calls for the portrayal of the world rejected. So if the novelist has indicted the world of the fourteenth century Roman Empire and the modern world, through the suggestive use of a modern prose style, he has not, by any means, eroded the impact of the comic vision of life conveyed through Waugh's concept of change and progress. Thus David Lodge's objection to the emphasis laid on the 'oblique comments on modern life', is also not justified.

The message contained in Helena's life regarding the achievement of progress through a religious change is made

more relevant to modern times by the use of a modern prose style which is nearer to modern man's pattern of thinking. Dr. Frederick J. Stopp⁷⁷ has offered another very interesting and plausible reason for its employment in narrating this 'venerable Christian story'. He argues that:

The alleged incongruity is in fact a congruity, that between the supernatural and the natural; and ... this is a problem which will always face the 'Catholic' novel.

A little later, he goes on to suggest:

Further reflection at a distance of time may succeed in revealing this incongruity as the key to Mr. Waugh's greatest success.

What he is trying to suggest can be understood more clearly in the light of the wheel-imagery which moulds the structure of this novel. The hub of the wheel of life, representative of Roman Catholicism, is an eternal reminder of the manifestation of the transcendental reality in the sense-reality. Thus it confirms the fact of the supernatural impinging on the natural, an idea basic to Roman Catholic theology. Harry Blamires has summed up this idea thus:

The conception of truth proper to the Christian mind is determined by the supernatural orientation of the Christian mind. When we Christians speak of "the great truths" of the Christian Faith, we mean especially those doctrines describing the meeting of the temporal and the eternal, doctrines testifying to a reality beyond our finite order, which has impinged upon that order and still impinges upon it; the doctrines of the Divine Creation, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

The choice of a 'natural' idiom for the 'supernatural' truth highlighted by Helena's discovery of the Cross is, thus, an admirable literary technique successfully made use of by Waugh.

Asked by Christopher Sykes about its artistic merit, Waugh grew eloquent and ecstatic, comparing it to the best ever done by T.S. Eliot, who shared his concern with the aesthetic expression of religious values in life.

'I think you mean T.S. Eliot. It's just as good as anything he can do. In prose I mean. You've never written anything so good. I don't think Graham Greene has or Tony Powell. It's far the best book I have ever written or ever will write. It's almost as good as Quennell'.⁷⁹

Waugh's enthusiasm is not as unjustified as Sykes considers it.⁸⁰ As an aesthetic expression of the novelist's concept of change and progress and an embodiment of his consequent sublime comic vision of life, the novel is without a parallel. The poetic brilliance with which Helena's progress from sterile paganism to meaningful Roman Catholicism has been foreshadowed and conveyed compels critical commendation. I, therefore, regard Helena as the best of all Waugh's novels.

THE SWORD OF HONOUR TRILOGY (1984):

Originally published as three novels, The Sword of Honour Trilogy⁸¹ (1984), is best amenable to critical scrutiny as one literary work. The aggregative study of the trilogy is feasible in view of the fact that it possesses not only one continuous narrative throughout but also one thematic pattern, which together make it one aesthetic whole. Once again the novelist expresses his comic vision of life in terms of his firm faith in the inverse relationship between secular change and progress and direct relationship between religious change and progress.

So oriented, the novelist has staged the action of this story against the backdrop of World War II. One is reminded of the warnings of the destabilisation of world order issued by Father Rothschild in Vile Bodies and also of the skirmishes beyond the out posts of secular civilisation, in novels like Black Mischief and Scoop. In all these novels, war symbolises the precipitation of order into disorder, rationality into irrationality, civility into barbarity and stability into instability. The wheel-of-life imagery, as always, helps in comprehending the significance of such a change. As the secular efforts of man for achieving progress rely on modernisation or the quickening of the pace of secular change, which manifests itself in a circular path on the wheel of life, human society, instead of coming

closer to the stability of the hub of the revolving wheel of life, pushes itself by doing so, father from that to the outermost orbit of the revolving wheel where the degree of its susceptibility to instability becomes perilously high. It is such an extreme situation that Waugh tries to present in the outbreak of World War II. As the outbreak of such a calamity conveys, in Waugh, both the idea of the futility of secular change and that of its decadence to the barbaric level of existence, portrayed in the two African novels, the enactment of the action of the trilogy during the turbulent times of war enables Waugh to depict on an epic plane the irrationality and disorder that plague the 'dynamic' society of modern man. But as it is an aesthetic work rather than a mere period-piece, it shows how man can extricate himself from the morass of dynamism by resurrecting his dead and sterile spiritual life with the acceptance of a truly religious way of life, a step that would set him going on the linear path that leads to the stability of the hub of the revolving wheel of life. It is in this sense that the trilogy needs to be studied as a 'greater' or 'divine' comedy.

The man in whose life religious change and progress are exhibited is Guy Crouchback, the chief protagonist of this trilogy. Waugh's choice of the name is artistically significant as it reinforces with its rich associations and suggestions, the theme pursued in this work. Waugh's hero

reminds one of the stooped Don Quixote; the ineffectual Catholic conspirator, Guy Fawkes; and Christ, bowed under the Cross of the sin of human kind. Like Don Quixote, Guy is oblivious of the real nature of the world he has launched himself into and has therefore to suffer his apotheosis's fate as long as his ignorance persists. Besides, both plunge into the dynamic world armed with nothing but their obsolete static code of chivalry. Again, like the 'dynamic' Guy Fawkes, Crouchback does not succeed in avenging the loss of his personal honour in the act of his wife's desertion, by fighting for the honour of the endangered Christendom. It is, however, in the suggestion of the Christ, bowed under the Cross, that Evelyn Waugh announces the significance of his life. Like Christ, Guy Crouchback willingly takes up the cross of Virginia's sins when he agrees to father her child by Trimmer. Just as Christ did so in the face of public ignominy, he too does so in spite of the loss of face involved in it. So with the usage of such a name for his central character, Waugh prepares us for the various stages of Guy's progress to the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Men at Arms (1952), the first novel occurring in the trilogy, presents Guy Crouchback in the style of the highly comic Don Quixote. However, when the novel begins, we find Guy, a disillusioned person as his sense of personal honour has been wounded by the desertion of his coquettish wife, Virginia Troy. The degree of her 'dynamism' can be gauged

from her knack of changing her husbands and paramours so constantly that she has become the very epitome of inconstancy in human relations. Faith in Protestantism helps her as it allows unbridled freedom to the expression of her unrestrained individuality. In this respect, she bears a faint resemblance to Shakespeare's Cleopatra who is the unrivalled queen of inconstancy and caprice. Guy Crouchback, on the other hand, is a static character who with his blinding faith in the outdated chivalric code of morality is no match for her. Like Paul, Adam, William Boot and Tony Last, he is fit only for the life of the 'stands'. From there he can watch unhurt the acrobatics of dynamic characters on the revolving wheel of life. His marriage with Virginia, like that of Tony Last with Brenda, is a mistake as it exposes him to the fate that a static person has to suffer when he steps rashly on the revolving wheel of life where he can scarcely balance himself for long. No wonder then that Guy flies to the secluded life of Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce after suffering a reverse at the hands of his dynamic wife, Virginia. In Italy, he is not a sympatico for the obvious reason that while the Italians, brimming with vitality, live in the midst of the world of change, Guy keeps aloof from it. Thus when the war breaks out Guy is living on the border of life, nursing his wounded personal honour.

The outbreak of World War II offers Guy an opportunity of avenging the loss of his sense of personal honour in the

act of killing and exposing himself also to the risk of death just as Yeats' Irish Airman does in An Irish Airman Foresees his Death. The Russo-German pact has endangered the entire Christendom by its much too aggressive postures. These two countries appear to Guy as projections of the Modern Age in arms and the sighting of the enemy gives him as great a satisfaction as his grand-parents had when they could consummate their love at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce. Guy's decision to protect the honour of his country and that of the entire Christendom is not only an illusion fostered by the static code of his chivalric and rational attitude to life but also a device with which he can camouflage his real 'dynamic' intention of justifying his manhood in the war. It draws him into the vortex of dynamic world for the line of distinction that he draws between the champions of the Christian cause and the infidels hardly exists. War in Waugh, as has been suggested earlier also, is an expression of the unbridled irrationality and barbarity of mankind. No degree of secular efforts towards modernisation has been able to crush it. If the man living in the jungle makes an unabashed show of his barbarity, the man in the city attires it in urbane guile. Waugh calls both these sets of people 'dynamic' rightly as the 'dynamic' world is characterised by these traits. Guy's crusade is bound to be abortive as it ignores the reality of the situation. This accounts for Guy's disillusionment and comic ineffectuality. But Guy transcends these feelings as

he is much more than an ineffective Don Quixote. Participation in the war proves beneficial to him in so far as it makes him wiser about himself and the world; into which he has launched himself. Guy realises not only the inadequacy of a rational and chivalric outlook on life but also the utter irrationality and valuelessness of the dynamic world. This saves him from the retrogressive step that William Boot takes in Scoop and he embarks instead on the odyssey of spiritual regeneration by dedicating himself to the true spirit of Christianity revealed to him by his sagacious father, Gervase Crouchback.

Guy's ineffectuality in the dynamic world and the trend of his future progress on the path of religious transformation is suggested beautifully by the subtle parallel evoked in the mention of Sir Roger of Waybroke, the English saint at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce. Before leaving for England, to join the war, Guy seeks his blessings by touching his sword. Sir Roger of Waybroke too had started from his home in England on a crusade to liberate the Holy land of Jerusalem from the control of the heathens. But as fate would have it, he never reached there. He died, instead, while fighting for a robber-baron, who had saved his life. Seen from the angle of the dynamic world, his mission was unsuccessful and abortive. But looking at his end from the Christian angle, one realises that he proved himself worthy of being God's chosen one by refusing to yield to

the temptation of deserting his Italian saviour in order to earn for himself the fame of a crusader. Sir Roger was humble enough not to spurn the opportunity of proving himself useful to his benefactor by even performing, in comparison with the noble crusading cause, an insignificant act of fighting for him against his foe. The people of Santa Dulcine Delle Rocce have, therefore, rightly cannonised him as a saint. By seeking Sir Roger's blessings, Cuy, in a way, is asking for his guidance in leading him away from the dynamic world, into which Guy has plunged himself, towards the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Intimations of his folly come to him ever since he lands in Britain. He finds that no one is really sincere about the war, as he is. The first place he visits upon his arrival in England is that of his sister, Angela who is married to Box-Bender, a Protestant M.P. Unlike Guy, Angela's husband considers war the right time to increase one's income and savings. He, therefore, has no qualms about making money during war. In this sense, he represents the low level of politicking and profiteering in British society. His son, Tony, who has joined the war narrates incidents of irresponsible soldiering and licentiousness in the barracks. Guy's romantic picture of a nation dedicated to upholding the banner of Christendom hardly tallies with the spectacle they present.

However, removed from this dynamic flock of people in Britain is the saintly old Mr. Gervase Crouchback. Though he has been a witness to many a calamity in his family like the madness of Ivo, his son; the death of Gervase, his other son, in the war; and the economic decline of the family; he has kept his cool and remained steadfast in his devotion to God.

“
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 over-loaded with misfortune. He had many like another been born in full sunlight and lived to see night fall. England was full of such Jobs who had been disappointed in their prospects.⁸²

The comparison with Job plays up old Mr. Crouchback's unswerving trust in God despite all material hardships. Notwithstanding his pride in his family - which he, however, keeps to himself - he is 'quite without class consciousness' which is but natural for so sincere a Christian. Helena had similarly felt one with the multitude in the Christian sense of being one with the entire 'believing' humanity in the Mystical Body of Christ. He thus dwells on the hub of the revolving wheel of life, which alone can help man to detach himself from the delusion of secular progress induced by the relativistic duality of the dynamic plane of existence. Commenting on his character, Frank Kermode rightly observes:

Royal Corp of Halberdiers as a probationary officer. The former is not at all disturbed by his son's desire to expose himself to the peril of almost certain death in World War II. What he is concerned about, instead, is Guy's spiritual welfare. That is why, he gives Guy Gervase's sacred medal of Our Lady of Lourdes before his departure. The medal had protected Gervase from sin when he was on the point of being seduced by a loose woman. She too could not escape the sobering effect of the medal. This further makes it clear that Guy, if he is to progress, must tread the path that leads towards an outlook on life symbolised by his father.

However, before he may embark on the linear path of progress, he must realise the folly of seeking a justification for his personal honour in the dynamic world which necessitates his understanding of the corruption in thought and action in the dynamic world. Guy can do so only when he steps out of his adolescence which holds him back from gaining any mature insight into the world of barbarity around him. The irresponsible and gay abandon of army life help Guy in coming of age. It is from this angle that the narration of Guy's school-boy pranks and quarrels gain significance. The regiment in which he serves is billeted in a school where "the preparatory school way of life was completely recreated". Ironically enough, Guy receives his first war-wound in the shape of an injury while playing football. It is here that a school-boy war

rages between Brigadier Ritchie Hook and Apthorpe, Guy's middle aged companion-in-arms, over the 'thunder-box' a chemically operated portable field latrine. Christopher Sykes has objected to the inclusion of this horse play on so elaborate a scale. He observes:

Evelyn gave sixteen pages to the adventure of Apthorpe's 'Thunder-Box'. The joke, even to those who relish lavatory-jokes, becomes wearisome through repetition.⁸⁵

Considered independently, Sykes' objection stands. But when examined from the point of view of the novel's thematic line of intention, it does not for the lavatory-joke, however offensive it may be to refined and cultured tastes, is here put in as an adolescent game for the delight and ultimate development of Guy out of the adolescent phase of life.

If Apthorpe comes to represent one adolescent myth for Guy, Brigadier Ritchie comes to stand for another. A veteran of World I, Ritchie Hook takes immense pleasure in 'biffing' the enemy. Guy's admiration for him is revealed in his whole-hearted approval of Ritchie Hook's reckless adventure of Dakar landing. In the words of A.A. De Vitis, 'The mission is a culmination of boyhood dreams of high adventure'.⁸⁶ Guy imagines himself playing the role of Truslove in embarking on this perilous adventure. Inspired by the destructive capability of Ritchie Hook, his 'dynamic' ideal, Guy brings back the chopped off head of a negro-

sentry which he presents quite rightly to this symbol of destruction. As a result of this misadventure, Guy has his military career blotted and is recalled to England to face an inquiry.

The futility of the 'dynamic' mode of existence is driven home to Guy in the forestalling of an operation everytime the men prepare for one. After an initial period of training, the Halberdiers keep on shifting from one probable place of war to another. The prospect of war fills the bosoms of the new officers, including that of Guy, with enthusiasm. But every time, their joining the war-front is put off, it creates a sense of ennui and listlessness among them. The pointless change of places lends an air of absurdity to the entire war effort. Their movement describes a circular course similar to that of Adam Fenwick Symes in Vile Bodies (1930).

The invasion of Finland compels Guy to take a fresh look at the war. Contrary to the dismal picture painted by the Catholic priest of the tin-church, Guy, soon after joining the army, had thought it a time of glory and dedication.

The priest was a recent graduate from Maynooth who had little enthusiasm for the Allied cause or for the English army, which he regarded merely as a provocation to immorality in the town. His sermon that morning was not positively offensive; there was nothing in it to make the basis of a complaint; but when he spoke of 'this terrible time of doubt, danger and suffering in which we live', Guy stiffened. It was a time of glory and dedication.⁸⁷

But now Guy feels otherwise. Though no one at Kut-al-Imara is affected by this invasion, Guy is. His earlier certitude about the nature of war abandons him now. Waugh writes:

No one at Kut-al-Imara 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.⁸⁸

Guy is confronted with the irrationality and savage self-expression of the dynamic characters inhabiting the world of constant change. As the circular motion of the revolving wheel of life also suggests, the dynamic mode of existence is wanting in a logical movement; the only motion it knows is temporal. In order that Guy may progress, he must extricate himself from the material concerns of a secular world whose change is counter productive, instead of being progressive. The ultimate comic vision of life in Waugh derives its strength from such revelations. Not long before this disaster Poland had been invaded by Russia without even any protest from Britain. The sight of the Christian states being allowed to slip into the communist hold disconcerts Guy as it is a betrayal of all principles that had inspired Guy to fight for England.

Coupled with the growing disenchantment with the politics of the dynamic world is Guy's increasing awareness of his religious shortcomings. In the initial stage, he realises that he has stopped saying his prayers ever

since his joining the army. Providence only saves him from a deadly sin he is on the verge of committing with his former wife, Virginia. Convinced by Mr. Goodall's deceptive suggestion that there was no harm in the cohabitation of a divorced Catholic couple, Guy launches on a course of action which is both preposterous and humiliating. Guy has for long ceased to think of Virginia as his wife. Resuming sexual relations with her would be no less than committing adultery - Waugh uses the expression, 'auspicious pseudo-adultery' - as such a union would be restricted only to the bodies, their souls being unaffected. It is only after his attempt aborts that he realises the grave sin he was about to commit.

Waugh develops further the idea of irrationality in 'the' 'dynamic' world in the lop-sided working of the counter-espionage department which opens a file on the patriotic Guy on the basis of an inadequate and insignificant piece of evidence. His past antecedents are held in suspicion and a nexus, which in reality does not exist, is established between him and Box-Bender, his brother-in-law.

'But Crouchback's quite another fish. Until September of last year he lived in Italy and is known to have been on good terms with the Fascist authorities. Don't you think I'd better open a file for him?'

'Yes, perhaps it would be as well'.

'For both, sir?'

'Yes, Pop'em all in'.⁸⁹

With this summary trial in absentia, Colonel Grace-Groundling- Marchpole labels the patriotic Guy, a fascist. Such decisions were not uncommon during World War II. D.H. Lawrence whose wife happened to be a German was harassed much for the possible recovery of any incriminating document by the British police, during the war. Waugh himself was the scapegoat of such bear-baiting, though not by the police, but by his literary and journalistic detractors. In his reply to a query regarding which side he would support in the Spanish civil war, he had, after suggesting the impossibility of such a hard choice, declared his support for the government of General Franco, but only in comparison with that of the communists, for the simple reason that anarchic government is better than an irreligious and a wholly lop-sided government. A distortion of it helped them prove Waugh's fascist inclinations. Waugh thus makes fun of such subverters of the rules of logic.

Men At Arms (1952) concludes with Guy Crouchback's return to England as a partially disenchanted and disgraced soldier from Dakar. So it scarcely traces Guy's complete detachment from the result of the war and his religious transfiguration which alone can ensure true progress. This gives the novel an air of incompleteness, if examined independently. This accounts for Waugh's own lukewarm attitude to this work, as is revealed in his letters. In his letter to Nancy Mitford, he observes:

I have finished that novel - slogging, inelegant, boring - and what little point it has will only be revealed in the fourth volume at least four years hence. Still there were some dunderheads who didn't appreciate Helena. Perhaps they will like it.⁹⁰

Again in his letter of 8 January 1951 (1952) to Clarissa Churchill, Waugh writes:

I have finished a novel - slogging, inelegant, the first volume of four or five, which won't show any shape until the end.⁹¹

Still again, in his letter of 1 September 1952 to Ann Fleming, Waugh reiterates his belief that the book must be read in conjunction with the volumes that follow for a proper appreciation of its value.

The kindest way is to regard it as the first comic turn of a long musical-hall show, put on to keep the audience quiet as they are taking their seats. If I ever finish writing, and if anyone ever reads, the succession of volumes that I plan to follow it, it will make some sense.⁹²

Unaware of this fact, Diana Cooper evaluated the novel as an aesthetically complete expression of the author's view point and consequently felt disenchanted with its literary merit. 'I thought', she told Evelyn, 'that you were going to give us a modern War and Peace, but it's much more like Mrs. Dale's Diary'.⁹³ John Raymond's analysis also suffers from an ignorance of the novel's introductory character. He is unable to grasp the real theme of progress through religious change when he observes:

Like every satirist at a loss for prey, the writer has made a temporary excursus into Myth. Mr. Waugh's myth ... is the English regimental tradition in 1940.⁹⁴

That the novel's inconclusiveness owes to its incompleteness as a work of art has, however, been rightly perceived by Christopher Sykes who observes:

The partial failure of the book was due to a familiar error of which Evelyn judging by his letter to Nancy Mitford, seems to have been partly aware; his writing was never amenable to publication by instalments, a large instalment of a very long book but an instalment nonetheless.⁹⁵

Though Delmore Schwartz has been able to guess what the novel is about, he has done so in the wrong manner. He maintains:

Waugh appears to be saying to the reader : I see the stupidity, foolishness and triviality of human beings just as much you do, but I draw a different conclusion; human beings are ridiculous without religious belief and they are just as ridiculous when they are possessed by religious belief, but at least when they are truly religious, they have a touching pathetic, bewildered quality which makes possible a little comparison amid one's overwhelming contempt.⁹⁶

While Waugh finds people without any religious beliefs ridiculous, he does not think the religious minded so, especially those who have comprehended the true essence of Christianity. The former are rendered ridiculous because of their inability to understand the futility manifest in the circular nature of secular change.

But the latter are not as they are coolly poised at the hub of the wheel of life where they are liberated from the deception of secular change. If Guy Crouchback looks ridiculous in this novel, it is because he has yet not outgrown his static personality which stands in the way of his understanding the nature of the dynamic world and also in his acceptance of the humble religious path of progress and honour. Thus the comic vision of life that grows in this novel is incomplete and far from clear.

Despite its introductory character, the novel suffers from one serious blemish. It pays much more attention to Apthorpe than Guy Crouchback, the chief protagonist of the novel. In fact, all the three sections are named after him. In the biography of Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Sykes observes rightly:

Its admirers were chiefly attracted by the character Apthorpe who threatened to become the protagonist of the story.⁹⁷

In fact, Waugh for once, himself seems to be in doubt about who the actual hero of the novel is. In the letter of 23 January (1952) to Lady Mary Lygon, he writes:

I have written a book in poor taste, mostly about WCs and very very dull. Well it is a dull subject isn't it. The only exciting moment is when a WC blows up with Capt. Apthorpe sitting on it. The shock & shame drive him mad. He is the hero.⁹⁸

Officers and Gentlemen (1955), the second novel occurring in the trilogy, opens with a grim and devastating picture of war-torn London. The end of man's secular efforts, directed towards secular progress, lies naked in the form of death and destruction. Such a life is really a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. London is being reduced to rubble by the German war-planes. Places of festivity have become the funeral pyres of helpless humanity. The phoney war is over and the barbarity of the jungle has at last hemmed in the pseudo-civilised centres of humanity. The savagery of Seth's Azania or for that matter, Jacksons' Ishmaelia, fades into insignificance before this picture of wilful genocide. It is to such a London that Guy returns.

The mercurial Ritchie Hook, like Captain Grimes, not only saves himself from the framing up but also gets his admirer, Guy Crouchback, acquitted. In the absence of any particular official assignment, Guy performs an act of piety towards the deceased Apthorpe. The latter had asked him to trace Chatty Corner and hand over his gear to him. The interest with which he searches Apthorpe's legatee shows the change that has come over him. Guy does not mind caring for Apthorpe's gear, even though it hardly deserves his attention. Only after discovering Chatty Corner does he rest.

Along with Guy's growing humility and piety, Christian virtues, is his declining interest in the war. Once again, Waugh drives home the idea of futility manifest in the dynamic way of life when he describes how army exercises are planned and abandoned. Posted at the Isle of Mugg as a commando, Guy along with other fellow soldiers waits for the ship that has to take them near a Mediterranean island to be captured by them. The promised ship does not appear for days together so that officers and men lose all hopes of ever seeing it and wish they were back with their regiments. Waugh describes the rise and fall of their hopes thus

This unvarying cycle of excitement and disappointment rubbed them bare of paint and exposed the lead beneath.⁹⁹

The comparison with the circular motion of a ship on a rough sea recalls the image of the wheel of life. The wheel, as it revolves, brings on a semblance of progress. But when its circular motion brings the man standing on it back to his original position, the illusion is shattered. In other words, dynamic mode of life cannot promise hope and progress but only despair and sterility. That quickening of the pace of the wheel of dynamic life only brings man back to his original position sooner is driven home in the abruptness with which military plans keep on changing. In the passage that follows Ian Kilbannock tells

Guy how many operations have been planned and then abandoned before even any one got scant of them.

(Guy): 'There was some loose talk about an island'.

(Ian): 'Operation Bottleneck? That was off weeks ago. Since then there's been Operation Quick sand and Operation Mousetrap. They're both off. It's Operation Badger now, of course'.

(Guy): 'And what is that?'

(Ian): 'If you don't know, I oughtn't to tell you'.

(Guy): 'Too late to go back now'.

(Ian): 'Well, frankly it's simply Quicksand under another name'.¹⁰⁰

The entire exercise of planning and re-planning looks ridiculous in view of the fact that it lacks a progressive character. Waugh appears to be saying that all secular efforts meet with the same fate.

While the constant planning and putting off of plans discourages Guy, the bloodshed and utter chaos that accompanies the Crete expedition appals him. The army which to an outsider gives the appearance of an ordered organisation is so only as long as it is under orders. The moment it is relieved of orders, it becomes disorderly and unruly. The Crete expedition plays up the disorder and disobedience to authority that is rampant in any secular organisation which has order superimposed upon it. Once the German war plans start hunting and decimating the British soldiers, chaos breaks out. In the scramble for the safety of their lives, Darwinian struggle for survival gets graphically

portrayed. Rank loses significance. The officers suspect their men who in turn suspect their superiors. Authority is undermined and in the forced state of equality, soldiers do not hesitate in rebelling against their superiors. Sometimes, they even murder the latter. The animalistic spirit that possesses them is best presented in the person of Corporal Major Ludovic. Before and while escaping from Crete in a boat, he kills two soldiers, one of them being Major Hound, his superior. Ivor Claire, the man in whom Guy had reposed all his trust of giving the Germans a tough fight, shows his back. The nightmarish picture of war presented here is perhaps one of the best among the novels that have come out of World War II. Though Guy makes good his escape, his psyche is substantially damaged as a result of this catastrophe. This foreshadows Guy's rejection of secular change as a means to progress and his consequent religious transformation.

While efforts are on to restore Guy to normalcy, the news of Russia's alliance with Britain is flashed. This changes the hue of the confrontation. Earlier, the war-camps were divisible ideologically. While the British and the other allies were Christians, the Germans and Russians were heathens. With this new pact, the rational distinction between the friend and the foe gets completely blurred. Political considerations gain ground at the expense of the religious, a fact which is not unnatural in the essentially secular dynamic world. Guy, who has

been unaware of this fact and has consequently been fighting under the impression that it is a religious war, is unnerved by it. His illusion about the nature of the world, he has jumped into, is shattered. He realises that the crusade upon which he had embarked does not exist. It is simply a figment of his mind.

Now that hallucination was dissolved, like the whales and turtles on the voyage from Crete, and he was back after less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world, where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led blundering into dishonour.¹⁰¹

The new alliance is, however, in keeping with the socialist mood that was then sweeping over England. The movement in favour of the common people and against the landed gentry was exaggerated to the point of absurdity in the suggestion that the upper classes stood for fascism. So when Ian tells Guy that this is a People's War, he intends to suggest that this is a war not only against fascism but also against the upper classes. What happens, as a result of the obsession with having people's heroes rather than gentlemen heroes is that a nondescript and undeserving fraud like Trimmer shoots into prominence. Trimmer's success, as opposed to the defeat of many deserving soldiers, highlights the injustice that has crept into the fabric of dynamic world, at every level.

It also brings home the idea of the difference between an unjust People's War and the chivalrous crusades of the past. By castigating the People's War, Waugh, however, does not show any predilection for chivalry as it is an institution which is unreal in the context of the world of change. Guy's disillusionment with it is a case in point. What Waugh is therefore trying to say is that Guy must bid farewell to war and army in order that he may seek his salvation in the real terms of Christianity which is not only an epitome of truth but also a true dispenser of justice.

Had Waugh abandoned the trilogy here as he himself declared in the foreword to the first edition of this novel and in the letter of 16 Nov. 1954, written to Nancy Mitford¹⁰², the entire work would have suffered the fate of a literary fragment, inviting, as a consequence, misleading interpretations of the theme pursued. As Christopher Wykes has rightly remarked:

The foreword was a great mistake. If it had been a statement of the fact; if Sword of Honour had indeed ended with this second volume, then it would not have been a work to enhance Evelyn's literary reputation. Too many loose ends would have remained; the full intention would have been but vaguely discernible; it would have but been remembered as a minor specimen ... among those works of art which perplex and fascinate us quia imperfectum.¹⁰³

Among the critics who perceived its incompleteness was Geoffrey Moore. Observing the 'tangle of loose threads'

in the plot, he contended very rightly against Waugh's assertion that it and Men At Arms could 'form a whole'.¹⁰⁴ Other critics, however, chose to assess them as a whole. Cyril Connolly felt 'disappointed' as he found the characters 'too superficial to sustain the structure'.¹⁰⁵ Only Norman Shrapnel suggested subtly that

Disorganisation is more than merely a subject for his fierce brand of farce; it is an expression of spiritual perversity.¹⁰⁶

The other voice of appreciation was that of Kingley Amis who appears not to have read the foreword carefully. He looked forward to 'the continuation of this saga' in order that 'the discursive and episodic' elements of the plot may fall in the right pattern.¹⁰⁷

One may, however, ask why Waugh issued such a declaration, knowing fully well its adverse impact on the theme he was pursuing. Or was it a statement of Waugh's declining artistic abilities? The answer is provided by the conversation between Graham Greene and Waugh, recorded in the former's review of the Diaries.

I had asked him why there was no indication on the dust-wrapper of 'Officers & Gentlemen' that a third volume of the trilogy was to come. He said, "I'm not sure that I'll be able to write it. I may go off my head again, and this time permanently".¹⁰⁸

Waugh's joy in being fit enough to start the third novel is, therefore, understandable. In the letter of 5 September 1960 to Ann Fleming, Waugh writes:

I am busily & happily at work on a sequel to those two war novels I wrote. The trouble is that it is quite unintelligible to anyone who doesn't know them by heart. I have to keep dipping into them to find what I wrote seven or eight years ago. Otherwise it is a gripping tale. 109

That the decision to terminate the trilogy was taken solely because of the author's failing health and not because of Waugh's ignorance of the need of the final and culminating novel in the trilogy becomes clear from what he wrote after having written the third novel.

In 1950 I wrote of Officers and Gentlemen. "I thought at first the story would run into three volumes. I find that two will do the trick". This was not quite candid. I knew that a third volume was needed. 110

The novel, Unconditional Surrender (1961), opens with the exhibition of the 'state sword', an expensive gift of the people of Britain to "the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad", near 'the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and the sacring place of the kings of England'. That this sword is a symbol of the perversion of sacred Christian values represented by Sir Roger of Waybroke's sword is suggested by its reverse position: 'the escutcheon on the scabbard will be upside down when worn on a baldric'. It is therefore ironical that this sword which is an

image of political expediency and barbarity let loose in the dynamic world, should have been offered a place so close to a shrine and more than that, worshipped. Ludovic, who is thoroughly steeped in the destructive spirit of this pseudo-civilised world does not hesitate in having a close look at it in order that he may celebrate its ignoble glory in a poem for a literary competition. Guy, on the other hand, refuses to pay homage to this symbol of dishonour and destruction for by giving away their 'state sword' to a heathen nation, Britain was dishonouring its Christian heritage and cause. Guy's refusal to be drawn into this dishonourable war is aptly and subtly suggested by his aversion for the 'state sword'. It marks an end of his love affair with the army and psychological association with the dynamic world that has gone berserk.

The association with Guy Fawkes here becomes prominent. Just as Guy Fawkes had failed in his mission of dethroning Queen Elizabeth and installing the Catholic Mary, Crouchback has failed in defending the endangered Christendom from heathen forces as years of secularisation have eclipsed the Christian outlook of the pseudo-christian societies of the west.

Disillusioned with the irrational ways of the dynamic world, Guy sulks in the absence of an alternative ideal that can redefine an otherwise wasted life. Old Mr. Crouchback reads it on his face and is worried, as before, about his spiritual welfare. Earlier, he had given him a sacred medal for the purpose. This time, he offers an advice that acts as a catalyst in achieving a drastic change in Guy's perception of the world and the individual's role in it. In his letter to Guy, Old Mr. Crouchback writes; though in the contest of the Lateran Treaty.

Quantitative judgements don't apply. If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of face. 111

In Mr. Crouchback's opinion, honour is to be measured not by worldly standards but by the Christian ones, which at times may entail a 'loss of face' in this world of change. Guy discovers that a person can justify his life and honour not only by fighting for the defence of the entire Christendom, which due to the growing secularisation set in by man's disregard for and ignorance of the eternal Christian perspective has sunk to a level beyond redemption, but also by saving at least one soul from an otherwise certain damnation. It is this movement from illusion to reality that lies at the heart of Evelyn Waugh's greater comedies which contain his sublime comic vision of life. The Evelyn Waugh protagonist rises like a phoenix from the ashes of a sterile 'dynamic' life to

fly to the all-embracing and eternal truth of the Roman Catholic hub of life. The graph of his progress from illusion to truth is, therefore, linear and not circular. Such an opportunity offers itself in the shape of Virginia's illegitimate child by Trimmer. If Guy does not accept Virginia as his wife, the child shall not only be born a bastard but also a foreigner to the Grace of God. If he does, the child shall be saved but Guy himself shall lose face in the society. Guy agrees to undergo personal humiliation for the sake of redeeming the nascent life in the shape of little Trimmer. This is in shining contrast with his past motives in possessing Virginia. Secular considerations such as the perpetuation of the family line with a son of his own fade into insignificance before the religious ones. By emulating his father Mr. Crouchback who himself is a spiritual elite, in the true sense of the word, Guy has not only discovered, to use Jeffrey Heath's term, his 'vocation', but has also raised himself to a pedestal near that of his father. In other words, Guy has started seeing life from the sub specie aeternitatis angle of the hub of the revolving wheel of life.

Bernard Bergonzi appears to be oblivious of this change in Guy's perspective, when he suggests:

... Guy Crouchback embodies the nostalgic myth of so much of Mr. Waugh's writing, the notion that true value lies in a combination of Catholicism and the aristocratic virtues.¹¹²

His suggestion, similar to that of Donat O Donnell, disregards how Guy willingly undergoes public humility, and even forgoes his family pride in the act of accepting Trimmer's child. V.S. Prichett's defence almost admits the presence of class-snobbery in Waugh and thus is equally unjustifiable. He maintains:

, To object to his snobbery is as futile as objecting to cricket, for every summer the damn game comes round again whether you like it or not. 113

An extension of Guy's newly discovered 'vocation' is the help he extends to the Jews trapped in Yugoslavia. Posted as a Liaison Officer there, he does his best to help them get out of the communist controlled country. The persecution of the Jews, a subject quite ancient in human history and glaringly particular during World War II, fills Guy with pity for them, even though they are not Christians. This should be a case in point for those who have accused Waugh repeatedly of being exclusively Catholic in his art. Guy's efforts do not yield fruit for a long time as the air-lifting of the Jews is repeatedly put off because of bad weather. Even when most of them find their way out, the Kanyis do not as they are executed for their closeness to Guy. This is the little task that Guy could perform in the service of God and he does not flinch in doing it. This shows the level of humanity that he has come to embody ever since his adherence to his father's

advice. Guy's firm pursuit of his Catholic ideals stands in shining contrast with his previous comic capers when he sought to justify his own and the secularised Christendom's honour by taking to a 'dynamic' mode of existence. He ceases to be an anti-hero and he assumes the stature of grand comic heroes as Henry in The Family Reunion.

While Guy has surrendered himself unconditionally to the Divine Will, the other characters in the novel have submitted themselves to the soul-grinding speed of the wheel of irrational world of change. It is on the crest of such a change that Ludovic rises to the rank of a Major and even becomes the Commandant of a Parachute Training Centre where Guy comes as a trainee officer. The appearance of Guy disturbs his peace. He feels haunted by Guy's awareness of the double murders he had committed during the Cretan retreat. Fleeing from his past, he first shuts himself up in his room during Guy's training and later at the end of the war, leaves England for good, buying Guy's Castello at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce to stay there for ever. He thus becomes a mental wreck. Ludovic's decision to quit England plays up, in terms of the imagery of the wheel of life, his decision to quit the constantly revolving wheel, representative of the world of secular change, and take a seat in the stands. It is a regressive step as it leads him from a dynamic state of existence, however vile and futile, to a static one. Meanwhile, he has also a book published. It is

entitled 'Death Wish'. 'Way back in 1924, Waugh had perceived such a fatalistic attitude among the youth of his own generation. In "A Letter of Exhortation from an Undergraduate to a Friend Abroad", he observes:

You know, Bill, what we want is another war. I become more and more convinced of that every day. These tiresome historians always find causes for their wars in national expansion and trade rivalry and religion and such things. I don't know about these because, as you know, I am never up in time to read the newspapers, but I gather from those who do that things are pretty unsettled we have a great body of young men of all sorts of education just longing for another general disturbance.¹¹⁴

A little ahead in the same letter, he expresses the willingness of these young men to fight for any institution or party that would pay them handsomely and offer them a good chance of speedy death'.¹¹⁵ Ludovic's book thus serves to draw attention towards the death-wish that had possessed the minds of the people in the conflagration of war. Indeed, Waugh repeatedly shows in his works the extent of irrationality and barbarity in the secular world of change.

Virginia's life, in contrast, after suffering a long and suffocating dip in the ocean of sin, buoys up with Guy's help. In her ability to change her husbands, she is the very picture of inconstancy. But the affair with Trimmer after exulting her for a while torments her. He not only dins into her ears his repetitive 'You, you, you' but also impregnates her with his child. When she

is unable to get rid of the nascent life within her womb, she tries to deceive Guy into marrying her again. But Guy's willingness to accept Trimmer's child soon changes her. She becomes a Catholic before remarrying him. Her death as a Catholic therefore guarantees the descent of Grace of God upon her as in Lord Marchmain's case. The linear graph of her life once again reveals the nature of Evelyn Waugh's sublime comic attitude to a life that has been christianised.

Acting upon his father's desire that he should stay at Broome after his death, Guy sells the property in Italy and raises a family of his own with Domenica Plessington at Broome. Waugh deleted the happy ending in the succeeding edition of this book as he felt it detracted attention from the novel's real thematic line of intention. His letter dated 31 October 1961, to Anthony Powell makes this explicit. It reads:

I am disconcerted to find I have given the general impression of a 'happy ending'. This was far from my intention. The mistake was allowing Guy legitimate offspring. They shall be deleted in any subsequent edition. I thought it more ironical that there should be real heirs of the Blessed Gervase Crouchback dispossessed by Trimmer but I plainly failed to make that clear. So no nippers for Guy & Domenica in Penguin.¹¹⁶

Most critics interpreted the perpetuation of Guy's own family line in his two children by Domenica as a sign of

Waugh's concern with making Guy comfortable not only spiritually but also materially. Box-Bender's envy over Guy's own progeny was cited as an evidence of this intention. The second edition rectifies the happy ending by leaving Guy issueless by his marriage with Domenica Plessington. This leaves little Trimmer, an outsider, the sole heir to the impeccable family name of the Crouchbacks. Besides, it redeems the evaluation of Guy's progress to the hub of the wheel of life from any material or secular criteria. The second-home coming of Guy is markedly different from the earlier one. While earlier, he had come as a static person, unaware of the dark nature of the dynamic world that is spreading out like a wild fire in the opportune time of war, he now returns for good as a spiritual elite wise in the sub specie aeternitatis wisdom of the Roman Catholic hub of the revolving wheel of life. In other words, the native has returned home from a self-imposed exile. Waugh has, thus, successfully steered the development of Guy Crouchback from the time he was an ineffectual Don Quixote or Guy Fawkes to the time when he becomes the sagacious Christ bent under the Cross of humanity's sin. To those who view the story of his life from a secular angle, it is a tragedy. But to those who view it from the eternal perspective of Roman Catholicism, it is a magnificent and 'divine' comedy. Indeed, the pattern of Waugh's greater comedy is somewhat similar to

that of Eliot. Eliot's chief protagonists also achieve epiphany or resurrection the way Guy does. Waugh therefore succeeds, like Eliot, in showing that abiding progress is possible only through religious change.

Bernard Bergonzi's contention that 'the defeat and disillusion of Guy Crouchback seems to indicate the total collapse of Mr Waugh's dominating myth'¹¹⁷ is hardly substantiated by the change Guy undergoes in the trilogy. So far as the matter of 'myth' is concerned, it has already been shown that it does not exist at all in Waugh. What he is trying to say, in fact, is that Guy's disillusion and despair is a sign of his submission to the modern world.

... the modern world has triumphed, and the implications of the book's title are everywhere apparent.¹¹⁸

In saying that he overlooks the fact that Guy's disillusion grows out of the irrationality and madness of the modern world. Besides, far from submitting to it he rejects it as he refuses to have any truck with its unjust battles and chooses, instead, the transcendental reality of Christianity.

Christopher Derrick has, however, rightly observed the graph of Guy's gradual progress towards the status of a spiritual elite when he says:

... the Italian peasants canonised the English knight, and we can provisionally make a kind of saint out of Guy, whom we leave at the end of the trilogy restored like Job to something better than his former condition, the heavenly visitation over and done with, the sacrifice accepted in tongues of fire, the books balanced, the past still there to be lived with.¹¹⁹

But he falls into the booby-trap of the happy ending and mistakes Waugh's intentions in giving precedence to the spiritual over the material considerations of evaluating human progress.

Similar mistake is committed by Simon Raven who in spite of not being oblivious to the progressive course of Guy's life,

... now as three years ago it still seems to me that Mr. Waugh brings Crouchback's pilgrimage to a legitimate goal; private salvation through private good faith.¹²⁰

suggests, wrongly, that an acceptance of Roman Catholicism entails the acceptance of the chivalric England, as well.

there is more than a suggestion that what Crouchback will righteously resist is not merely Nazism but the whole apparatus of modern and secular progress as promoting religious apostasy and social change - two calamities which Mr. Waugh does not, it is true, equate but sees as intimately connected.¹²¹

It may be asserted once again that an acceptance of the religious hub of life implies, in terms of the wheel
 // imagery, a rejection of all products of secular efforts, be it chivalry or modernism. The ultimate comic vision

of life in Evelyn Waugh steers away from this emphasis on the pursuit of secular progress which is shown to be deceptive and comically absurd.

Regarding Waugh basically as a satirist, Gore Vidal considers the affirmative aspect of Waugh's fiction, as revealed in this trilogy, no more than romantic day dreaming and hence a drag on him as a critic. He observes:

Waugh ... in the military trilogy, which The End of the Battle (the title of the American edition of Unconditional Surrender) completes, indulges himself in romantic day-dreams which are not only quite as unpleasant as the things he satirized, but tend in their silliness to undermine his authority as critic, Juvenal would not have made that mistake.¹²²

Far from indulging in romantic day-dreams, Waugh rejects them, a point that is clear enough in Guy's realisation of the inadequacy of the obsolete code of chivalry. Moreover, Waugh shows realism of par excellence when he makes his protagonist not only comprehend the deep rooted depravity in the dynamic world or the world of change but also withdraw from its concerns and steep himself instead in the realism of the religious hub of life, the Roman Catholic Church. So it is not Waugh but Juvenal who committed a mistake in not outgrowing a mere negative attitude in his artistic expressions.

Commenting on the trilogy, Christopher Sykes observes in Evelyn Waugh:

As hardly needs saying, after a long withdrawal from the subject and preoccupation with work of a different kind, Evelyn eventually and triumphantly finished the trilogy.¹²³

His appreciation owes to the perception that

In this work (Unconditional Surrender) Evelyn attempted to achieve a great ambition: to describe in terms of a fictional experience close to his own the significance to men and women of the ordeal of the crisis of the civilization which reached its climax in World War II.¹²⁴

Thereafter, he founds his critical opinion of the novel on this thematic approach.

Whether he succeeded; or whether, among others who tried to reflect the Hitlerian catastrophe in fiction, he merely over-reached himself, is the subject of this chapter.¹²⁵

Though his perception is not wrong, it would yet be wrong, to judge the artistic merit of the book on this basis, as it tells only half the truth about the book's thematic line of intention. Far from being a mere description of the significance of the crisis of civilization, the narrative of the novel aims at showing Guy's progress to the religious hub of life from the irrationality and corruption signified by the bestiality of the Second Great War. In the successful completion of this spiritual odyssey, the hero undergoes a renewal of life that is implicit in the Christian view of progress. Thus, the novel, instead of being a static portrayal of life, charts

the movement of the central character from insignificance to significance. This movement is at the heart of all 'greater comedies', whether written by Waugh or Eliot. The central character extricates himself from the absurd monotony of a circular secular change in order to discover the true meaning of his existence. His success therefore forms the essence of the triumphant conclusion of any greater comedy. Christopher Sykes appears to be ignorant of this change in Guy when he objects to his delineation as an 'ineffectual' person.

... in the first sentence, there occurs the worst blemish on the whole undertaking: the ineffectual hero, Guy Crouchback. He is not something new in Evelyn's writing, he is the victim as the hero again, making a late though not his last appearance. He had first appeared not as farcical in himself but as an effective stimulator of farce... in Decline and Fall and then much later as a stimulator of unorthodox tragedy in A Handful of Dust. His appearances had all been successfully contrived, and they had all followed, with amazing originality, a well-worn path; that of the character who is not interesting in himself but to whom interesting (and horrifying) things happen. Here his appearance as Guy Crouchback was not successful.¹²⁶

Guy's ineffectuality, far from being a blemish, is only a part of an essential stage in his development. It sheds light on the inadequacy of his static chivalric code which he must outgrow in order that he may become an effective instrument of Divine Grace on earth. In this sense, he is certainly a development over static characters like Paul Pennyfeather and Tony Last. His development

parallels that of Helena, who similarly reposes faith in the redemptive power of Roman Catholic Church after outgrowing her static opinions. Cyril Connolly has rightly observed the graph of Guy Crouchback's progressive life when he enunciates the theme that his life embodies:

I have left out what is perhaps Mr. Waugh's major theme: the recovery of Crouchback's faith, of the sense of joy and purpose in life which he had lost when his marriage broke up, and which had invalidated his scrupulous orthodoxy.¹²⁷

In fact, Waugh has brilliantly portrayed the theme of progress through religious change in the developing character of Guy Crouchback, as he did in that of Helena. All the three books together show Waugh's ultimate comic vision of life which is affirmative and poised in the resurgence of life rather than being negatory and indicative of mere absurdity in the dynamic mode of life. No wonder then that Cyril Connolly felt impelled to make a request for the immediate publication of all three novels in one volume.

I strongly urge the publisher to issue all three books in one volume immediately; the cumulative effect is most impressive, and it seems to me unquestionably the finest novel to have come out of the war.¹²⁸

It should, however, not be mis-construed as a measure of its period interest as the values upheld in this trilogy are universal and eternal.

From an examination of the progressive character of Guy Crouchback's spiritual odyssey, it becomes clear that the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh is played up not only by the thematic pattern of the events but also by the structural pattern of the trilogy. The trilogy has a linear plot that begins with Guy leading a 'static' life in his villa in Italy and ends up with him leading a Christian and truly civilized life at Broome, the traditional home of the Catholic family of Crouchback. The artistic harmony achieved between content and form here speaks of the artistic maturity Waugh had achieved by the time he came to write this trilogy. The reputation of Waugh as a literary genius must, therefore, rest on the ease with which he has developed his sublime comic view of life in the greater comedies.

CHAPTER-4CONCLUSION

Of all literary reputations ever maligned by critics because of their close proximity to the author, Waugh's has perhaps suffered the most. It has been alleged that his novels are circumscribed in their scope by the effete upper-class Mayfair world of London. It has also been suggested that he is a minor author offering only a minor interest in the dated value of his works. To cap it all, it is alleged that his novels are light-weight comic works. My study of Waugh runs against this kind of argument. True, Waugh's works do centre around gentleman-characters. But they do not, at the same time, preclude from their artistic focus, the other sections of society. More than that, the profoundly philosophical attitude towards change and progress, that shapes Waugh's comic vision of life, lends the works a unique universal appeal and profundity.

Although attempts have been made, in the past, to draw attention towards the comic bent of Waugh's genius, these have scarcely succeeded in plumbing the philosophical depth of his comic vision of life. Besides, most of these draw no line of distinction between satire and comedy. As

a result, they fail to comprehend the sublime comic view of life unfolded in the greater comedies of Waugh. They invariably end up with regarding Waugh as a satirist and his greater comedies, an aberration in his artistic career. It is in the context of these dismal attempts that my study of Waugh makes a humble attempt to attract attention towards the philosophical ideas that inform and enrich Waugh's comic vision of life.

I have contended that Waugh's singular attitude to change and progress moulds his comic vision of life. Secular change, due to its circular character, makes a mockery of all efforts aimed at progress. Man returns to his original state of existence, no matter how much he may try to get away from it. This comic vision of absurdity pervades all the lesser comedies of Waugh. Religious change, in sharp contrast, is linear in character. So, a man who thinks of surging ahead by effecting a religious change in himself succeeds in his endeavour and, in consequence, his life is meaningful. The sense of joy that accompanies this change is palpable in all the greater comedies.

The figure of speech that is central to an adequate comprehension of this comic stance is the symbolic image of the wheel of life. Waugh compares life to the motion of a wheel. While secular change is

represented by its circular motion, religious change is indicated by the linear motion of an imaginary person making for its stable hub. The circular motion of the wheel of life deprives man of the prospect of progress. He is, therefore, caught in the demonic circle of secular change. His only achievement is absurdity! The linear motion towards the hub of the wheel of life, in contrast, leads man from one stage of development to another. It is when he touches the hub that he experiences a thrilling transcendence. Though he lives on a temporal plane physically, yet he overcomes the limitations of his situation by poising himself in the eternal and immutable reality of the religious hub of the wheel of life. Being a Roman Catholic by volition, it invariably implies acceptance of the Roman Catholic view of life. The Roman Catholic Church, to Waugh, is the temporal reminder of an eternal truth. The realisation of its reality redeems man from the absurdity of a secular way of life.

But if the image of the wheel of life defines Waugh's comic vision of life adequately, it also endows it with an equally expressive form. While the absurdity of secular change is underlined by a circular plot in the lesser comedies, the purposefulness of religious change is conveyed by a linear plot in the greater comedies. In the lesser comedies, the comic fun

that arises is of a grim nature generally for while we laugh at the ignorance of people gullible enough to rely on secular change as a means to progress, we also sympathise with them when their illusions take the toll of their lives, physically or spiritually. The perpetual cyclical motion that the characters undergo on the revolving wheel of life defines both the comic vision of absurdity in the lesser comedies and their individual form. In Decline and Fall (1928), Waugh's first major novel, secular achievements are shown to be no more than an eye-wash. British society, despite its vigorous programme of modernisation, is shown to be seething with the corruption of moral values. Britain emerges no better than a remote barbaric society of Africa. The idea of secular progress epitomised in the modernity of Britain is ridiculed through Paul Pennyfeather, a static character, whose picaresque journey through Britain proves as futile as its history: Paul returns to the point from where he began his journey. By ending the novel with the same situation with which it began, Waugh endows it with a circular plot that immediately makes the reader recall the absurd cyclical motion of the wheel of life. Despite the comic vision of absurdity unfolded here, both at the thematic and structural level, the central character, Paul Pennyfeather is not a flat character. Waugh traces his development from the time when he was ignorant of his real identity to the time when he beams with self-knowledge.

At the beginning of the novel, Paul Pennyfeather does not know that he is a static character unfit for participating in the process of secular change. But at the end, he is fully aware of this reality. Accordingly, he retraces his steps into the static environs of an academic institution like Oxford.

In Vile Bodies (1930), the focus becomes more concentrated as the central character, Adam Fenwick-Symes's repeated attempts to enable himself to marry Nina Blount describe a circular pattern. Marriage here does not have any religious significance as its materialisation depends solely on such secular factors as the monetary status of the individual. Episode after episode renders Adam comic in his misplaced confidence in secular change as a means to bettering his lot. The comic vision of absurdity unfolded here is underlined by the circular plot of the novel which makes no material alteration in Adam's lot. There is, however, a hint of large-scale devastation in the outbreak of the Second World War which Waugh sees as a direct consequence of the acceleration of the rate of secular change. The movement away from the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life represents, in Waugh, a drift towards a state of anarchy and chaos indicated by the high degree of instability at the outermost orbits of the wheel of life. Adam does not achieve the self-knowledge that his predecessor in Decline and Fall does. Nevertheless,

Waugh's second major novel is a strong indictment of the progressive historiographers' reliance on secular change as a means to progress.

By the time Waugh came to write Black Mischief (1932) he had already got proselytized to Roman Catholicism. His conversion is a landmark in his artistic growth. Till now, Waugh had only an intellectual conception of the kind of thing that could redeem man from the vicious and absurd circle of temporal change. The evidence is irrefutably there in Otto Silenus' discourse on the nature of life in Decline and Fall. Waugh saw in the hub of the wheel of life a temporal indicator of eternal reality. Despite its historical existence, the hub is beyond the reach of historical change. As a consequence, it is a reminder of eternal reality. With his conversion to Roman Catholic faith, the hub of the wheel of life came to stand for him for the immutable reality of the Roman Catholic Church. Accordingly, Waugh surveys the temporal world steeped in historical change with renewed vigour and greater insight in the novels beginning with Black Mischief. Temporal change now signifies, in no uncertain terms, the quest for secular progress through secular change and the movement towards the hub of the wheel of life, man's willingness to conform to Divine Order and Harmony, which alone guarantees true progress.

In Black Mischief, Waugh shows the absurdity of

pursuing progress through the means of secular change on the large canvass of history. Azania is one of the barbaric states of Africa. Under the stewardship of two rulers, it makes an attempt to progress to the stage of civilisation through a string of secular changes. The vanity of the attempts gets reflected in their utter failure to civilise it. The ghastly end of Seth, the very epitome of this misconceived quest, points to the absurdity of seeking progress through secular change. With Seth's death, Azania returns to its original state of barbarity. The war, with which the novel opens, also concludes it. This endows the novel with a circular plot that fully conveys the thematic import of the novel.

In A Handful of Dust, the price that Tony Last, a static character, pays for persisting with his 'static' illusions is reading one by one, in a perpetual cyclical motion, the gothic novels of Dickens to a half-crazy hybrid, Mr. Todd. In his tryst with him, Tony clashes with the unabashed barbarity of savages unredeemed by religion and the worthless guile of secular Western civilisation. The absurd cyclical motion that his life is condemned to is not unlike that of Sisiphus. However, while Sisiphus mocks at his fate, Tony rues it. He is, therefore, a picture, at once, of fun and sympathy. The relationship between the formal circle and the thematic circle does not remain concealed even in this novel.

In Scoop, the emphasis of humanist and enlightenment historiography on secular change as a means to progress is ridiculed by the exposure of the extent of illogicity in the process of secular change. William Boot, a novice journalist, is 'catapulted' into fame as a leading investigative newsreporter by a series of incidents that hardly show any causal sequence and the reader can scarcely repress his laughter over the gullibility of the secular world for being taken in by the apparently logical nature of secular change in William's career. The sense of absurdity that characterises Waugh's comic world of secular change is conveyed through a circular plot that first substitutes John Boot with William Boot and then, as if to make amends, substitutes William Boot with John Boot, most surreptitiously. This ensures William Boot's return to his original static world of Boot Magna. William Boot is unlike other static characters of Waugh in that he is aware of his personal limitations from the beginning. Thus, the comic vision of absurdity revealed in the circular journey of William Boot and the circular plot of the novel does not, in any way, affect Waugh's art of characterisation adversely.

In Put Out More Flags, Basil Seal flees from the fate of conscription in British army during World War II

to his sister's secluded place, Malfrey. Basil detests the order imposed by the discipline of military life. Being a 'dynamic' character, he has a predilection for chaos and anarchy. These conditions aid him in carrying out ruthless exploits with impunity. One of his first war-efforts is, therefore, the exploitation of the static characters of Malfrey. It is followed by his operation-persecution against the static Ambrose. The novel returns to its original situation when Basil Seal decides, at the end of the novel, to join the war so that he may enjoy killing Germans. The circular course of Basil's life offers no redemption or even the slightest improvement in his personality. His life, thus, indicates truly Waugh's comic vision of absurdity. The theme of the novel is corroborated by its form which is encased in the cycle of seasons.

In The Loved One, just as in Decline and Fall, an entire secularised society is brought under the focus of Waugh's serio-comic vision of absurdity. The absurdity of pursuing progress through secular change is driven home through the perversion and inversion of religious values of life in the secular institutions of developed America. The fragility of these products of secular human endeavour for progress becomes clear in their inability to serve as a life-buoy to the people who repose faith in them. When

the testing time arrives these false values desert man and he, perforce, is left in the arms of the barbaric past. Aimee Thenatogenos's death at the end of the novel amply testifies to the veracity of this fact. Unable to seek support from the false religion of Whispering Glades, Aimee turns to her barbaric ancestors for help and eventually, commits suicide. The return of the men and women of the secular civilisation of the West to the ways of their ancestors, in hours of crisis, shows the absurdity of man's quest for secular progress. Waugh's comic vision of absurdity makes us laugh at Aimee for her excessive and misplaced faith in the inverted values of Whispering Glades and feel sympathetic simultaneously over her gruesome end. Further, it is reinforced by a circular plot which begins with Dennis's arrival in America and ends with his departure to England, the place from where he came.

In The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Waugh reveals the absurdity of the world of secular change-in Waugh's terminology, the dynamic world-through a circular plot that first throws the schizophrenic Pinfold into the dynamic world of his own hallucinations aboard the ship, S.S. Caliban, and then brings him back, at the end, to his native static world of Lychpole. As in Decline and Fall, the novel ends with the protagonist gaining an insight into

his real nature. Accordingly, he rejects the dynamic world and accepts the static world. It is a regressive step and not progressive one. Hence, the comic vision of absurdity revealed in the valuelessness of the dynamic world remains central to the meaning of this novel.

The balance achieved in the lesser comedies between the vision and the form, however, does not sacrifice easy comprehension on the part of the reader. The temporal movement of the plot ensures the accessibility of the reader to its entertaining flavour. It speaks highly of Waugh's artistic genius that even when he convey^s a vision of absurdity and chaos, he does not allow the form of his novels to lose their classical perfection. He has, therefore, rightly been called a post-modernist writer.

Contrasted with the comic vision of absurdity in the lesser comedies is the comic vision of regeneration in the greater comedies. The fulfilment of one's hopes and the meaningfulness of a life lived religiously lends a note of joy and jubilation to the greater comedies. The fact that Waugh gave expression to the supreme achievement of man, self-realisation and redemption from the ennui of an absurd and sinful world, shows how he transcended the comic vision of absurdity that circumscribes the entire literary output of the Theatre of the Absurd, and

existentialist writers. In Waugh, the greater comedies are a necessary sequel to the lesser comedies. Having shown the futility of secular change as a means to progress, Waugh, as a committed Christian writer, had to show the comic vision of life implicit in the religious transformation of the individual and the society. While the circular motion of the wheel of life helped him convey the first view, the linear motion towards the stable hub of the wheel helped him in conveying his ultimate and Christian comic vision of life.

Just as the lesser comedies reveal a balance between their form and meaning, so do the greater comedies. The structure of these comic novels coheres with the vision emerging out of them. Each of these novels // possesses a linear plot which adequately indicates the logical development present in religious change. The central character begins his life with 'static' notions of life, confronts the dynamic world, discovers the inadequacy of his static attitude to life and the absurdity of the dynamic mode of existence. Eventually, he rejects both and makes for the Roman Catholic hub of life which he selects as the ultimate goal of his life. The achievement of this goal redeems him from the absurdity of secular change and uplifts him to a state of existence which is most superior and abiding. He realises, so to say, the bliss of the prelapsarian state

of existence. It is most often indicated by admission to Church and elevation to sainthood. The linear course of religious change, in consequence, lends the plots of these novels a linear character. Unlike the lesser comedies, the greater comedies do not end where they began.

Accordingly, in Brideshead Revisited, a novel that marks Waugh's transition from the lesser to the greater comedies, two kinds of plots co-exist. While the minor thematic movement concerning the absurdity of secular change is brought out in the circular plot that begins with Charles Ryder's reminiscent mood in war-time England and ends with his stepping out of the world of his memories, in a situation scarcely altered, the major thematic movement concerning the optimism and joy of progress achieved through religious change is brought out in the linear plot of memories, that begins with Ryder's staticity, reflected in his romanticism, and ends with Ryder's conversion to Roman Catholicism, after a turbulent and self-enlightening encounter with the dynamic world in which he rejects both his romantic attitude to life and the secular attitude to progress. But for its value in providing a framework, the circular plot of this novel fades before the thematic brilliance of the linear plot encased within it. The tone of colour and gaiety set in

this comic novel continues to reverberate in the other two greater comedies of Evelyn Waugh.

In Waugh's second 'greater comedy', Helena, there is a single plot that displays the progressive nature of religious change in the linear spiritual odyssey of Helena who, born and brought up in a dynamic world, overcomes her adolescent staticity in her close touch with the dynamic world of the Roman Empire through her marriage with Constantius Chlorus, rejects the valueless and absurd secular change with which both her husband and her son, apart from the Roman gentry in general, are obsessed, and elevates herself above the run-of-the-mill society through her acceptance of and adherence to the Roman Catholic values of life. This is, in my opinion, Waugh's best novel as it achieves unparalleled comic sublimity and grandeur both in its poetic description of the 'holy quest and in its abstruse conclusion of that quest: Helena achieves saintliness through a submission of her wild human will to the pacific Will of God in the act of discovering the True Cross. Helena's character offers the best example of a spiritual elite in the entire canon of Waugh's creative work.

Waugh's third greater comedy, The Sword of Honour Trilogy, is spread over three volumes, Men At Arms, Officers

and Gentlemen, and Unconditional Surrender, each published separately and at separate points of time. Like all other greater comedies, its narrative too runs along a plot which is linear in character. Guy Crouchback, the chief protagonist of this trilogy, is a victim of the dynamic world and is, therefore, living as an exile in Italy. The outbreak of World War II offers him an opportunity of reasserting his lost self-esteem under the pretext of protecting the honour of Christendom. His knight-errantry comes to a nought when he realises that the war is being fought for no such reason. Even he has been hoodwinking his own self by thinking so. Deep in the mind of every soldier, he included, is an irrational and barbaric desire to kill and be killed. Confronted with this knowledge, Guy Crouchback sloughs off both his static mental sheath and dynamic emotional covering. He realises the inadequacy of a static attitude to life and the inferiority and absurdity of the dynamic world's obsession with secular change. Acting upon his father, Old Mr. Gervase Crouchback's advice, he submits to the Will of God so much so that he is willing to undergo worldly humiliation for the sake of other-worldly honour. The adoption of Virginia's illegitimate child by Trimmer, ennobles Guy Crouchback, thereby holding out the sublimity inherent in Waugh's ultimate comic vision of life.

The comic vision of life unfolded in the greater

comedies is, however, never allowed to touch the borderland of didacticism. Waugh was no explainer of things. He was, as a novelist should be, a describer of events. Consequently, his narratives do without the causal sequence of the traditional nineteenth century novel. In order that his comic vision of life may emerge unobtrusively, Waugh made innovative use of English language and its literary techniques. It is quite obvious from the central role played by the image of the wheel, which Waugh likens to life, in the thematic and structural cohesion of his novels. It is not without reason that the greater comedies of Waugh have an aura of poetic charm about them. His post-modernist emphasis on objectivity does not, therefore, stand in the way of his artistic achievement. Instead, it aids him in gaining a universal appeal.

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren describe a successful literary work of art as one in which 'the materials are completely assimilated into form'.¹ Understood as an invitation to the idea of a balance between subject and form, the statement resembles Waugh's own opinion on the matter. Waugh maintains:

{ Properly understood style is not a seductive decoration added to a functional structure, it is of the essence of a work of art.²

The balanced inter-relationship between subject and form

achieved in Waugh's comic novels bears testimony to this assertion. And it is by virtue of this achievement that Waugh's major literary output is one luminous mass of order and aesthetic beauty.

We, thus, conclude that while there may be many useful approaches to the study of Waugh but the one approach that touches the heart of Waugh's creative works and uncovers his artistic genius is the study of his comic vision of life. It is only by placing the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh in the centre of our study of Waugh that we discover the common thematic concern running through the entire canon of Waugh literature; be it, the lesser or the greater comedies. The superior comic vision of life, unfolded in the greater comedies, as a way out of the absurdity of life, depicted in the lesser comedies, without seeming didactic at the same time, shows the heights of artistic perception achieved by Waugh. Again, the creative use of language and literary tools made for its artistic expression attract attention towards the artistic excellence achieved by Waugh. Waugh, thus, emerges as a major post-modernist novelist who felt and lent an abstruse artistic utterance to his perceptions and vision.

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A very surprising man about ten years my senior, had come to take the place of the disgruntled Scotchman as second master; a dapper man of sunny disposition who spoke in the idiom of the army. He later provided certain features for the character, 'Captain Grimes,' in my first novel.

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69. David Lodge, op.cit., p.23.
70. Despite Waugh's denials, critics have compared Azania to Ethiopia, which Waugh visited in 1930. There is however ground for believing so. A comparative analysis of Black Mischief and Remote People shows a number of similarities in situations and places. For instance, Dierre-Dowa (p.80) becomes Debra Dowa in Black Mischief; the King's soldiers are without boots (p.84) as in the novel and the access to the British Embassy is as shoddy (p.87) as in the novel. The similarity between the two books has brought the novel, the odium of a mere travalogue which is certainly unjustified keeping in mind the changes that Waugh has effected in the raw materials

provided by his personal experience :an artistic vision that the travelogue, Remote People, lacks. Commenting on it, waugh himself once wrote:

If only the amateurs would get into their heads that novel writing is a highly skilled and laborious trade... One has for one's raw material every single thing one has even seen or heard or felt, and one has to go over that... until one finds a few discarded valuables.

Then one has to assemble these tarnished and dented fragments, polish them, set them in order, and try to make a coherent and significant arrangement of them. It is not merely a matter of filling up a dust-bin haphazard and emptying it out again in another place.

(Evelyn Waugh, "People who want to sue Me," in Donat Gallagher (ed.), A Little Order, op.cit., pp.14-15.)

What distinguishes Black Mischief from its counterpart Remote People then is 'a coherent and significant arrangement' of its incidents.

71. Evelyn Waugh, Black Mischief, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1932, p.11.
72. *ibid.*, pp.11-12.
73. *ibid.*, p.12.
74. *ibid.*, p.15.
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76. *ibid.*, pp.16-17.

77. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.23.
78. Seth's victory over Seyid is modelled on a real life incident reported by Waugh as a special correspondent in Addis Ababa to The Times of 22 December, 1930. Waugh had reported how Lij Yasu, the previous ruler of Ethiopia, was defeated and deposed by the new Emperor Haile Selassie with the help of a disinformation campaign against him. (Evelyn Waugh, "Ethiopia Today: Romance and Reality", The Times, 22 Dec., 1930, in Donat Gallagher (ed.), The Essays Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, Methuen, London, 1983, p.119).
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85. *ibid.*, pp.59-61.
86. *ibid.*, p.61.
87. *ibid.*, p.53.
88. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, op.cit., p.18.
89. " *ibid.*, p.18

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96. *ibid.*, pp.146-47.
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101. Stephen Spender, *op.cit.*, p.169.
102. Eric Linklater, Listener, 19 October 1932, p.576
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104. *ibid.*, p.161.
105. Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1982, p.33.

106. Ernest Oldmeadow, 'Editorial', Tablet, 18 Feb.1933, in Martin Stannard, op.cit., p.135
107. The novel, "A Handful of Dust" is based on Waugh's journey to Brazil in 1932. Interesting parallels between Tony's experiences in the Amazonian jungle and Waugh's own can be discovered upon comparing the text of the novel with that of the travelogue, Ninety-two Days. However, the tendency to treat the novel as no more than a fictionalized account of the travel would be incorrect for despite the resemblances, the novel aims at comprehending a truth which is utterly beyond the purview of the travelogue. Waugh very rightly draws a distinction between the experiences narrated in a novel and in a travelogue in these words:

*

....a writer is not really content to leave any experience in the amorphous, haphazard, condition in which life presents it; and putting an experience into shape means, for a writer, putting it into communicable form.

(Evelyn Waugh, "A Journey to Brazil in 1932" When The Going was Good, p.187.)

108. While all other novels of Waugh were written from beginning to end, as is the usual manner, this novel, in the words of Waugh 'began at the end'. Mentioning the reasons for such a unique conception, Waugh writes:

I had written a short story about a man trapped in the jungle, ending his days reading Dickens aloud. The idea came quite naturally from the experience of visiting a lonely settler of that kind and reflecting how easily he could hold me prisoner. Then, after the 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 savage at home and the civilized man's helpless plight among them.

(Fanfare; Life(International:Chicago), 8 April 1946, in A Little Order, 33).

Waugh uses the word 'civilized' here as it is used in common parlance.

109. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1971, pp. 9-10.

110. A.A. De Vitis in his book Roman Holiday says:

In Tony Last, Waugh creates a hero whose nostalgia for the romantic past finds expression in his every action. The rooms of the Victorian Gothic Abbey are appropriately named after the members of the Arthurian court - Guinevere, Lancelot, Galahad and others. (p.31)

Frank Kermode in "Mr Waugh's Cities" expresses similar views:

Tony is nice dull gentleman who knows vaguely that the defence of Hetton is the defence of everything the past has made valuable.

(quoted from Martin Stannard.,
Op.cit., p.283)

Stephen Greenblatt also has brought out a similar significance of Hetton:

By the accumulation of a great many seemingly irrelevant details, Waugh evokes a whole world, a philosophy, and a way of life as well as an architecture and a landscape. Hetton is a lovely, sentimental, idealized world of the past and of childhood, at once silly and charming, hopelessly naive and endearing. (23)

111. David Lodge, op.cit., p.10.

112. Ernest Oldmeadow, 'Editorial', Tablet, 8 Sept. 1934, p.300 in Martin Stannard, op.cit., p.151.

113. Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Evelyn Waugh", Three Modern Satirists: Waugh, Orwell, and Huxley, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1965, p. 22.
114. Martin Stannard sees an autobiographical element in the theme of infidelity. He writes:
- There was, of course, a strong, if oblique, element of autobiography in it. This was the first time he had explored in detail the delicate subject of a wife's desertion and his pain and disgust at such infidelity spills over from his experience into the novel. (p. 23)
- Yet we should guard against reading too much in the autobiographical element for the novel transcends the limitations of a personal complaint in its theme of change and progress.
115. Richard Johnstone, op.cit., p. 89
116. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p. 16.
117. *ibid.*, p. 9.
118. *ibid.*, p. 9.
119. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, op.cit., p. 24.
120. Evelyn Waugh, To Katherine Asquith, January 1934 in Mark Amory (ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1980, p. 84.
121. Evelyn Waugh, "Fan-Fare", Life, 8 April, 1946, Chicago, in Donat Gallagher (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London, 1977, p. 32.

122. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, op.cit., p.40.
123. *ibid.*, p.76.
124. *ibid.*, p.75.
125. *ibid.*, p.85.
126. *ibid.*, p.109.
127. *ibid.*, p.118.
128. Graham Martin, "Novelists of Society: Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, C.P. Snow" in Boris Ford(ed.), The New Pelican History of English Literature, Vol.7, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.485.
129. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.123.
130. *ibid.*, p.124.
131. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, op.cit., p.29.
132. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, op.cit., p.144.
133. Richard Johnstone, "The Catholic Novelist II: Evelyn Waugh," The Will to Believe, OUP, Oxford, 1982, p.91.
134. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, op.cit., p.151.
135. *ibid.*, p.152.

136. In his letter to Henry Yorke, Waugh points out the symbolic nature of Tony's quest.
- All that quest for a city seems to me justifiable symbolism. A.A.De Vitis is of the opinion that Waugh's symbolism is influenced by T.S.Eliot's in The Wasteland.
- As Tony dreams of the lost splendours of Hetton, hunting for its replica in the jungles of Brazil, Waugh makes reference to the theme of the city in The Waste Land, and he implies that the city Tony seeks is the city of God.
(32).
137. *ibid.*, p.160.
138. David Lodge, *op.cit.*, p.27.
139. Frank Kermode, Encounter, Nov.1960, in Martin Stannard, *op.cit.*, p.283.
140. Henry Yorke's Letter to Evelyn Waugh, quoted in Mark Amory (ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1981, p.89.
141. Evelyn Waugh, To Henry Yorke, Sept.1934, in Mark Amory (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.88.
142. Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.27.
143. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, *op.cit.*, p.32.
144. Stephen J.Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.31.
145. Evelyn Waugh, A Handful of Dust, *op.cit.*, p.207.
146. Stephen J.Greenblatt, *op.cit.*, p.31.
147. Bernard Bergonzi, Blackfriars, July-Aug.1964, in Martin Stannard, *op.cit.*, p.159.

148. *ibid.*, p.160.
149. Terry Eagleton has been most vociferous in denying Waugh's novel a universal vision on the plea that they centre round aristocratic characters and values (see note No. 23). Commenting on such charges, Waugh plays up their folly in these words:

Nor am I worried at the charge of snobbery. Class consciousness, particularly in England, has been so much inflamed nowadays that to mention a nobleman is like mentioning a prostitute 60 years ago. The new prudes say, "No doubt such people do exist but we would sooner not hear about them." I reserve the right to deal with the kind of people I know best.

(Fanfare in A.L.C.34)

Moreover the condemnation of the inadequacy of the aristocratic values of the past on the ground that they are vulnerable to change, itself shows the charge of Terry Eagleton too harsh.

150. Brigid Braphy, New Statesman, 25 Sept.1964, in Martin Stannard, *op.cit.*, p.161.
151. Rose Macaulay, Horizon, Dec.1946 in Martin Stannard(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p.202.
152. Evelyn Waugh in Michael Davie(ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1976, p.177.
153. Graham Martin "The Novelists of SocietyE, in Boris Ford(ed.), The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.485.

154. Evelyn Waugh, Scoop, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.26.
155. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1971, pp.24-25.
156. Evelyn Waugh, Scoop, op.cit., p.23.
157. *ibid.*, p.23.
158. *ibid.*, p.27.
159. *ibid.*, p.33.
160. *ibid.*, p.34.
161. *ibid.*, p.67.
162. *ibid.*, p.138.
163. *ibid.*, p.138.
164. *ibid.*, p.146.
165. *ibid.*, p.154.
166. *ibid.*, p.155.
167. *ibid.*, p.157.
168. *ibid.*, p.165-66.
169. *ibid.*, p.177.
170. *ibid.*, p.186.

171. Commenting on the significance of the cloister in the modern age, Evelyn Waugh writes in the foreword to Elected Silence by Thomas Merton:
- In the natural order the modern world is rapidly being made uninhabitable by the scientists and politicians. We are back in the age of Gregory, Augustine and Boniface and in compensation the Devil is being disarmed of many of his former enchantments. Power is all he can offer now; the temptation of wealth and elegance no longer assail us. As in the Dark Ages the cloister offers the sanest and most civilized way of life.
- (Evelyn Waugh in Donat Gallagher(ed.) The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, Methuen, London, 1983, p.369.)
172. A.A.De Vitis, Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh, Vision Press Ltd., London, 1958, p.36.
173. Brigid Brophy, New Statesman, 23 September, 1964, p.450 in Martin Stannard(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, p.161.
174. Christopher Hollis, Evelyn Waugh, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1954, p.14.
175. Martin Stannard(ed.), "Introduction", Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, pp.30-31.
176. Christopher Hollis, Evelyn Waugh, Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., London, 1954, p.19.
177. ibid., p.18.
178. Alan Fryce-Jones, New Statesman, 11 April, 1942, in Martin Stannard(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, p.216.

179. Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel, Vol. 11 , Barnes and Noble Inc., New York, 1967, p.357.
180. Martin Stannard(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, p.33.
181. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.38.
182. Plato, Philebus.
183. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.82.
183. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.82.
184. ibid., p.49.
185. ibid., p.91.
186. ibid., p.94.
187. ibid., p.95.
188. Evelyn Waugh, "Tolerance," "The Seven Deadly Sins of Today by Seven Famous Authors", John Bull, 2 April, 1932, p.7, in Donat Gallagher (ed.), A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London, 1977, p.26.
189. Christopher Hollis, op.cit., p.19.
190. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags, Penguin Harmondsworth, p.150.

191. *ibid.*, p.76.
192. *ibid.*, p.42.
193. *ibid.*, p.41.
194. *ibid.*, p.61.
195. *ibid.*, p.174.
196. *ibid.*, p.186.
197. The Ambrose Silk episode has an autobiographical undertone in the sense that Waugh was similarly accused maliciously of being a fascist by the popular press and his reviewers of that time too spoke of his qualified support for it in "Spanish Civil War", where Waugh showed rather his antipathy to it.

As an Englishman I am not in the predicament of choosing between two evils. I am not a Fascist nor shall I become one unless it were the only alternative to Marxism. It is mischievous to suggest that such a choice is imminent.

His comparative preference for fascism stemmed from the belief that

anarchy(fascism) is the nearer to right order, for something that has not developed may reach the right end, while something (Marxism) that has fully developed wrongly cannot... the disillusioned Marxist becomes a Fascist; the disillusioned anarchist, a Christian.

(Evelyn Waugh, "Art from Anarchy", The Essays, Articles & Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, p.205)

But critics misinterpreted it to imply his being a fascist. Moreover, his fiction hardly shows any sign of support for the fascists and it is clear from the Ambrose Silk episode also.

198. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.25.
199. *ibid.*, p.25.
200. *ibid.*, p.26.
201. *ibid.*, p.26.
202. Lionel Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p.357.
203. Christopher Hollis, *op.cit.*, p.29.
204. A.A.De Vitis, Roman Holiday, Vision Press Ltd., London, 1958, p.38.
205. *ibid.*, p.39.
206. Eugene Ionesco quoted in Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p.23.
207. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory (ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1981, p.158.
208. Alan Pryce-Jones, New Statesman, 11 April, 1942, in Martin Stannard, Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, R.K.P., London, 1984, p.216.

209. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 198, p.29.
210. Evelyn Waugh, Put Out More Flags, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p.16.
211. ibid., p.38.
212. ibid., p.221.
213. Waugh began writing this novel on Friday, 21 May, 1947 as per his own admission in his diary (Michael Davie (ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.174.)
214. Evelyn Waugh, The American Epoch in the Catholic Church, "Month, Nov., 1949, in Donat Gallagher(ed.), The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.379.
215. Evelyn Waugh, Decline and Fall, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.208.
216. Evelyn Waugh, "Commentary" for T.A. Mc Iverny's The Private Man, New York, 1962, 1962 in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, op.cit., p.145.
217. Unsigned Review, Times Literary Supplement, 20 Nov. 1948, p.652 in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit. p.307.
218. Evelyn Waugh, "Why Hollywood is a Term of Disparagement", Daily Telegraph, 30 April, 1947, p.4 in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, op.cit., p.41.
219. ibid., p.41.

220. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 19, pp.27-28.
221. ibid., p.29.
222. ibid., p.29.
223. ibid., p.15.
224. Northrop Frye in "The Argument of Comedy", (1948), opines that 'comedy contains a potential tragedy within itself.' (Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," 1948 in L.J. Palmer(ed.), Comedy: Developments in Criticism, Macmillan Education, Houndmills, 1984, p.79).
225. Evelyn Waugh, "Conservative Manifesto", Robbery Under Law, Chapman and Hall, London, 1939 in Donat Gallagher(ed.), The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.162.
226. Evelyn Waugh, "Death in Hollywood," Life, 29 September 1947, p.83.
227. Evelyn Waugh in Michael Davie(ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.675.
228. Evelyn Waugh, "Half in Love with Easeful Death," Tablet, 18 October 1947, pp.246-48, in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, op.cit., pp.155-57.
229. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.265.
230. Evelyn Waugh, "Half in Love with Easeful Death", 18 October 1947 in Donat Gallagher (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, op.cit., pp.159-60.

- 231.^o ibid., p.159.
232. Evelyn Waugh, "The American Epoch in the Catholic Church," Month, Nov.1949, in Donat Gallagher(ed.), The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.388.
233. Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel, Vol.11, Barnes & Noble Inc., New York, 1967, p.359.
234. Edmund Wilson quoted in John Farrelly, Scrutiny, XXIII, Winter, 1951-2, p.233 in Martin Stannard(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, op.cit., p.316.
235. John Farrelly, op.cit., p.317.
236. Desmond Mac Carthy, Sunday Times, 21 Nov. 1948, p.3 in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit. p.308.
237. A.A.De Vitis, Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh, Vision Press, London, 1958, p.55.
238. ibid., p.54.
239. Cyril Connolly, Horizon, Feb.1948 in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.299.
240. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, op.cit., p.64.
241. ibid., p.69.
242. ibid., p.45.
243. Evelyn Waugh, "Commentary" for T.A. Mc Iverny's The Private Man in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, p.142.

244. Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1982, p.7.
245. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, op.cit., p.46.
246. ibid., p.84.
247. ibid., p.56.
248. ibid., p.101.
249. Evelyn Waugh, "Tolerance", in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order op.cit., p.26.
250. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, op.cit., p.111.
251. Evelyn Waugh, "Commentary" for T.A. Mc Iverny's The Private Man, in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, op.cit., p.143.
252. Evelyn Waugh, The Loved One, op.cit., p.116.
253. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.259.
254. A.A.De Vitis, op.cit., pp.57-58.
255. John Bayley, National Review, Feb.1949, in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.312.
256. Evelyn Waugh in Michael Davie(ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit., p.680.
257. R.D.Smith, New Statesman, 11 Decamber 1948 in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.310.
258. ibid., p.312.

259. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, op.cit.,p.273.
260. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth,1984,p.10.
261. Evelyn Waugh, "Anything wrong With Priestley?", Spectator,13 Sept.1957 in Donat Gallagher(ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London,1977,p.136.
262. Evelyn Waugh in Michael Davie(ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London,1976,p.769.
263. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.),The Letters of Evelyn Waugh,Weidenfeld & Nicolson,London, 1981,p.475.
264. *ibid.*,pp.493-94.
265. Michael Daire(ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson,London,1976,p.724.
266. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.),The Letters of Evelyn Waugh,Weidenfeld & Nicolson,London, 1981,p.417.
267. *ibid.*,p.418.
268. *ibid.*,p.418.
269. *ibid.*,p.419-20.
270. Gustave Flaubert in Francis Steegmuller(tr.), Selected Letters,Farrar Strauss & Co. and Hamish Hamilton, London,1954, quoted in Richard Ellmann & Charles Fiedelson,Jr.(ed.), Modern Tradition,Oxford Univ.Press,New York,1965,p.132.

271. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.9.
272. Evelyn Waugh, "Personal Call", B.B.C. Radio, 16 Nov. 1953.
273. Evelyn Waugh, A Little Learning, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.44.
274. Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1982, p.40.
275. Evelyn Waugh in Michael Davie (ed.), *op.cit.* p.317.
276. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.10.
277. *ibid.*, p.10.
278. *ibid.*, p.13.
279. Evelyn Waugh, "People Who Want to Sue Me", Daily Mail, 31 May 1930, p.10 in Donat Gallagher (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, 1977, p.13.
280. *ibid.*, p.14.
281. Martin Stannard (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p.xxiii.
282. Jeffrey Heath, *op.cit.*, p.13.
283. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.15.
284. *ibid.*, p.15.

285. Lionel Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p. 362.
286. J.B. Priestley, "What Was Wrong With Pinfold?", New Statesman, 31 August 1957, p. 224 in Martin Stannard (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 389.
287. Evelyn Waugh, "Anything Wrong With Priestley?", Spectator, 13 Sept., 1957 in Donat Gallagher (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London, 1977, p. 137.
288. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1979, p. 38.
289. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp. 83-84.
290. *ibid.*, p. 98.
291. *ibid.*, p. 98.
292. *ibid.*, p. 156.
293. J.E. Priestley, "What Was Wrong With Pinfold?", New Statesman, 31 August 1957, p. 224 in Martin Stannard (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 391.
294. John Raymond, New Statesman, 20 Oct. 1957, p. 68, in Martin Stannard (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 385-86.
295. Jeffrey Heath, *op.cit.*, p. 2.
296. Evelyn Waugh, "Ronald Firbank", in Donat Gallagher (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London, 1977, p. 77.
297. Philip Toynbee, Observer, 21 July 1957, p. 13 in Martin Stannard (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 337.

298. Unsigned Review, Times Literary Supplement,
19 July 1957, p.437, in Martin Stannard(ed.),
op.cit., p.383.
299. Donat O'Donnell, Spectator, 19 July 1957, p.112
in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.381.

CHAPTER 3

1. The sustaining of an injury in the leg in late 1943 during World War II period, to use a cliché, a blessing in disguise for Waugh as the artist in him got time to ponder over the composition of a new book during the period of convalescent leave. His letter to Laura Waugh, dated 25 January 1944, suggested intense enthusiasm in discovering a new plot for his next novel.

I have written to Col. Fergusson asking for three months' leave to write a book & am going to the Ministry of Information this afternoon to try & enlist their support. It will be an enormous boon if it is granted.¹

(Amory, Mark (ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1980, p. 176.)

Having succeeded in getting leave, Waugh retired to Chagford in order to translate the nebulous ideas in his mind into a fictive whole. The entry in the diary on 31 January 1944 clearly spells out this purpose of his visit.

Today Monday, I came to Chagford with the intention of starting on an ambitious novel tomorrow morning. I still have a cold and am low in spirits but I feel full of literary power which only this evening gives place to qualms of impotence.²

(Michael Davie (ed.), The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, on Weidenfeld & Nicolson London, 1976, pp. 557-8.)

According to this entry, Waugh should have begun writing the novel on Feb. 1, 1944. But his letter to Laura Waugh, from Chagford, on Feb. 1, 1944, mystifies the fact, as in it, he claims to have already 'done 2,387 (words) in

1¹/₂ days' which can be so only in case he had² begun writing on 31 January, 1944. For four months, he lived the life of a recluse in order to be able to keep up the tempo of his impassioned writing. At last on 16 June 1944, the novel got licked into shape.

2. The 'warning' appeared in the inside flap of the dust jacket of the novel.
3. *ibid.*
4. F.M. Cornford in 'The Ritual Origins of Comedy', The Origin of Attic Comedy (London, 1914), pp. 3-4, 53-60 argues the association of comedy with the theme of triumphant renewal of life, celebrated in various forms of ancient and absolute games and rituals, Northrop Frye's well-known essay 'The Argument of Comedy', in English Institute Essays, 1948 (New York, 1949), pp. 58-73, brought out the ritual pattern of death and resurrection in different forms. The efforts of both these literary theorists have therefore established the claim of many works of art, displaying this pattern in their plots, to the title of comedy. In fact, this view of comedy has come to be regarded as superior to that of Aristotle which lays emphasis on the ludicrous. This has endowed comedy with a grandeur that has otherwise been associated only with tragedy.
5. Bernard Bergonzi, The Situation of the Novel, Macmillan, London, 1979, p. 111.
6. Harry Blamires., The Christian Mind, S.P.C.K., London, 1963, p. 67.
7. Nancy Mitford., quoted in Mark Amory (ed.), The Letters of Evelyn Waugh, Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., London, 1982, p. 196.

8. Evelyn Waugh, in Mark Amory (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.196.
9. V.C., Clinton Baddely, Spectator, 8 June 1945, p.532 in Martin Stannard (ed.), Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984, p.237.
10. Jeffrey Heath, The Picturesque Prison, Evelyn Waugh and His Writing, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1982, p.161.
11. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, Penguin Harmondsworth, 1968, p.41.
12. David Lodge, Evelyn Waugh, Columbia University Press, New York, 1971, p.33.
13. A.E.Dyson, "Evelyn Waugh: And the Mysteriously Disappearing Hero", The Crazy Fabric, Macmillan, London, 1966, p.194.
14. V.C. Clinton-Braddeley, *op.cit.*, p.238.
15. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p.163.
16. *ibid.*, p.172.
17. *ibid.*, p.182.
18. *ibid.*, p.193.
19. *ibid.*, p.216.
20. *ibid.*, p.216.
21. *ibid.*, p.263.

22. *ibid.*, p.244.
23. *ibid.*, p.288.
24. *ibid.*, pp.295-6.
25. *ibid.*, p.312.
26. *ibid.*, p.318.
27. *ibid.*, p.318.
28. *ibid.*, p.322
29. *ibid.*, p.322.
30. Edmund Wilson, New Yorker, 5 January 1946, in Martin Stannard(ed.), *op.cit.*, p.245.
31. *ibid.*, p.245.
32. Evelyn Waugh in Mark Amory(ed.), *op.cit.*, p.206.
33. Stephen Spender, "The World of Evelyn Waugh," The Creative Element, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1953, p.172.
34. A.A.De Vitis, Roman Holiday, Vision Press, London, 1958, pp.46-7.
35. Rose Macoulay, Horizon, December, 1946 in Martin Stannard(ed.), *op.cit.*, p.254.
36. Evelyn Waugh, "Converted to Rome: why it has Happened to me," Daily Express, 20 October 1930 in Donat Gallagher(ed.), The Essays, Articles & Reviews of Evelyn Waugh, Methuen, London, 1983, p.103.

37. A.A.De Vitis, *op.cit.*,p.53.
38. Evelyn Waugh, in Mark Amory(ed.), *op.cit.*,p.200.
39. John K. Hutchens, New York Times Book Review, 30 Dec.,1945, in Martin Stannard,*op.cit.*,p.242.
40. Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited,Penguin Harmondsworth,1968,pp.330-31.
41. *ibid.*,p.331.
42. Harry Blamires, *op.cit.*,p.67.
43. Jeffrey Heath, *op.cit.*,p.52.
44. Donat O' Donnell, "The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh", Bell, December 1946,in Martin Stannard(ed.), *op.cit.*,p.259.
45. T.J. Barrington, Bell,Feb.1947 in Martin Stannard,*op.cit.*,p.265.
46. Evelyn Waugh, Bell,July 1947,in Martin Stannard, *op.cit.*,p.270.
47. *ibid.*,p.271.
48. David Fryce-Jones, Time and Tide,23 July 1960, in Martin Stannard, *op.cit.*,p.274.
49. Frank J Yarte et al.,Progress and the Crisis of Man,Nelson-Hall Inc.,Chicago,1976,p.86.
50. Evelyn Waugh, To Robin Campbell,27 December, 1945,Piers Court,in Mark Amory(ed.),*op.cit.*,p.215.

51. Christopher Sykes, Evelyn Waugh, William Collins Sons & Co.Ltd., London, 1975, p.318.
52. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.9.
53. See reference no. 259 in Ch.2.
54. Evelyn Waugh, The Ordeal of Gillert Pinfold, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.9.
55. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp.24-25.
56. Evelyn Waugh, in Mark Amory(ed.), op.cit., p.207.
57. F.J. Stopp, "Grace in Reins", Month, August 1953, in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.332.
58. ibid., p.331.
59. Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel, Vol.11, Barnes & Noble Inc., New York, 1967, p.359.
60. John Raymond, New Statesman, 21 October 1930, p.374, in Martin Stannard(ed.), op.cit., p.321.
61. Harry Blamires, op.cit., p.86.
62. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.32.
63. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.15, Encyclopaedia Britannia Inc., Chicago, 1981, p.993.

64. Evelyn Waugh, "Come Inside" in Donat Gallagher(ed.), A Little Order, Eyre Methuen, London, 1977, p.148.
65. Evelyn Waugh, Helena, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.84.
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80. Christopher Sykes in his book Evelyn Waugh, disputes Waugh's success in writing this novel and therefore considers his enthusiasm unjustified.
81. The three novels that comprise The Sword of Honour Trilogy (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984) were originally published separately at various points of time. While Men At Arms and Officers and Gentlemen were published by Chapman & Hall in 1952 and 1955 respectively, Unconditional Surrender was published after an unusually long interval of time in 1961.
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