



THE PROBLEMS OF THE ENGLISH SOCIETY THROUGH THE DEPICTION OF ARTISTIC CREATIONS OF EVELYN WAUGH.

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Abstract:

This article is devoted to exploration how his satirical novels play with dominant structures of rationality and challenges the ways in which everybody comes across in the society in that times. In this chapter we examined two main aspects of Evelyn Waugh's textual practice: namely his experiment with literary form and his treatment of what one might consider social topics.

Keywords: Caricature, Grotesque, Sensuality, Solitude, Self-Indulgence, Immaturity, And Heterodoxy

Evelyn Waugh is considered a humorist and a recognized prose stylist. In his later works, social conservatism is traced, and religiosity becomes more explicit. The works of the writer cause controversy among critics. The critic Martin Amis found that the snobbery in "Brideshead revisited" was "a failure of the imagination and an artistic failure". On the other hand, the American literary critic Edmund Wilson declared Waugh "the only first-class comic genius to have appeared in English literature since Bernard Shaw." In 1966, a *Time* magazine obituary summarized that Waugh "developed a viciously hilarious and yet essentially religious attack on the century, which, in his view, severed the nourishing root of tradition and dried up all the values of the time in which the author lived." The heroes of Evelyn Waugh's works are a series of caricatured, sometimes grotesque, bordering on the absurd portraits of the "gentlemen" of modern England, from poseurs, idlers, empty-minded people, swindlers and scoundrels to truly decent simpletons who evoke a sympathetic smile, always enjoying the author's favor and sympathy.

Selina Hastings, the author of a "Multi-volume biography of Waugh"¹, writes at its very beginning:

Evelyn Waugh's reputation rests on two foundations: that he was one of the best stylists of twentieth-century English prose, and that in life he was a monster. To speak on the first question, you need to read his books; on the second, you need to turn to his life.

Looking back over his life from the vantage-point of his sixtieth year, Evelyn Waugh recalled his boyhood fascination with the "derelict furnace-house" and "old kitchen-garden" of his aunts' house at Midsomer Norton: "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."²

Crease taught Waugh the fine art of manuscript lettering and illumination, and his retiring, almost furtive character stands in sharp contrast to those of the glaringly public figures who influenced Waugh at other times. Waugh eventually outgrew the influence of his cloistered mentor, for he saw that Crease's type of retirement was inadequate and even dangerous. But he never gave up his desire for a sanctuary, and he embarked upon a lifelong quest for the right kind of seclusion. 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 very core of his work and personality. In the novels before "Brideshead Revisited" Waugh's protagonists typically find solitary refuges which are false—not unlike Francis Crease's—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. To express the pattern in other terms, the characters—more properly, the personae—of Waugh's early fiction try to take refuge in the barbarous and essentially immature City of Man; later they find the authentic sanctuary they seek in the City of God. Until they do so they are mere shadows capering in a debased realm which is a parody of the real world and a travesty of the richer past.

Waugh's nostalgia for the lush places of this world shows how deeply he longed for their sensuality, solitude, self-indulgence, immaturity, and heterodoxy; his ruthless rejection of them shows how intensely he

¹ Selina Hastings. "Evelyn Waugh: A Biography" New York, Whitson Publishing, 1963-p 67

² Davis Robert "Evelyn Waugh, A Little Learning" - (London: Chapman and Hall, 1964), p.44



needed to impose order and stability upon his wayward impulses. As things turned out, Waugh never wholly exorcised his immature love of the profane world; in the end, indeed, his long struggle to purge himself of the unripe and the untrue only drove the two sides of his cleft nature even further apart. The deep rift in Waugh's psyche between the worldly and the other-worldly made him unhappy, but it also generated the tensions which sustain his art and give it its characteristic quirky complexity.

Waugh both feared and loved the lush places, and despite his lifelong attack on immaturity he could not root it out of his own heart. Although he tried to exorcise them, Paul, Adam, William Boot, Ambrose Silk, and Basil Seal probably remain closer to the essential Evelyn Waugh than Charles Ryder and Guy Crouchback. In later life Waugh adopted the outward pose of a patriarchal country gentleman who abominated the world, but that orderly patriarch harboured in his soul a Dionysiac youth who was fascinated by what he loathed. Insistent on the Augustan graces though he was, Waugh never overcame his Petronian impulses; to the end he was always partly in thrall to memories of an age without restraint. What induced Waugh habitually to view life as a seductive trap, and to seek a true discipline to counteract life's blandishments? The answer seems to be, in part, that his riotous life at Oxford taught him to distrust his own unguided impulses. There, he learned that complete freedom was its own form of imprisonment. Undoubtedly because of the anarchy which he sensed not far below the surface of his own nature, Waugh frequently argued that discipline, or "imprisonment," was beneficial to the creative faculties. As early as 1929, in a sharp attack on the aimless "younger generation," he prescribed "the imposition by rigid discipline ... of the standards of civilization.... The muscles which encounter the most resistance in daily routine are those which become most highly developed and adapted. It is thus that the restraint of a traditional culture tempers and directs creative impulses. Freedom produces sterility."³

Satire and Roman Catholicism are the bookends of much that is written about Evelyn Waugh. His own attitudes towards these twin supports of his academic reputation differed. He declined to agree that he was a satirist, and insisted on his Catholicism to a degree that sometimes brought him close to denigration of his earlier, non Catholic novels.

By basing his definition on forms of society and ideology that no longer exist, Waugh asserts the historical impossibility of his being a satirist, and then he goes on to suggest for himself and any like him another historical role. 'The artist's only service in the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own'. The next sentence shows that he does not mean by this art for art's sake. 'I foresee in the dark age opening that the scribes may play the part of the monks after the first barbarian victories. They were not satirists'. They were, however, primitive historians. If what they recorded seems excessive, it is because they chronicled the deeds of barbarians, persons of habitual excess, but their accounts share the perspective of a religious affiliation. The little systems of order will not therefore be independent of each other.

Evelyn Waugh in 1930 instilled Catholicism. Having matured as a writer even before the war, he came into conflict in many books with the views that he declared. Thus, declaring his commitment to Catholicism, he appeared in his novels directly or indirectly (through characters close to him) as a skeptic, gnostic and nihilist⁴

As a result of his commitment to Catholicism, during the war he expressed very dubious and false opinions about Italian fascism. Back in the 1930s, he admired Mussolini and called the English Jesuit Campeony (executed for espionage against the motherland in the XVI century) a martyr for the faith." According to the apt remark of R. Fox Waugh thus found himself in the years of the broad anti-Fascist movement on the eve of the Second World War in the tenacious embrace of the nationalism of another country. In the second and third parts of his trilogy, a lot of stories are scattered, talking about the hostility, then about the author's sympathy for the Soviet Union-an ally country"

Waugh is defining the role of the novelist as (Catholic) historian, although in 1946 he had modified and would continue to modify the role as he had played it up until the war. He is misleading only if his fans infer that the role he describes is new for him. He had played it from the start of his career.

From the beginning of his career Waugh believed that the hollowness of modern British culture stemmed from a crucial failure of taste, although it was some time before he explicitly connected that failure with the absence of religious values. In Waugh's journalism right after "Decline and Fall" there is a preoccupation with

³ Evelyn Waugh, "The War and the Younger Generation," *Spectator*, 13 April 1929, P- 570.

⁴ Evelyn Waugh "Brideshead Revisited" London: Chatto and Windus, 1940 p49



what he liked to call the "bogus." Setting himself up as a spokesman for youth, he also became one of its harshest critics. He claimed that young people lacked "qualitative standards" and that they even preferred the second-rate: "People no longer speak of 'pearls' and 'artificial pearls' but of 'pearls' and 'real pearls'... There is more or less of anything: a bottle of champagne or two bottles, but no idea that between one bottle and another differences of date and brand should suggest a preference."⁵

Waugh pointed to two main reasons for the rise of the "bogus" quantitative world: the "substitutes" of wartime and the failure of fathers to educate their offspring.

No "imposition by rigid discipline ... of the standards of civilization" ever took place, and so the younger generation became "the ineffectual and indiscriminating people we lament today."⁶

Waugh's early novels and travel books do not at first glance appear to be animated by a religious impulse; indeed, they seem to reflect the more dandified ideal of taste represented by Harold Acton. Acton and Waugh both scorned the fraudulent and the derivative, but Waugh's "disgusto," as one reviewer called it, sprang from deeper convictions than Acton's.

The definition of "Catholic writer" has become a label that supposedly removes all further questions about Waugh's work. We believe that every religious writer, especially of the Waugh scale, has an individual perception of faith, God, and theology. Turning to the work of Catholic writers in England in the twentieth century, we should talk about the Catholicism of G. K. Chesterton, H. Belloc, Graham Greene, J. R. R. Tolkien, etc. as individual worldviews, somewhat different from each other – and from the standard understanding of Catholic doctrine. Therefore, we believe it is important to identify precisely the special Catholicism characteristic of Evelyn Waugh as a person and a writer, those aspects of his personal individual faith that determined the direction of his work and those key concepts on which the problems of his works are based to a certain extent.

At the same time, it is worth noting that Waugh's work is almost completely devoid of the taste of propaganda, which is often present in writers with a clearly expressed ideology, whether religious or political. His Christianity is organically woven into the artistic world of his works, so that in his case, the analysis of creativity and biography complement each other, are a single whole. We work with the edge at which the artistic world of the

work reveals the real biographical author, so much attention is paid to diaries, letters, and biographical evidence.

As a conclusion it can be seen that Contemporary satire writer Evelyn Waugh is not afraid to expand the notion of what constitutes a satirical works. The Chapter III has an attempt to capture the larger thematic potential of Evelyn, involved in his textual practice and this chapter is address to the question of his characters and the shape of satire in the English society in his early novels, rather than being put into literary boxes, Evelyn Waugh thrives in the freedom of unsolved problems.

We have argued that Evelyn Waugh's literary innovation not only concerns his formal style, but the ability to produce a more nuanced perception of female characters in literature. Our aim has been to show his variety and display a dimension of his work which has gone unnoticed by critics. In the second chapter, we discussed the feminist significance of these narrative strategies of his male and female characters and how his textual practice affects the satirical genre as an arena for literary experiment. A signature quality for much of Evelyn Waugh's satirical novel is the freedom of exploring a fictional landscape beyond logical reasoning.

In addition, we analyzed critics' and other writers' opinions about Evelyn Waugh's methods to create characters in the novel. Are all characters and personages taken from real life or imaginative? And of course, the created situations and events portrait written based on the social position of the country. And also moral positions of the people after World War II, their behavior, desires, and even everyday life description detailed in almost his very novel.

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⁵ Evelyn Waugh, "Matter-of-Fact Mothers of the New Age," Evening Standard, 8 April 1929, p. 7.

⁶ Evelyn Waugh, "The War and the Younger Generation," *Spectator*, 13 April 1929, pp., 570



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