

Art, Architecture and Aesthetics: Evelyn Waugh  
and the Visual Arts

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## **Abstract**

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This thesis explores Evelyn Waugh's aesthetic sensibilities through his written and visual art works in relation to the disciplines of art and architecture. A significant creative tension in his work derives from an adherence to contradictory theories of the source of artistic accomplishment. He was torn between the idea of the artist channelling an intrinsically mystical energy, as experienced by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the idea of skill arising from discipline and craftsmanship as defined by Roger Fry. These impulses I define as 'romantic' and 'rational', relating respectively to questions of spirit and inspiration, and to the representation of the secular, and objective representation.

Waugh's visual art is not widely recognised or studied. I have had unprecedented access to all known letters, diaries, and artwork. Thus my first chapter offers new insights into his early writing process, suggesting how the construction of the visual image became an integral element of his writing. The second chapter discusses Waugh's art collection, which included Pre-Raphaelite works and Victorian narrative paintings. The tension between the romantic and rational remains but manifests itself in collecting, rather than creation.

Completing the picture are Waugh's theories on architecture. He uses architectural symbolism to gain narrative distance from his subjects, reflecting the impulse behind his emotionless book illustrations. From 1930 Waugh sought shelter from what he considered chaotic egalitarianism, within the seemingly permanent walls of the aristocratic country house. After the Second World War, however, his only refuge was his Catholic faith, itself threatened by Vatican II's liturgical reforms, removing the vital element of privacy Waugh always sought, and destroying the link between priest and craftsman. Retreating into his work, he combined again the romantic and rational sides of his aesthetic ideology in the notion of pious creation.

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## Introduction

*'Mr. Waugh, it is said here that you are irascible and reactionary. Will you please say something offensive?'*<sup>1</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> September 1953 three young broadcasters, Charles Wilmot, Jack Davies and Stephen Black interviewed Evelyn Waugh for the BBC radio programme 'Frankly Speaking'.<sup>2</sup> This show was based on an existing French programme '*Quis êtes-vous?*' and imitated as best it could its interrogative style of interviewing, resulting in one of the most notoriously ill-natured and unpleasant conversations recorded for the series. The BBC launched 'Frankly Speaking' in December 1952, thus Waugh's interview was relatively early on in the series' history, the thirteenth episode to be broadcast. There were about one hundred episodes produced in all, and sadly very few of the recordings have survived. Waugh was in distinguished company as a 'Frankly Speaking' subject, also interviewed in 1953 were the author Rebecca West, producer Walt Disney, architect and designer Hugh Casson, athlete Roger Bannister and politician Eleanor Roosevelt.<sup>3</sup> It is important to provide some cultural context to this radio programme in order to fully understand its impact on Waugh, and indeed on its contribution to his public image as an ill-tempered reactionary. Clement Atlee's Labour government (1945-1951) made huge changes to the way post-war Britain operated<sup>4</sup> and this had a significant effect on culture, even after their defeat by the Conservatives in the 1951 General Election. In this era of monumental change, traditions were challenged and questioned, not least in the arts and in popular culture. Therefore, the aggressively modern format of 'Frankly Speaking', its interrogative interview style far removed from the polite, reserved spirit of 'Desert Island Discs' (first broadcast in 1942) was part of the zeitgeist. The art and design of the 1950s was full of jagged, kinetic shapes that demanded attention and in

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 765.

<sup>2</sup> The programme was later broadcast on 16 November 1953.

<sup>3</sup> It is curious in fact, given the high profile of these guests, that the programme should be broadcast at around ten p.m. on a weeknight, particularly in the first years of the series.

<sup>4</sup> Atlee's government began deconstructing the British Empire, granting independence to Pakistan, India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. It nationalised various vital industries including the Bank of England, the British Electricity Authority, National Rail services, the coal industry and the Iron and Steel Corporation. It also oversaw the creation of the National Health Service and implemented the welfare state, passing the National Insurance Act in 1946.

many cases defied interpretation. Heavily inspired by developments in space science, everything from curtains to coffee tables took on a distinctly futuristic air. It was not an environment particularly suited to Evelyn Waugh, and it is fair to say that he occasionally relished the role of an ultra-conservative anachronism. The set-up of the interview, pitting three earnest interviewers against one subject is threatening, but if Wilmot, Davies and Black thought they would manage to goad Waugh into exposing any of this supposed bigotry, they were sadly mistaken. After the broadcast of the 'Frankly Speaking' interview Waugh notes in a letter to Nancy Mitford that 'They tried to make a fool of me & I don't believe they entirely succeeded.'<sup>5</sup> Though Waugh did fairly well in the face of the BBC's onslaught, the qualifier 'entirely' in his letter is telling; the experience unsettled Waugh's self-confidence and the nature of his subsequent mental breakdown seems to have been rooted in these interrogations.

Waugh drew upon his experience with the BBC Home Service in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957), where the titular character is persecuted by disembodied voices he thinks are being broadcast from the radio. He was not overly keen on giving the interview in the first place; there are several letters which go back and forth from his agent A. D. Peters and the BBC negotiating fees, and a letter from Waugh himself to Joseph Weltman of the BBC stating that he was 'prepared, provided the fee is adequate, to answer any number of reasonable questions on general subjects. I do not think I have the necessary talents to give the impression that I am taking part in a three-cornered intimate chat with personal friends.'<sup>6</sup> Ultimately the questions Waugh was asked strayed quite far from 'general subjects' and so he cannot be criticised for the bristling, and at times exasperated, tone he took with his inquisitors. Nobody would confuse the interview with an 'intimate chat with personal friends'; it was more in the manner of an interrogation intended to, for example, incriminate a suspect through the use of badgering and deliberately misconstruing the answers to some very emotionally charged questions. Despite this, the answers Waugh gives (when he is able to elaborate upon them) provide a real insight into his thoughts about art, collecting and the

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<sup>5</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, 11 December 1953 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Mark Amory (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 471; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>6</sup> EW to J. Weltman, 2 September 1953, in *Letters*, p. 464; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

creative process, and it is important to disentangle this enlightening content from his understandable antagonism toward his interviewers.

Early in the interview Waugh is asked about his career – had he always wanted to be a writer? –to which he responds: ‘Oh far from it. My early dream was to be a man of action.’ His choice of words here is significant, as he then continues to define what a man of ‘action’ might actually do, the list consisting of exploring, being a carpenter or making objects. These choices are perhaps surprising, especially considering Waugh served as a soldier in the Second World War, perhaps the most obvious embodiment of the ‘man of action’. Instead, he focuses on practical, workmanlike pursuits, and continues to return to this idea of the carpenter throughout the interview. The time he practised carpentry in the late 1920s may only have been brief, but it was, he said, ‘the nearest I got to what I wanted to do.’ He registered at the Academy of Carpentry on Southampton Row in central London on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1927 and ‘arranged to go to a great many classes’.<sup>7</sup> Here Waugh refers to The Central School of Arts and Crafts, a School whose array of courses was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement through the direction of its founder, William R. Lethaby.

In a diary entry from December 1927,<sup>8</sup> Waugh records making a mahogany bed table ‘not very well’. It appears that this is the same piece of furniture he refers to in the interview as being in use after thirty or forty years, so perhaps it was not so badly made after all, at least from a functional point of view. When asked why he writes, Waugh insists that he wishes only ‘to make a pleasant object’, but any suggestion of sympathy toward the notion of ‘art for art’s sake’ is quickly discarded: ‘I think any work of art is something exterior to oneself, it’s the making of something whether it’s a bed table or a book’, a sentiment later echoed in *Gilbert Pinfold*. Pinfold is described as seeing ‘books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself to be used and judged by others.’<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on the physicality of a work of art, and the universality he applies to seemingly discrete objects as a book or a piece of furniture is vital to an understanding of Waugh’s artistic opinions. He values skilful, craftsman-like work, items that are useful but

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<sup>7</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 308.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1998), p. 5. Hereafter *TOOGP*.

not utilitarian and things that are beautiful, not solely decorative. In this way Waugh's aesthetic ideals are probably the closest to those of the Arts and Crafts movement, but his disdain for collaborative artistic endeavours meant that he could never be entirely comfortable with their way of working. It is also telling that Waugh should refer to his work as carpentry, when in fact what he learnt at The Central School of Arts and Crafts would be more accurately described as cabinetmaking, a finer art. Indeed, information on the School suggests that "carpentry" *per se* was not offered, the closest department being that of Cabinet-Work and Furniture.<sup>10</sup>

There are at least two reasons Waugh might have stressed the humble nature of his work: that he did not have much confidence in the quality of his woodwork (borne out by the mahogany bed table), or, more theologically, because of its association with Saint Joseph, father of Christ. A letter from Harold Acton in January 1928 is interesting in this respect.

But what of the other news, that you have taken to Carpentry? I am astonished and delighted by this, for there are such great things to be done in this direction, and the craftsmen have long lain cold in the churchyard: I am sure you will make beautiful things. Your Christmas design reached me: was this a symbol that you are following in the footsteps of Saint Joseph?<sup>11</sup>

The Christmas design Acton refers to here is Waugh's 1927 Christmas card (see fig. 1) which features an overlapped image containing two doves, holly leaves and berries and three woodworking tools: a clamp, a saw and another item which is harder to identify, but which is probably a wide, flat chisel. That the design forms a rudimentary cross, contains the tools of a carpenter and uses the Christian symbols of the dove and holly would have led Acton to his conclusion. It seems Waugh first made an ink drawing of the design that was then made into a line block print, as annotations on the original work indicate.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Central School of Arts and Crafts - Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951'  
<[http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/organization.php?id=msib2\\_1212166601](http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/organization.php?id=msib2_1212166601)> [accessed 20 September 2017].

<sup>11</sup> Harold Acton to EW, 1 January 1928; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.

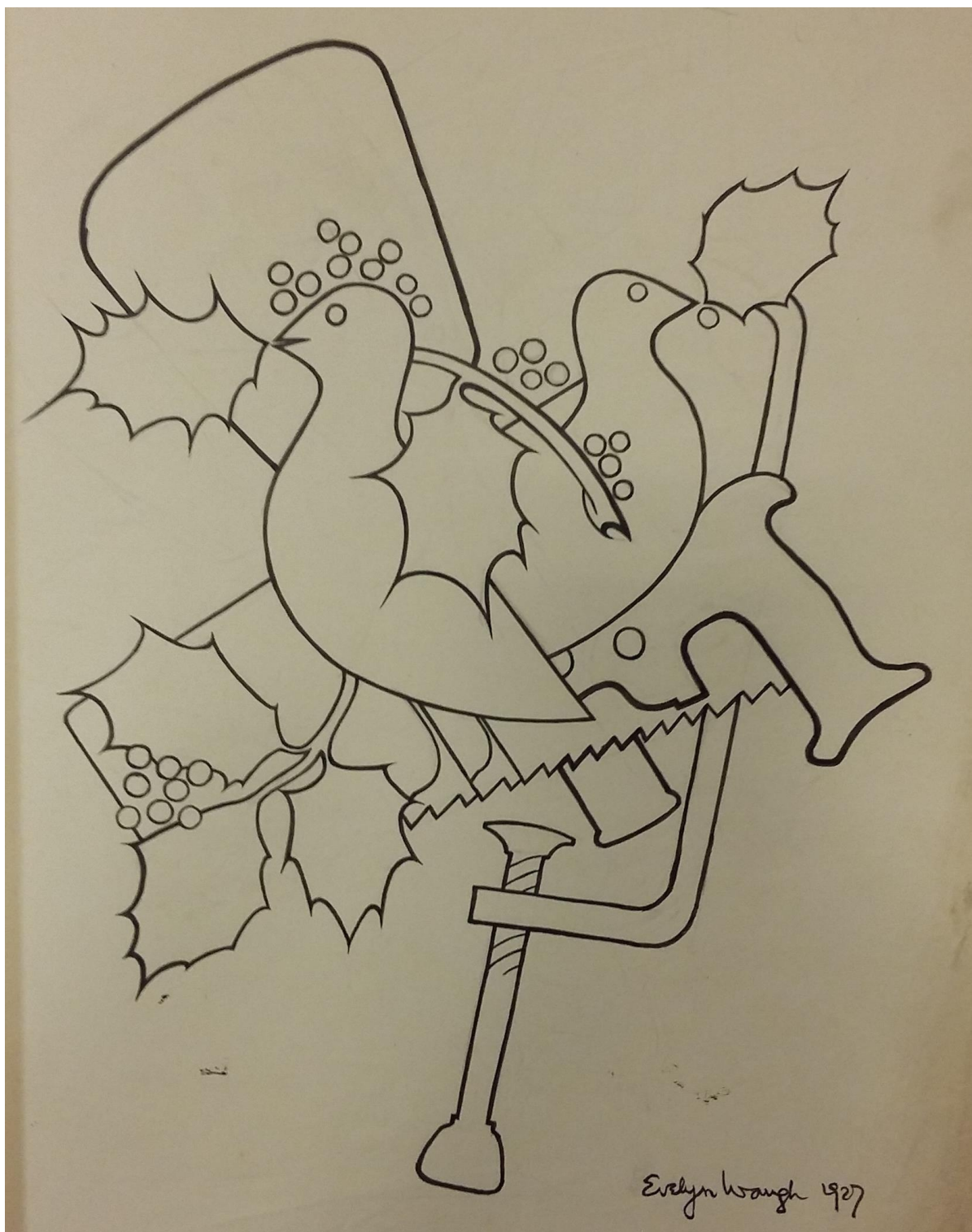


Fig. 1. Untitled pen and ink drawing by Evelyn Waugh, 1927. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

In 1927 Waugh was not actively practising Christianity, and he would not convert to Catholicism until 1930, so in producing this sort of image, Waugh was expressing an unacknowledged religious sensibility through his art that had nowhere else to go. It is an entirely unsentimental representation of religious imagery in the simple and practical tools of the craftsman that has its precedent in John Everett Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1850).

Waugh is able to elaborate on his opinions about carpentry in the 'Frankly Speaking' interview, as he is asked whether the discipline has been subject to the same kind of degradation as painting had suffered in exposure to modernist techniques. His reply that 'carpenters have almost ceased to exist as a race' is hyperbolic, but he is not incorrect when he states that at the time of the interview:

[...] things are now produced by steaming bits of wood and bending them into shape, or even worse in bending bits of metal. Where the art of carpentry exists it is purely in a rather cranky arts and crafts way and there is still some sound work being done in that I think.<sup>12</sup>

It is likely that Waugh had a few specific 'cranky' carpenters in mind, for instance Arthur Romney Green<sup>13</sup>, who worked in the arts and crafts mould. Indeed, an entry from Waugh's diary in December 1927 records that Henry Lamb had offered to drive him down to Bournemouth to see Romney Green. Unfortunately this visit falls within the six-month gap in which Waugh failed to keep a diary, but if they did indeed meet, it is not too much of a leap to imagine they would have found aesthetic sensibilities in common.

Thus Waugh's interest in what he calls "carpentry" is a metaphor for how he saw his own artistic process; the hidden, accurate work involved in putting together a piece of furniture is not so far removed than the work of the author who wishes to 'make a pleasant object'. Douglas Woodruff<sup>14</sup> certainly appreciated the workmanship of *The Loved One*, writing, 'I have read [it] twice, the second time to admire the joinery and cabinet making'.<sup>15</sup> And, examination of Waugh's early

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<sup>12</sup> Evelyn Waugh, Stephen Black, Jack Davies and Charles Wilmot, 'Frankly Speaking Interview', 16 November 1953 in *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (1964; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, 525–37 (p. 531).

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Romney Green (1872-1945) woodworker, designer and writer.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Woodruff (1897-1978) journalist and editor of the Catholic review *The Tablet* between 1936 and 1967.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Woodruff to Evelyn Waugh, February 1948; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

manuscripts gives an insight into his editing process, with sections cut out and stuck in. The *Rossetti* manuscript resembles a kind of collage, as not only does Waugh cut and paste his own work, he also sticks entire pages of books he quotes from into the manuscript. This method of assemblage emphasises Waugh's earlier, slightly more haphazard writing process. *Vile Bodies* (1930) is an interesting case when considering Waugh's revision process as it is inextricably linked to his separation from his first wife, Evelyn Waugh née Gardner. Waugh was in the process of writing the novel when She-Evelyn (as she was known) deserted him, and as Martin Stannard argues in his introduction to the *Complete Works* edition of *Vile Bodies*, edited certain passages to 'bite back [...] the whole text [became] something of a public letter to his wife, sometimes bitter, sometimes almost confessional.'<sup>16</sup> Examples of these edits include the removal of 'comic references to fashionable Cockney chatter' in sections of dialogue with Agatha Runcible, which Stannard suggests increases the objectivity with which Waugh presents the antics of the Bright Young People in the novel.<sup>17</sup> With his divorce from a fashionable member of that set, Waugh no longer felt part of the world depicted in *Vile Bodies* and so revisions of this kind that remove the narrator from the text are both stylistic and pragmatic. Waugh thus cultivated the cynical, removed style of narration that defines the large majority of his fictional writing.

Waugh never finished the second part of his autobiography, *A Little Hope* but three drafts survive and are published in John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke's *Complete Works* edition of *A Little Learning*. These drafts show Waugh revising and reworking the story of his failed suicide attempt, which he claims was curtailed by a sting from a jellyfish while trying to drown himself. In the first draft, Waugh states 'My prospects were as bleak, my character as feckless as before my encounter with the jelly-fish. Nevertheless I had unknowingly passed a climacteric.'<sup>18</sup> By the second draft however this reference to a climacteric has been removed, and Waugh's self criticism is markedly increased: 'My prospects were as empty, my character as unstable, my habits as extravagant & dissolute as before my encounter with the jelly-fish but by minute degrees everything became more

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Stannard, 'Introduction' to Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, ed. by Martin Stannard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. xlviii.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. xlvii.

<sup>18</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 484.

agreeable.’<sup>19</sup> By the third, most complete draft, Waugh has returned to the original phrasing, changing the word ‘bleak’ to ‘empty’.<sup>20</sup> Hannah Sullivan’s states in her article on difficulties in the revision process of autobiography, ‘Autobiography and the Problem of Finish’, that there is ‘an ominous, lurking connection between completion and the death of the author’ thus ‘In autobiographical writing, where the writing subject and the written object designedly blur, [...] anxieties about closure and completion are sharpened.’<sup>21</sup> This is particularly true for Waugh, who was not only writing *A Little Hope* towards the end of his life in 1965, but also writing about the notion of a potential death arising from his suicide attempt in 1925. It is certainly a difficult way to begin the second part of his autobiography, and so the revisions he made between the first and third drafts of the opening pages become a way to track his ambivalent attitude toward the memory of these events. In the first draft Waugh is keen to emphasise the suicide attempt as a climacteric, even if he was not aware of it at the time. In the second draft Waugh shies away from this standpoint, the idea that ‘everything became more agreeable’ is less emotionally weighted, yet the criticism of his own character and habits seem to contradict this attempt at objectivity. The third draft reinstates the idea of a climacteric, and it could therefore be argued that through the process of revision and editing Waugh was able to reconcile his feelings toward his suicide attempt and rewrite it into an event which was a positive turning point in his life.

To return to the *Rossetti* manuscript, perhaps its unusual appearance is due to the haste in which it was written, but it is interesting that its first page is in a particularly neat hand, without crossings out or insertions, almost as though it had been written out before and copied up with a mind to making even the source of his first book a beautiful object – even if he found he could not continue in such a vein. It is worth mentioning too, that Waugh had his manuscripts bound professionally, and was particularly aggrieved that Mr Maltby,<sup>22</sup> the Oxford bookbinder, had disarranged some of the chapters of the *Rossetti* manuscript, making a note of the mistake on the inside of the front cover. It seems this was a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 484-5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 486.

<sup>21</sup> Hannah Sullivan, ‘Autobiography and the Problem of Finish’, *Biography*, 34.2 (2011), 298–325 (p. 299).

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Henry Maltby, Oxford bookbinder.



bone of contention for Waugh, as his diaries were also subject to the same disorganisation: 'According to his custom, Mr Maltby has seen fit to bind these diaries in the wrong order' Waugh wrote on the frontispiece of his 1925-1926 journals.<sup>23</sup> This fastidiousness with the appearance of his work, not only its content, is a key part of what Waugh tried to get across to Wilmot, Davies and Black in the interview. At the root of everything is artistic modesty and immersion in the physical process: '[...] because I'm not a good craftsman. It is only a pleasure doing things well.'<sup>24</sup> It is a statement that is pious in its devotion to the notion of work, a quasi-religious experience for Waugh, as we will see later in his criticism of the Modernist method, and his admiration for the figure of the artist-craftsman.

It is worth briefly explaining the history of three collaborative art groups, which in their own way all influenced Waugh and his aesthetic theories at different points in his career and which will be discussed in some detail in this introduction: the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood<sup>25</sup>, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.<sup>26</sup>, and the Omega Workshops. The first, both chronologically and in terms of importance is the PRB. Founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman-Hunt and John Everett Millais, the group's aim was to recapture the vivacity of painting produced before the influence of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Renaissance artist Raphael. In short this involved turning away from the strict conventionality of contemporary painting in favour of brighter colours and a desire to go 'back to nature' for inspiration. This was under the influence of John Ruskin, who encouraged members of the Pre-Raphaelites to paint *en plein-air*, which later became a central tenet of the Impressionist movement. William Michael Rossetti, writing in 1906, claimed that the idea of the Brotherhood was based in 'a serious and elevated invention of subject, along with earnest scrutiny of visible facts, and an earnest endeavour to present them veraciously and exactly.'<sup>27</sup> Though the works produced by the Pre-Raphaelites followed these principles, their individual

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<sup>23</sup> Despite these mistakes, Waugh must have felt some allegiance to Maltby's Bookbinders and writes in his diary in 1944 that he was disappointed that 'Maltby, the Oxford binder I have dealt with since I was an undergraduate, [...] writes that he is too busy with "local government work" to attend to my orders.' *Diaries*, p. 595.

<sup>24</sup> Waugh, 'Frankly Speaking', p. 532.

<sup>25</sup> Hereafter PRB.

<sup>26</sup> Hereafter MMF & Co.

<sup>27</sup> William Michael Rossetti, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Their World: A Personal View* (London: The Folio Society, 1995), p. 34.

painting styles are distinct; there was no attempt to create a homogenised, anonymous body of work.

MMF & Co. operated between 1861 and 1875 and was succeeded by the now more familiar Morris & Co. which remained in business until 1940, although its designs are still available to purchase today. MMF & Co. boasted several members and followers of the PRB as designers: Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones. The company is remembered for its medieval-inspired patterns and products, but this was not solely an aesthetic matter, it was also a socialist one. William Morris was a great believer in returning to the honest hand-craftsmanship of medieval artisans, which was at the heart of what would become the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Omega Workshops were founded in 1913 by Roger Fry, and aimed to unite the visual and decorative arts. This was not dissimilar to Morris's intention, but there was an emphasis on the anonymity of the work produced under the Omega Workshops 'brand'. Individual pieces were not signed but given the omega symbol, the last letter in the Greek alphabet. Fry wrote a fundraising letter to George Bernard Shaw in 1912 stating one of the reasons for this decision:

All the products of the workshop will be signed by a registered trademark. This will insure the exclusiveness of our designs, and [sic] important point in view of the inevitable commercial imitation which follows upon the success of any new ideas.<sup>28</sup>

It also allowed for the elimination of the artistic ego, and multiple artists 'working together with mutual assistance instead of each insisting on the singularity of his personal gifts [...] is of the utmost value in such decorative work as [Fry] propose[s], where co-operation is a first necessity.'<sup>29</sup> The brightly coloured, abstract designs coming out of the Omega Workshops were less distinguishable as the work of particular artists than the work produced by the PRB, and though one could argue that this rendered the products soulless and un-craftsman-like, imitating the mass production methods of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was not their original aim. In his prospectus Fry argues that 'While deploring the extreme tyranny of mechanism in modern production they [the artists at Omega] are willing to make use of it so far as it allows of the expression

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<sup>28</sup> Roger Fry and Christopher Reed, 'Omega Workshops Fundraising Letter', in *A Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 196–97 (p. 197).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

of their ideas'.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately the Workshops closed after just six years in operation due to poor sales.

Part of Waugh's attraction to craftsmanship undoubtedly came from the industrious spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement, as previously stated. Its influence would have still been felt keenly in the then quiet suburb of Golders Green where Waugh spent his formative years. Yet it was the PRB that really caught his attention, starting a lifelong passion for their paintings which culminated in his owning a small, but significant collection of works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and Arthur Hughes. When questioned about his taste in painting during the 'Frankly Speaking' interview, Waugh maintains that 'real' painting ended around 1870, and is impatient to establish (even interrupting questions about French Impressionism) that he has a 'keen interest in the Pre-Raphaelites and in English nineteenth-century subject painting.'<sup>31</sup>

As with the members of the Arts and Crafts movement Waugh was wary of collaborative artistic work, but despite this he remained entranced with the Pre-Raphaelites throughout his life, a self proclaimed 'brotherhood', but one that never really defined its boundaries. The work of Rossetti, Hunt and Millais differs wildly in style, and Waugh had a particular preference for the technically less accomplished, but more emotive style of Rossetti. Like the adherents of the Arts and Crafts movement, the Pre-Raphaelites were also interested in the more practical application of their artistry,<sup>32</sup> another element of their work that attracted the craftsman in Waugh. In 1928 Waugh published *Rossetti His Life and Works* (1928), the theories of which are heavily influenced by Roger Fry. Fry's approach to artistic inspiration could not be further from that of Rossetti, something that will be examined in more detail later. Waugh's artistic consciousness, I shall argue, developed out of a tension between these two approaches.

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<sup>30</sup> Fry and Reed, 'Prospectus for the Omega Workshops', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, pp. 198–200 (p. 199).

<sup>31</sup> Waugh, 'Frankly Speaking', p. 531.

<sup>32</sup> Holman Hunt designed furniture inspired by ancient Egyptian decorative art, and Morris & Co. even named one of their rush-seated chairs after Rossetti.

The prominence given to Fry's ideas in *Rossetti* suggests that the Omega's anonymous alliance of artists was not always repugnant to him.<sup>33</sup> He seems to have been drawn to the idea of an artistic community, even though in practice he found it impossible to work with others. Indeed Stannard notes that by 1938 Waugh found collaborative writing 'the height of intellectual depravity'.<sup>34</sup> It became an issue of relinquishing artistic control, something that was at the forefront of Waugh's mind in 1947 when he and his wife Laura spent a month in Hollywood as guests of Metro Goldwyn Meyer to discuss adapting *Brideshead Revisited* for the screen.

The trip proved fruitful in that visits to the Forest Lawn cemetery in Los Angeles inspired *The Loved One* (1948), but working with the studio was impossible for him:

We then went to what was called a 'conference' which consisted of McGuinness coming for ten minutes and talking balls. Then the 'writer' was called in who proved to be Keith Winter whom I last knew as Willie Maugham's catamite at Villefranche. [...] He has been in Hollywood for years and sees *Brideshead* purely as a love story. None of them see the theological implication, though McGuinness says that 'a religious approach puts an American audience on your side'.<sup>35</sup>

Thus Waugh sees collaboration on creative projects as futile, and perhaps that is why he is more consistently positive about the PRB. Like the Omega Workshops, the PRB had a symbol, a stylised initialism often hidden in say, the leg of a chair, as in the case of Millais' *Isabella* (1849). But the difference between the two was that along with this identifying mark, Pre-Raphaelite works were often individually signed, and even when they were not, the styles of each artist were easily distinguishable. Thus to Waugh the group work of the PRB heightened individualism where that of the Omega Workshops produced only homogeneity; aesthetics here begins to cross over into politics.

This emphasis on the individual is a point Waugh attempts to return to again and again during the 'Frankly Speaking' interview, but is often prevented from doing so. Wilmot, Davies and Black seem intent on pushing him into making

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<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Waugh made regular anonymous contributions to the Oxford University magazine *Isis* under the name 'Scaramel' between 1922-1924.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh The Early Years: 1903-1939* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1986), p. 459.

<sup>35</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 708.

broad and bigoted generalisations - how else could they justify questions like 'Do you find it easy to get on with the man in the street?' <sup>36</sup> Waugh's uncharacteristically progressive response was: 'I've never met such a person', meaning not that he does not associate with ordinary people, but rather that he does not believe that such a homogenous figure exists: 'There is no ordinary run of mankind, there are only individuals who are totally different'.<sup>37</sup> And here politics (in which he had no interest) begins to transition into theology (in which he had great interest) as Waugh considers the unique nature of every human soul. Later, in another attempt to goad Waugh into incriminating himself as a right-wing snob, the interviewers state: 'You are enjoying a spectacle [...] of crowds, and yet crowds you don't like [...] You like, in fact, generally speaking to be in an upper window looking down.' Here Waugh admits his fondness for spectacle, but masterfully dodges any implication that he might be 'looking down' on society in a censorious way. In fact, this point in the interview is notable in that it touches more upon Waugh's literary technique than on his temperament, something that is generally lacking in the interview as a whole.

It is worth noting that Waugh as a narrator frequently seems to be poised above the action, both in his fiction and non-fiction; and he uses this technique particularly well in his travel writing. In *Labels* (1930), Waugh comments on how it 'was fun to see houses and motor cars looking so small and neat'<sup>38</sup> from the plane, and in *Vile Bodies* (1930) expands on the magnified exteriority of this viewpoint to explain Nina's nausea. In the plane on the way to her honeymoon, she begins to feel unwell as she looks out of the window at the country laid out in miniature beneath her. It is implied that her nausea is caused both by the motion of the aircraft and by the idea of a mass of tiny people 'marrying and shopping and making money and having children',<sup>39</sup> a relentless frenzy of arbitrary group activity that very literally sickens Nina. In this sense we might say that the interviewers have a point in criticising Waugh for his position as an author in an

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<sup>36</sup> Waugh, 'Frankly Speaking', p. 532.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 535.

<sup>38</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Labels: A Mediterranean Journal* (1930; London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, ed. by Martin Stannard, 43 vols (1930; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), II, p. 136.

‘upper window looking down’, as this view of the world seems very much removed from the quotidian experience of ‘the man in the street’.

If anything, the ‘Frankly Speaking’ interview shows Waugh simplifying his aesthetic tastes and theories of art. For at the heart of his work, and indeed his soul, was a series of contradictions that he spent his entire artistic and literary career attempting to reconcile. In *A Little Learning* he describes the origins of this aesthetic tension:

In the vacancies of the adolescent mind mutually contradictory principles make easy neighbours. From Beardsley there was no great distance to Eric Gill, for whose wood-cuts I developed an abiding love. I had no interest in his teaching, preferring Samuel Butler’s Notebooks, to which Barbara [Jacobs] introduced me, as a source of wisdom. I had not read much Ruskin, but I had in some way imbibed most of his opinions; nevertheless I respectfully studied works that would have been anathema to him, and my mind was divided by the knowledge that all that was most admired in modern painting was being done in defiance of his canon. I halted between two opinions and thought it more showy to express the new. Barbara, in fact, made an aesthetic hypocrite of me. It was many years before I would freely confess that the Paris school and all that derived from it were abhorrent to me.<sup>40</sup>

In truth what Jacobs may have done is to have engendered productive oppositions in the evolving aesthetic tastes of the then teenaged Waugh. Far from hypocrisy, these oppositions proved to be fertile ground from which Waugh’s major works would spring.

One of the earliest examples of an aesthetic opposition in Waugh’s work can be found in his first published piece of non-fiction, *Rossetti: His Life and Works*. Written no doubt in part due to the timeliness of its publication (the centenary of Rossetti’s birth), Waugh’s book is nevertheless deeply personal. It opens with two quotes, one from Rossetti and one from Roger Fry:

[...] I used to sit on the hearthrug listening to him, and look between his knees into the fire till it burned my face, while the sights swarming up in it seemed changed and charged with the music, till the music and the fire and my heart burned together and I would take paper and pencil and try in some childish way to fix the shapes that rose within me. For my hope, even then, was to be a painter.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Waugh, XIX, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911), p. 557.

I know that real artists, even if they are destined to paint highly imaginative works and go mad in the end like Van Gogh, generally begin by making an elaborate study of an old pair of boots or something of that kind.<sup>42</sup>

These approaches could not differ more, and by citing them as epigraphs Waugh reveals rather more about himself than the subject at hand. On the side of the romantic artist figure, desperately trying to fix 'shapes that rose within [him]' we have Rossetti; and on the other, that of the rational, process-driven "real artist", sits Fry. Had Waugh simply prefaced *Rossetti* with Rossetti's quotation, as would have been typical of a traditional biography, one might have concluded that this romantic vision was how Waugh saw and experienced the creative process. However, by contrasting it with Fry's statement on the gruelling and workmanlike manner of a developing artistic practice, Waugh betrays not only scepticism towards Rossetti's account of inspiration, but also the knowledge, first hand, that one must begin with the fundamentals of form and composition before one has any hope of 'fixing shapes', never mind achieving artistic greatness.

Waugh attempts to apply Fry's type of Formalist art criticism to Rossetti's work in a series of annotated illustrations. Drawing bold dynamic lines over his simplified drawings of four of Rossetti's works, Waugh attempts to reduce Rossetti's works to their essential forms. *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1850) is a 'simple rectangular design', *The Marriage of St. George and the Princess Sabra* (1857) an 'elaborate geometric design balanced on the diagonal', *Monna Vanna* (1866) has a 'simple accentuated curved motive' and *The Question* (1875) is formed of 'elaborate straight lines and radiating curves'.<sup>43</sup> Waugh's fairly arbitrary dissection of *The Marriage of St. George* comes to look more like a poorly executed Vorticist drawing in the style of Wyndham Lewis, but it is clear that he was fairly pleased with his work. 'In the accompanying figures' he wrote in *Rossetti*, 'an attempt is made [...] to show four phases in his development of rhythmic unity in the use first of right angles, then of the diagonal, later of a single curve, and at the last of

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<sup>42</sup> Roger Fry, 'The Artist and Psycho-Analysis', in *Art and the Market: Roger Fry on Commerce in Art, Selected Writings, Edited with an Interpretation*, by Craufurd D. Goodwin (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1988), pp. 124–38 (p. 134).

<sup>43</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti His Life and Works*, ed. by Michael G. Brennan, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xvi, p. 107.

contrasting curves.’<sup>44</sup> A critic<sup>45</sup> writing a review for *Life & Letters*<sup>46</sup> in 1928 takes issue with these diagrams:

Mr. Waugh evidently values that part of his book in which he confounds the modern school of art criticism; but the poor old horse he thrashes might have been left to die in peace. No sensitive person can take very seriously the aesthetic puritanism of the last fifteen years, and the most high and dry of art critics likes things entirely at variance with his theories.<sup>47</sup>

Stannard explains Waugh’s formalist approach to Rossetti’s work by stating that ‘He was not then the artistic conservative he was to become; quite the reverse.’<sup>48</sup> He was also clearly inspired by Fry’s interpretations of art. For example, in an article for *The Burlington Magazine*, Fry states:

For Picasso, as I understand it, the purpose of decomposition was mainly to arrive at what one might call a canon of form – the discovery in any given object of certain elementary units of form out of which he built up his total design by repetitions on various scales and in various positions. By this method a certain uniform quality of form was imposed on every part of the design.<sup>49</sup>

Waugh’s description of Rossetti’s works is in much the same vein. He also focuses on repetition, which he refers to as ‘diapering’ a term more commonly used to describe applications of decoration on heraldic shields, stained glass windows and the like.

His early pictures are for the most part a diaper pattern in two dimensions, a result following directly from the precepts of Millais and Hunt [...] They sought to diffuse the interest of the composition into every part of the canvas. The result is in Rossetti a unifying rectangularity in which, probably unconsciously, he attempts to hold the composition into its frame by repeating its lines and corners throughout the design.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, with both words and diagrams Waugh attempts a formalist criticism of Rossetti. It is not altogether convincing but it is nevertheless interesting in terms of plotting the contradictions that exist in Waugh’s work. As drawn as he was to Victorian art, even as a young man, there prevails a suspicion of the old world that was evocative of his father’s aesthetic taste.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> It is likely this critic is Cyril Connolly, given the fact he contributed regularly to *Life and Letters*, the reviews are signed “C.C” and that he knew Waugh.

<sup>46</sup> A literary journal in publication between 1928 and 1935, edited by Desmond MacCarthy and later Ellis Roberts.

<sup>47</sup> C. C., ‘Reader’s Reports’, *Life and Letters*, 1928, 141–55 (p. 141).

<sup>48</sup> Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh The Early Years: 1903-1939*, p. 139.

<sup>49</sup> Roger Fry, ‘M. Larionow and the Russian Ballet’, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, June 1919, 112–19 (p. 118).

<sup>50</sup> Waugh, *Rossetti*, p. 108.



Another opposition in Waugh's work that proves a fertile ground for creativity is that of the authentic and the inauthentic, and indeed these tie into the previous discussion about the romantic and rational approach to the production of art. Although Waugh has his reservations about Rossetti and 'the shapes which rose within', it is apparent that he deems this type of artistic inspiration more authentic than the overly-intellectualised, even soulless work of the Modernists. The conclusion of *Rossetti* illustrates Waugh's inability, even reluctance to deliver a definitive judgement of this method. In his criticism of Rossetti, Waugh suggests that there was a certain lack of spirituality in his work:

[...] there was fatally lacking in him that essential rectitude that underlies the serenity of all really great art. The sort of unhappiness that beset him was not the sort of unhappiness that does beset a great artist; all his brooding about magic and suicide are symptomatic not so much of genius as of mediocrity. There is a spiritual inadequacy, a sense of ill-organisation about all that he did.<sup>51</sup>

As previously mentioned, Waugh had not yet converted to Catholicism at the time of *Rossetti's* publication and it is therefore unusual that he should focus so intently on the seeming lack of sanctity in Rossetti's work. There is a sense that possessing a religious spirit imbues an artist with a consistent ability to create 'really great art', and in lacking this moral centre, Rossetti fell short of genius. Despite this, Waugh's final words on the subject are as follows:

The problem is that here and there in his life he seems, without ever feeling it, to have transcended this inadequacy in a fashion that admits of no glib explanation. Just as the broken arch at Glastonbury Abbey is, in its ruin, so much more moving than it can ever have been when it stood whole and part of a great building, so Rossetti's art, at fitful moments, flames into the exquisite beauty of Beata Beatrix. It is the sort of problem that modern æsthetics does not seem capable of coping with. It has been the object of this book to state, though, alas! not to solve, this problem.<sup>52</sup>

Waugh's argument about appreciating the broken arch at Glastonbury Abbey shows his debt to Ruskin, and places Rossetti amongst the earlier artistic tradition of the picturesque that appeals to the senses in an irrational, yet spiritual way. There is something inherently unexplainable about Rossetti's work, and though Waugh does not suggest how he manages to occasionally 'transcend' his 'spiritual

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

inadequacy', we can conclude that Waugh considers part of Rossetti's appeal lies in his sporadic, inconsistent genius.

It is also worth mentioning here that Picasso is set against Rossetti in *Rossetti*, and it is Picasso, surprisingly, that emerges from the comparison triumphant:

Æsthetics must inevitably be a deductive study, and it gives a stimulating frisson to one's æsthetic standards to turn, if only for a few hours, from contemplating the pellucid excellencies of Picasso to the turgid and perverse genius of someone like Rossetti.<sup>53</sup>

Ultimately, for all of Waugh's modern posturing in *Rossetti* - using Fry's formalism to dissect Rossetti's pictures and admiring Picasso's 'pellucid excellencies' - he cannot entirely shed the element of conservatism that would dominate his later aesthetic theories. In the concluding section of the book, Waugh makes the following, highly problematic, argument:

It seems to me that modern criticism has failed in this: that it has taken an already existing word, 'art,' and has fastened it upon a newly discovered 'necessary relation of forms in space.' No one would deny that there is this vivifying quality to be found as a common factor in most recognised works of art, from Michel Angelo to Cezanne; if one likes one may dignify the perception of this quality by the title of 'æsthetic emotion,' but surely it is unjustifiable to claim this as the one vital factor and to accept anything embodying it as a work of art? The fact that primitive negro sculpture satisfies the æsthetic emotion ought to make the healthy Western critic doubt the formula rather than acclaim the barbarian.<sup>54</sup>

In this statement Waugh betrays his relative lack of knowledge and exposure to art history. For how else could he praise Picasso and not recognise the debt he owes to African sculpture and art? It seems that Waugh is comfortable in applying formalist criticism to what he himself finds aesthetically worthy, but is wary of theories of art that permit the inclusion of works he considers 'barbarian'. This approach is consistent in Waugh's critical oeuvre, to the extent that a producer at the BBC warned of his liability 'to make inaccurate critical observations which need careful checking'.<sup>55</sup> In later life Waugh spoke with admiration of St Mary's Church at the Serima Mission in Zimbabwe, which is decorated with sculptures and carvings in a traditional style. Waugh details his travels in *A Tourist in Africa*

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 168-9.

<sup>55</sup> EW to Ronald Lewin, 14 May 1951; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

(1960), and finds that the church 'is a building designed for use, to be seen from the inside':<sup>56</sup>

The most important carvings at present are the entrance and the Stations of the Cross. [...] The Stations, new since my last visit, are in the round, standing out from the wall on brackets. They are the most ambitious and successful of the works at Serima. Like everything else they are designed for use. I thought of the Stations at the much advertised chapel at Vence, which Matisse scrawled over a single wall in a manner that inhibits the devotion they should occasion.<sup>57</sup>

Thus it appears Waugh can look beyond the surface appearance of these angular sculptures whose antecedents proved so influential to Cubist and abstract art because they provide a function. They are intended to aid worship, rather than solely existing for artistic edification and so, in Waugh's eyes at least, are 'successful' works. It is with paternalistic, patronising concern that he then considers the potential future of the artists who worked at Serima:

What will happen when Fr Groeber is no longer there to direct them? [...] Their technical skill will remain ripe for well-intentioned exploitation by collectors and museums. How long can their vision remain uncontaminated by Europe and America? Those eager apprentices I saw today will find that there are larger rewards awaiting them for inferior work. With very little labour they can imitate 'expressionist' or 'abstract' models. Something of the kind, I gather, is happening in parts of the Belgian Congo.<sup>58</sup>

With this statement Waugh expresses concern over what might happen if the artisans of Serima begin to imitate their imitators, thus creating works that exist solely for aesthetic reasons, and not for the meaning behind them. Waugh is at least consistent here; he might not appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the sculpture, but he does at least recognise them being fit for purpose at St Mary's as devotional aids. If this purpose is lost the art object becomes divorced from meaning and to Waugh, this is unjustifiable. He sums this up succinctly as follows: 'That is the aim of the builder; to make a church, not to found an Art School. The sculptors have been called into existence for the church, not the church for the sculptors.'<sup>59</sup>

Though Waugh hints at a sense of aesthetic conversion in the Frankly Speaking interview, it is also an important part of his fiction. Perhaps his most

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<sup>56</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Tourist in Africa* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986), p. 130.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

autobiographical character, Charles Ryder, has a similar experience in *Brideshead Revisited*. In the first section of the novel for instance, Charles re-evaluates his interior design choices in the wake of a visit to the Botanical Gardens with Sebastian. But it is worth examining the way Waugh uses Charles to explain the temptation to ‘rewrite’ one’s previous, now abandoned, tastes into a narrative that matches one’s current preferences:

It is easy, retrospectively, to endow one’s youth with a false precocity or a false innocence; to tamper with the dates marking one’s stature on the edge of the door. I should like to think—indeed I sometimes do think—that I decorated those rooms with Morris stuffs and Arundel prints and that my shelves were filled with seventeenth century folios and French novels of the second empire in Russia-leather and watered-silk. But this was not the truth. On my first afternoon I proudly hung a reproduction of Van Gogh’s Sunflowers over the fire and set up a screen, painted by Roger Fry with a Provençal landscape, which I had bought inexpensively when the Omega workshops were sold up.<sup>60</sup> [...] My books were meagre and commonplace—Roger Fry’s *Vision and Design* ...<sup>61</sup>

This is a fairly revealing passage, as it shows Waugh’s self-awareness of his own aesthetic conversion. In *A Little Learning* he argues that ‘There are cases of aesthetic conversion when eyes accustomed to traditional styles are accorded a revelation, and find beauty and significance in what has previously seemed ugly and chaotic. I have never had that experience.’<sup>62</sup> In fact, Waugh did experience something very like this twice: first when he met Harold Acton at Oxford and was converted to Modernism; and second after becoming Catholic and abandoned Modernism. From that point he publicly denounced Picasso, finding ugliness and insignificance in what had previously seemed exciting. As a Catholic, Waugh also distanced himself from the aesthetic theories of Fry. In 1927 he would happily lend his mentor Francis Crease a copy of *Flemish Art* (1927),<sup>63</sup> but in 1946 criticises the artist Laura Knight in his diary for having her ‘tastes warped by Roger Fry’<sup>64</sup> when viewing her painting *The Nuremberg Trial* (1946).

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<sup>60</sup> Alec Waugh bought *Provençal Valley Screen* (1913) in 1919 from this sale at the Omega Workshops.

<sup>61</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>62</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 97.

<sup>63</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 303.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 680. Waugh notes in his diary that by chance the papers on a table in *The Nuremberg Trial* had taken the form of a cross, which Knight worried was too much like ‘illustration’. This concern over overt, realist, imagery is what Waugh refers to when he states her tastes are ‘warped by Roger Fry’.

The description of Charles Ryder's conversion concentrates on his self-consciousness as a middle-class aspirant artist. Where in middle age Waugh expresses active hostility to modern art, he writes of Charles's conversion as the product of a quiet, yet acute embarrassment, something that can be tidied away by his manservant:

When at length I returned to my rooms and found them exactly as I had left them that morning, I detected a jejune air that had not irked me before. What was wrong? Nothing except the golden daffodils seemed to be real. Was it the screen? I turned it face to the wall. That was better.

It was the end of the screen. Lunt never liked it, and after a few days he took it away, to an obscure refuge he had under the stairs, full of mops and buckets.<sup>65</sup>

The Omega screen, unceremoniously hidden among the tools of domestic drudgery, is divested of its aura as an art object and as a piece of craftsmanship. Later in the novel Charles sells the screen for ten pounds to his dull friend Collins, who is described among Charles' other early Oxford friends as 'grey figures' that 'seemed quietly to fade into the landscape and vanish'<sup>66</sup> after he is exposed to the world of Sebastian Flyte. Collins expresses the same scepticism toward modern theories of art as Sebastian. Both are unconvinced by the arguments expressed in Clive Bell's *Art* (1914):

Collins had exposed the fallacy of modern æsthetics to me: "... the whole argument from Significant Form stands or falls by volume. If you allow Cezanne to represent a third dimension on his two-dimensional canvas, then you must allow Landseer his gleam of loyalty in the spaniel's eye" ... but it was not until Sebastian, idly turning the page of Clive Bell's *Art* read: " 'Does anyone feel the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture?' Yes. I do," that my eyes were opened.<sup>67</sup>

To understand what Waugh is saying here we must turn to the meaning of the 'Significant Form'. This phrase comes directly from Bell's *Art* and is defined as the 'quality [...] shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions'.<sup>68</sup> It is an astonishingly vague definition and relies enormously on a subjective view of any particular art work, which is the fallacy exposed in *Brideshead Revisited*; if one is to make the intellectual leap in reading a two-dimensional painting as three-dimensional, then surely the sentimentalism in a Landseer painting has to be read

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<sup>65</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, p. 35.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914), p. 8.

in the same way. The argument implied by Waugh here is that Bell would not allow such sentimentality. But Collins, and one might argue, Waugh, has conflated 'Significant Form' with 'Form' which Mary Acton defines concisely as 'the term artists use to describe the feeling of volume in a painting. It is illusory in the sense that the artist is trying to convey the feeling of solidity on a flat surface'.<sup>69</sup> Bell's coinage is more interested in the relationship between objects on a canvas and their subsequent relationship with the viewer. 'Form' in itself is simply the optical illusion of the third dimension. The question then becomes whether art can legitimately evoke feeling or emotion in the first place, and whether these feelings are immutable. It is ultimately Sebastian's rather languid conviction that convinces Charles of the shortcomings of Significant Form. Bell's theories appear purely cerebral and passionless. They try to understand what it was about a work of art, no matter what its provenance, that made it important, what traits all great art works share:

What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible – significant form. In each lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.<sup>70</sup>

Where Sebastian operates from an instinctual, almost childlike apprehension of the world, Collins responds intellectually. This is another example of the endlessly fruitful tension between logical and romantic understandings of art that Waugh sets out at the beginning of *Rossetti*. Though Collins and Sebastian may be equally unimpressed by Clive Bell, the way they express themselves differently is decisive for Charles, and, we may infer, Waugh himself.

Stannard comments that 'Waugh volunteered a great deal of personal information' in 'Frankly Speaking' 'previously unknown to anyone but his family and his cronies'.<sup>71</sup> Thus, despite the combative nature of the interview, its outcome was not entirely futile. In fact some of Waugh's answers concerning the visual arts

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<sup>69</sup> Mary Acton, *Learning to Look at Paintings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> Bell, *Art*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh No Abiding City: 1939-1966* (1992; London: Flamingo, 1993), p. 337.

are among his most cohesive statements on the subject. What did Waugh mean when he defined *real* painting as anything produced before 1870? Apparently he is defending the skills of realist and narrative representation that he considers to have been destroyed by the French Impressionists, who ‘ruined English painting’.<sup>72</sup> Impressionism, which was not predicated upon slavish representation of the world, but instead inspired by the mood and atmosphere of a setting, set the stage for the later abstractions of the Modern movement and was therefore culpable, both in form and content for the degeneration of art into the same sort of ‘gibberish’ Waugh deplored in Modernist literature.

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2017 marked an important moment in the study of Evelyn Waugh as a visual artist. On the 18<sup>th</sup> July the first major exhibition of his drawings opened at antiquarian bookseller Maggs Bros in their new shop and exhibition space in Bloomsbury. The show contained a wide range of Waugh’s work, from childhood drawings to dedicatory illustrations in the front of books he presented to friends as gifts. Particularly interesting to see together were several of the bookplates Waugh designed for family and friends. These show not only his artistic abilities but also the scope of his aesthetic influences, from the spiky, almost Vorticist lines of his bookplate for Cecil Roberts to his own armorial plate which proclaims ‘*Industria Ditat*’ [Industry Enriches]. In his catalogue introduction Mark Everett describes Waugh’s first bookplate, a simple black and red text which declares ‘EVELYN ARTHUR ST. JOHN WAUGH HIS BOOK’ (1923) - as modernist but it betrays more of an allegiance to an arts and crafts aesthetic; the typeface has serifs and the composition is deeply reminiscent of Eric Gill’s work (see fig. 2).

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<sup>72</sup> Waugh, ‘Frankly Speaking’, p. 530.

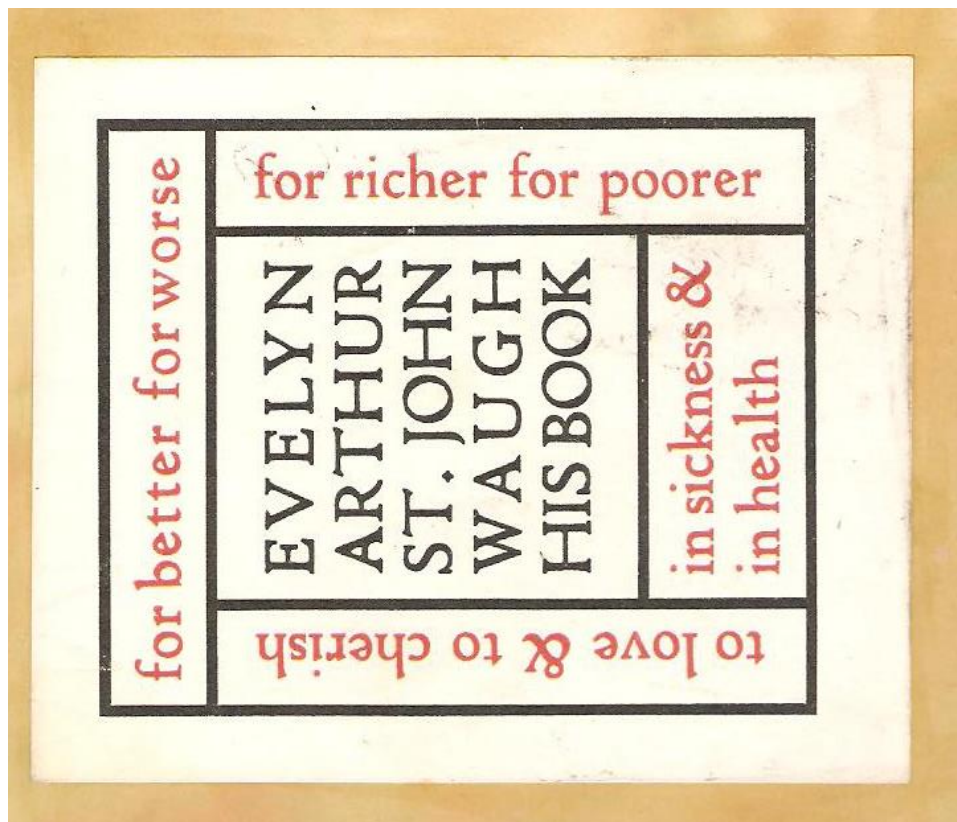


Fig. 2. Bookplate by Evelyn Waugh, 1923. Private collection.



WOOD ENGRAVING BY THE AUTHOR, AUGUST 1923

Fig. 3. 'Fires of Youth' by Evelyn Waugh, 1923. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Also displayed was the striking 'Fires of Youth' (1923), a woodcut published in the *London Mercury* that year (see fig. 3). Waugh sent this piece to Harold Acton who wrote in response:

I have always said that you are a genius dearest Evelyn, and now comes the proof. "Fires of Youth", quite apart from the symbolism of the undecided youth between the cradle and the grave, is enchanting as a design. At last you have escaped from the influence of that nice old maid<sup>73</sup> who taught you illumination and whose drawings I have at the same time admired and deplored. At last you are the MODERN you were always intended to be. The others, though not so successful, are very pleasing. The only one I do not care for is the nude faun. The Duchess of Malfi is most successful (the only word one can use for a wood-cut design, for it must inevitably be a success or a failure).<sup>74</sup>

The symbolism in this piece is indeed significant, given that Waugh would leave Oxford in the summer of 1924, and likely felt himself at a crossroads in life. There is a sense that the figure is being pulled down against his will into both cradle and grave, one leg entwined in swaddling clothes, the other in vines. The practice of woodcutting, as Acton points out, does usually result in a failure or success, given that it is nearly impossible to rectify mistakes. It does not seem as though the practice particularly lends itself to Waugh's way of working, as in both artistic and literary endeavours, we can see evidence of a great deal of reworking and revising.

Another example of Waugh's penchant for reworking can be seen in illustrations for his short story *Love Among the Ruins: A Romance of the Near Future*, published in 1953. These "illustrations" are in fact edited versions of engravings by Henry Moses based on sculpture by Antonio Canova. Waugh's diary of Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January 1953 records: 'I had half remembered a cut in a set of Canova's Works which might be adapted to decorate Love Among the Ruins. With dazzling eyes and a magnifying glass and razor blade I attempted adaption.' A little over a week later he wrote: 'I try to work and have completed some collages from Moses's engravings after Canova which, if they can be reproduced, will be amusing and ornamental and should determine the form of *Love Among the Ruins*.'<sup>75</sup> In March Waugh 'fiddled with the collages for *Love Among the Ruins*' which he

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<sup>73</sup> Acton refers to Francis Crease here.

<sup>74</sup> Harold Acton to EW, 21 September 1923; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.

<sup>75</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 752.

describes as 'becoming more and more [his] own work.'<sup>76</sup> In a letter to Diana Cooper around the same time he writes:

It is a great delight to do the pictures for my silly story. I haven't the guts nowadays to do an original drawing but by the time I have finished with paste and scissors and Chinese White and Indian ink they are really all my own work. It is like Cinema producers who have to have a story to start on and then gradually eliminate it.<sup>77</sup>

These adapted illustrations do not show us Waugh's original artistic talent, but they do provide an insight into the way he was able to manipulate materials to satiric and humorous effect. Claiming that editing pre-existing works, either by direct manipulation or installation makes one the creator of said works is at the heart of Dadaism, and in particular the 'ready made' of Marcel Duchamp. This has implications for the understanding of his graphic art as being an extension of his literary art, as Waugh took incidents from life and manipulated them in much the same way in his novels; even going as far as to make a fictionalised version of himself in *Labels* (1930), an apparently non-fiction, autobiographical travelogue. The notion that 'Cinema producers [...] have to have a story to start on and then gradually eliminate it' is also significant in understanding Waugh's conception of the artistic process when anyone but the original creator of the work is at the helm. It is unclear whether Waugh is being facetious here about the 'art' of modern cinema, but he uses the same sort of language to describe to Graham Ackroyd how he ought to go about adapting *Vile Bodies* for the radio:

I have had unhappy experiences in the past and can only give permission for the adaptation of *Vile Bodies* on the condition that the adaptor's work is purely one of excision. Nothing must be added that is not by myself. If with scissors and paste you can make a coherent radio play you are welcome to submit it to BBC.<sup>78</sup>

It is clear then, from the later collage work of *Love Among the Ruins* illustrations to the concept of applying 'scissors and paste' to the written word, that this is a process of creation familiar to Waugh, one that can be either refine what is already there, or remove its essential meaning. An item in the Magg's exhibition demonstrates this perfectly. 'Wimbornes by Evelyn Waugh & Family. 1958' is an album of newspaper clippings, arranged in such a way to create amusing

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 754.

<sup>77</sup> *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh and Diana Cooper*, ed. by Artemis Cooper (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992), p. 160.

<sup>78</sup> Evelyn Waugh to Graham Ackroyd, c. 24 October 1952; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

juxtapositions between headlines, photographs and captions. The rules of the Wimborne are explained in the catalogue: 'headlines and extracts could not be manipulated except by excision of other material.'<sup>79</sup>

Other works in the exhibition show Waugh's prodigious contributions to the Oxford University magazines, *Isis* and *Cherwell*. In fact, given how much graphic art Waugh produced in these three short years, along with other, less salubrious extra-curricular activities, it is no wonder that he barely had the time to study what he had originally intended at Oxford, and that he left the institution with a bad Third. A period not covered in great detail by the exhibition, however, is Waugh's artwork directly following the Oxford years, the time he spent at the London art school, Heatherley's. There was a pair of still life drawings from this period in the exhibition, that of a skull and a glove, but the majority of the Heatherley works remain in Waugh's sketchbooks, held at the Harry Ransom Center. The two examples shown in the exhibition certainly support Everett's judgement of Waugh's more formal artworks as being not 'particularly competent' but they are not the best of what he achieved at Heatherley's.

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<sup>79</sup> Mark Everett, Ed Maggs, and Alice Rowell, *E.W. Pinxit: The Graphic Art of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Maggs Bros Ltd, 2017), p. 14.

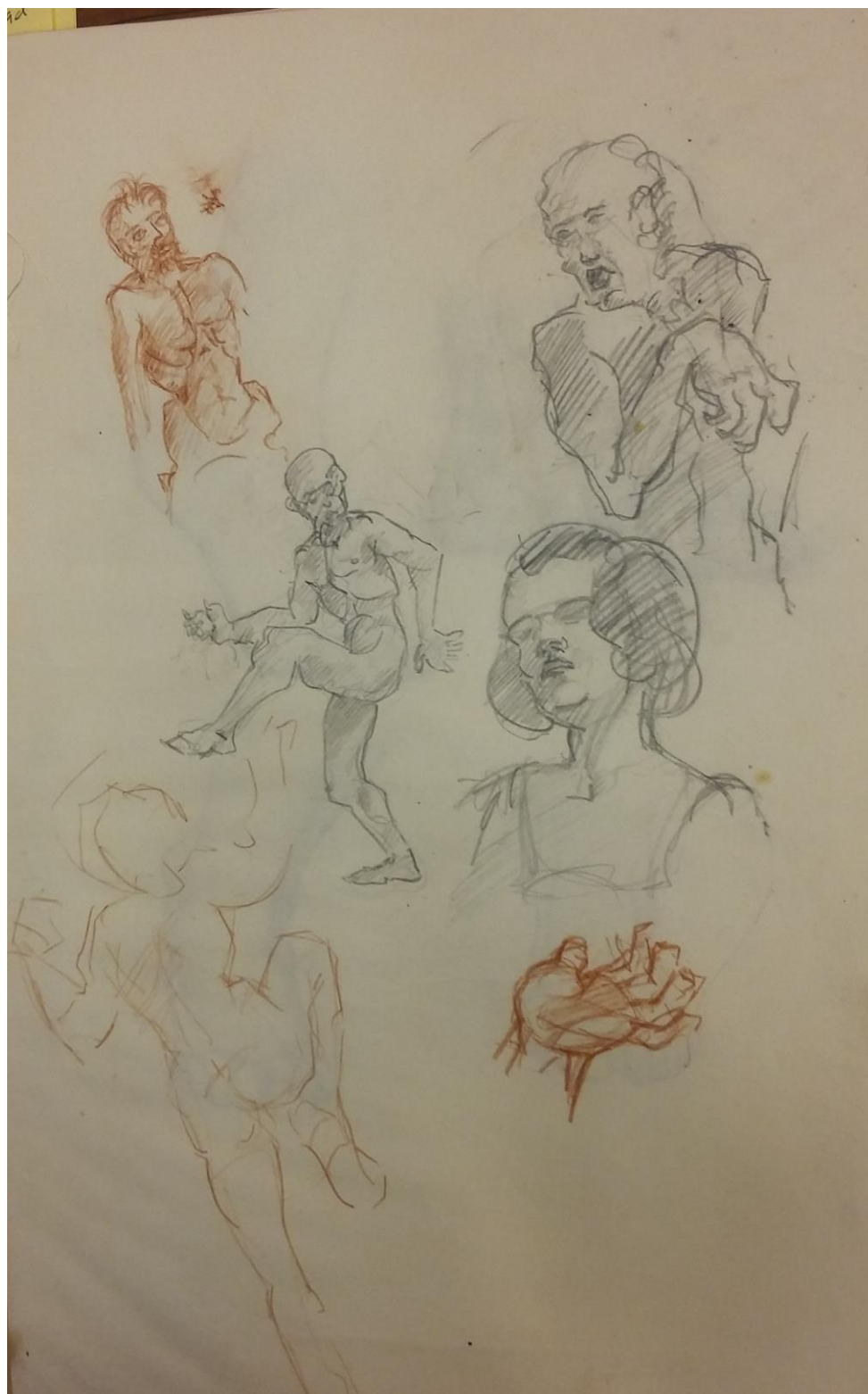


Fig. 4. Untitled pencil and conté crayon drawings by Evelyn Waugh c. 1924. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Waugh's sketchbook contains some proficient life drawing and anatomical studies that show his understanding of the human figure, vital for the success of his more cartoonish, simple line drawings. Where he really excels though, are his more grotesque depictions of wizened figures, perhaps inspired by life drawing models, but certainly not part of a traditional art school syllabus (see fig. 4).

Sadly Waugh did not thrive at Heatherley's, writing in his diary after his first day there that it was:

[...] full of girls – underbred houris most of them in gaudy overalls; they draw very badly and get much in the way of the youths who seem to be all of them bent upon making commercial careers for themselves by illustrating Punch or advertising things. It does not seem to me likely that I shall find any pals among them.<sup>80</sup>

Waugh shared this disdain for advertising with Roger Fry. Based on a talk Fry gave to the British Psychological Society in 1923, 'The Artist and Psycho-Analysis' was published by Hogarth Press in 1924 and contains the following argument:

Take for instance advertisements: many of these show no esthetic effort and do not even try to afford esthetic pleasure; they merely convey more or less inaccurate information about a particular object. You can think of advertisements where not only are the merits of the objects enumerated but the object, let us say a bottle of Somebody's Beer, is depicted. Every detail of the bottle and its label is given so that we may recognize it when we see it in the bar, but there is no sign that in the manner of representation any thought has been expended for our esthetic pleasure.<sup>81</sup>

We know Waugh read this essay, as he references it at the beginning of *Rossetti*.

Ultimately Waugh was disillusioned with the kind of work he was expected to do at Heatherley's and the kind of work his fellow students were interested in pursuing. He attempted at various times to begin a career as an artist; firstly under the tutelage of Francis Crease, then at Heatherley's Art School, followed by a frustrated notion of joining the Pear Tree Press<sup>82</sup> as an apprentice and finally with his enrolment at The Central School of Arts and Crafts to learn cabinet-making. Waugh would later sadly proclaim that 'I say I failed as a carpenter and failed as a painter'<sup>83</sup> in that ill-fated interview with the BBC in 1953. But all this visual education, however frustrated, did not go to waste. He illustrated many of his own novels, and designed book covers for other writers, and his ability to construct a

<sup>80</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 189.

<sup>81</sup> Fry, 'The Artist and Psycho-Analysis', p. 127.

<sup>82</sup> The Pear Tree Press was founded in 1889 by James Guthrie, a printmaker and artist.

<sup>83</sup> Waugh, 'Frankly Speaking', p. 531.

vivid scene with the barest of elements betrays his hand as that of an artist and became crucial to his literary technique.

The exhibition and its catalogue led to the publication of various articles in the press and an increased interest in Waugh in as a visual artist. *Phaidon*, in an article published on their website in September 2017, maintain that ‘The works in the exhibition don’t wholly support the notion that, in gaining a brilliant British novelist, we lost a world-class artist’<sup>84</sup> which is rather reductive in its evaluation of Waugh’s artistic skill. Waugh would have been the last person to claim that he was, or even had the potential to be, a world-class artist, but as Michael Bird pointed out in the *Telegraph*: ‘Though his designs and illustrations feel very much like by-products of a bigger talent they point to the importance of Waugh’s visual sensibility in his work as a whole.’<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately Bird’s article contains various inaccuracies. Its very title: ‘Evelyn Waugh: the cubist years’, suggests a much longer and serious engagement with modern art than actually occurred. Bird presents the moment Waugh and Barbara Jacobs decided to cover the walls of the nursery with ‘Cubist’ murals in 1918 as indicative of his serious interest in modern art, inextricably tied to his desire to ‘scandalise’ his father with a ‘calculated slap in the face.’<sup>86</sup> However, there appears little evidence to support the idea that Arthur Waugh was scandalised by his son’s artistic activity. Alexander Waugh cites a letter from Arthur to Jean Fleming in *Fathers and Sons* (2004) that could potentially corroborate Bird’s claims.

Barbara and Evelyn have been busy for two days defiling the studio with the most awful paint. They have painted the fireplace and walls all over cubes of colour yellow, red, blue, in irregular splotches. You never saw anything so awful. And as they do it, their loud laughter rings through the house. I sit alone and think of the other boy – lonely, cold, hungry, even if he is alive; and I wonder *what* their hearts are made of.<sup>87</sup>

Arthur is clearly upset, but the context he provides—being affronted by Barbara and Evelyn’s seemingly callous merrymaking while Alec was missing at the Front – is important too. It was not so much the modernity of the painting (which sounds

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Have You Seen the Art of Evelyn Waugh? | Art | Agenda’, *Phaidon*

<<http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2017/july/18/have-you-seen-the-art-of-evelyn-waugh/>> [accessed 8 September 2017].

<sup>85</sup> Michael Bird, ‘Evelyn Waugh: The Cubist Years’, *The Telegraph*, 15 July 2017, pp. 10–11 (p. 10).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Arthur Waugh quoted in Alexander Waugh, *Fathers and Sons* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2005), p. 132.

more like a prefiguring of the sort of work of Piet Mondrian would produce in the 1920s and onwards than anything strictly Cubist) that offended Arthur, but the spirit in which it was executed, with the backdrop of Alec's possible death. In *A Little Learning* Waugh recalls the occasion as follows:

Barbara and I had covered the walls of the former day-nursery with what we took to be cubist paintings – that is to say, we reduced our figures to angles and flat planes. Mark Gertler was shown them. Hard put to find an amiable comment, he remarked that there was originality in the way in which we had combined so many various pigments – enamel, oil paint, blacking and poster-paint.<sup>88</sup>

Gertler, a well-known artist in the early twentieth century, was associated with the Bloomsbury set and part of the London Group, and it is unlikely at the age of fourteen, that Evelyn himself would have invited him to look at his work in the nursery. It is much more likely that Arthur, with his connections to artistic circles in London in the early twentieth century, would have done so. Thus it is hard to understand why Arthur would have done such a thing if he had so objected to his son's painting. Indeed, it shows a level of interest in Evelyn's visual work that is often forgotten, as despite their differences in opinion on many aesthetic matters, Arthur was deeply supportive of his son's art. On the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1919, Evelyn received a letter from his father offering advice on how to finish off his design for the cover of *Invisible Tides* (1919), Beatrice Kean Seymour's first novel:

Today the post brought a letter from Father in which he suggests my putting a crescent moon into my cover design. I think that it would be a mistake artistically however appropriate it may be symbolically. Anyhow I shall do everything else first and then see how it looks.<sup>89</sup>

It was through Arthur that this commission, along with many others, was made possible as Seymour was published by Chapman and Hall, where Arthur worked as managing director. Arthur both supported his son with creative input (against his own better judgement Evelyn did include a crescent moon in the final design for *Invisible Tides*) and as a patron.

Bird also places far too much emphasis on Waugh's brief period of interest in Cubism, and uses it to justify his assertion that: 'True to his cubist roots, Waugh understood what the avant-garde knockers-down of hallowed traditions were

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<sup>88</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 98.

<sup>89</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 31.

about. Modernism might be unfriendly or pretentious, but it was nowhere near as drearily deadly as English good taste.<sup>90</sup> Waugh's recollection of his 'cubist roots' on the other hand, is as follows:

It must have been utterly fatuous, for I knew nothing whatever of the theory of the movement and had seen very few of its products. In my excitement at seeing it printed [a letter titled 'In Defense of Cubism'] I attempted to make what I took to be a Cubist drawing and sent it to the editor of *Drawing* with the suggestion that it should be reproduced in his next issue. That was the end of my career as an apologist for Picasso. The drawing was promptly returned to me with the note that my contribution was not regarded as an 'article', as I had described it, but as a 'letter'.<sup>91</sup>

In fact, Waugh's taste cannot be so easily defined. That he had an affinity for avant-garde mischief is indisputable, but once art and literature strayed into the territory of nonsense, or 'gibberish'<sup>92</sup> as Waugh described the work of James Joyce and Gertrude Stein, it became anathema to him. Waugh wrote a letter to Robin Campbell<sup>93</sup> in 1945 explaining why he disliked Picasso and his work, stating that 'He fails in communication, the artist's first task, because of [the] hit-or-miss method' he employs in his painting. Later arguing that though 'his devotees tell me he communicates chaos & despair these are not the messages of art. Art is ennobling & purgative. Chaos & despair are brilliantly conveyed by any issue of the "Daily Mirror"'.<sup>94</sup> Thus Waugh maintained that all art must have a purpose, and communicate ideas intelligibly. In the same letter he upholds the narrative realism of Chaucer and Henry James while Picasso and Gertrude Stein on the other hand are described as being 'aesthetically in the same position as, theologically, a mortal-sinner who has put himself outside the world of God's mercy'.<sup>95</sup> By positing aesthetic expression as a component of religious morality, Waugh makes the argument that Modernism with its divergence from purpose and sense is an affront to God and is therefore unjustifiable to the devout. Waugh stated that: 'I believe the West is in rapid decay because of its rejection of God. I point to Picasso

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<sup>90</sup> Bird, 'Evelyn Waugh: The Cubist Years', p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 98.

<sup>92</sup> Waugh and Elizabeth Jane Howard, 'BBC Monitor Interview', 16 February 1964 in *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (1964; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, pp. 575-583, (p. 580).

<sup>93</sup> Robin Campbell (1912-1985) served as an Officer in the Second World War with Evelyn Waugh. He was later the Director of the Arts Council England (1969-78).

<sup>94</sup> EW to Robin Campbell, 27 December 1945, in *Letters*, p. 247; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.



as a symptom.’<sup>96</sup> Modernism then, is not just ‘unfriendly and pretentious’ as Bird argues, but actively godless and degenerate.

Thus, although Evelyn Waugh was writing during the Modernist period, he is rarely described as a Modernist writer, and, with the notable exception of George McCartney’s *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (1987), is often confined to a footnote in larger anthologies of the movement. According to McCartney, Waugh ‘wanted nothing to do with the expressive fallacy implicit in stream-of-consciousness narration [...] Instead he devised a fiction of controlled chaos [and] shaped an esthetic which might be thought of as an alternate modernism’.<sup>97</sup> Conflicts in Waugh’s thoughts on, and applications of, ‘Modernist’ techniques confuse the matter, but McCartney is right when he states that ‘Waugh applied a modernist technique without a modernist ideology.’<sup>98</sup> Indeed, Brooke Allen argues that Waugh occupied a characteristically contrary space, ‘deploring all modernity, while all the time using whatever stylistic tricks modernist experiment afforded him: collage, the interior monologue, classical parody, the intrusive narrator, the camera eye, montage.’<sup>99</sup> Fletcher and Bradbury argue that what defines the Modernist style of self-conscious narration is that it puts ‘the means and modes of art at the centre of the work [...] forcing the reader to pass beyond the reported content of the novel and enter into its form’.<sup>100</sup> A quote from Waugh’s 1962 interview with Julian Jebb for *The Paris Review*, would at first seem to agree with this Modernist emphasis on form:

I think that your questions are dealing too much with the creation of character and not enough with the technique of writing. I regard writing not as investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed. I have no technical psychological interest. It is drama, speech, and events that interest me.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 247-8.

<sup>97</sup> George McCartney, *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 49-50.

<sup>98</sup> George McCartney, *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 70.

<sup>99</sup> Brooke Allen, ‘Vile Bodies: A Futurist Fantasy’ *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 40 (1994), 318-28 (p. 318).

<sup>100</sup> John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury, ‘The Introverted Novel’ in *Modernism 1890-1930* ed. Malcom Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 394-415 (p. 396).

<sup>101</sup> Evelyn Waugh quoted in Julian Jebb, ‘The Art of Fiction No. 30’, *The Paris Review*, 30 (1963) <<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4537/the-art-of-fiction-no-30-evelyn-waugh>> [accessed 1 August 2014].

This comment may appear to agree with the basic tenets of Modernist style, but Waugh did not agree with experimentation for the sake of experimentation and continues this line of thought with a comment on James Joyce:

Experiment? God forbid! Look at the results of experiment in the case of a writer like Joyce. He started off writing very well, then you can watch him going mad with vanity. He ends up a lunatic.<sup>102</sup>

The enduring image of Evelyn Waugh is that of the curmudgeonly reactionary who used his literary talents to wage war on the modern world. He may not have been a Cubist, or a Modernist, but his tastes ran so counter to the zeitgeist that he can be described as ahead of the times, even as he looked over his shoulder to the past. Indeed, Robin Campbell admits that Waugh ‘must be the most avant-garde man I know really’,<sup>103</sup> if only because of his tendency toward contrariness and outspoken criticism of the supposedly innovative Modern movement. Throughout this thesis I will return to the productive oppositions that informed Waugh’s aesthetic theories, something that, with reference to his artwork, and art collection, has not been dealt with in Waugh scholarship in any great detail before now. I will attempt to demonstrate how he spent his career in constant oscillation between the figures of romantic and rational artists, his search for authenticity in the figure of the artist-craftsman, and how his Catholic faith and a belief in the essential orderliness of the universe caused him to reject any work that disrupted this world view.

The first two chapters of this thesis will examine these issues in relation to Waugh’s collection and criticism of visual art works, and of his own illustrations, woodcuts and paintings. This is important in order to foreground the experimental nature of Waugh as a visual artist and how this influenced his literary practice, even after he had abandoned the idea of becoming a full-time artist or craftsman. The third and fourth chapters explore Waugh’s relationship with buildings and architectural theory, showing how he addressed similar aesthetic concerns in both his fictional and non-fictional writings on the subject. Waugh praises the same tenets in architecture as he does for the visual arts; a respect for craftsmanship, for example in the work of Antoni Gaudí, authenticity, and function. Ultimately Waugh is disturbed by Modernist intrusion into both the literal and aesthetic landscape of

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Robin Campbell to EW, 26 February 1948; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

Britain, with the First and Second World Wars serving as catalysts to the degradation of everything he held dear.

## Chapter 1 - Collector and Critic

Christopher Wood describes some of the main pieces in Waugh's art collection in his article 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector'<sup>1</sup> but there are a few omissions and mistakes in his account that bear clarification. This chapter will rectify this by providing as complete a list as currently possible of the contents of Waugh's collection. References to this collection in existing scholarship are scant and so this chapter aims to provide more of an explanation as to what exactly inspired Waugh to put together such an idiosyncratic collection, something that is lacking in Wood's discussion. This chapter will also look at how Waugh's art collection reflected his aesthetic theories, particularly in reference to what he saw as the function and practice of 'good' art.

As many of the paintings from Waugh's collection have been sold over the years to private collectors it is occasionally impossible to obtain reproductions, though illustrations will be provided where feasible. In addition, some works are by relatively minor artists and as such it is sometimes impossible to confirm dates and original titles. The majority of paintings Waugh purchased were Victorian and can broadly be described as belonging to the narrative or 'problem picture' genre. These include: W. A. Atkinson's (fl. 1849-1867) *The Upset Flower Cart* (c. 1860s), John Joseph Barker's (1824-1904) *The Botany Lesson* (c. 1860s-1870s), Edward Adveno Brooke's (1821-1910) *Battersea Fair* (c. 1860s), James William Cole's (fl. c. 1830-1882) painting of the Great Exhibition (c. 1851), Augustus Leopold Egg's (1816-1863) *A Teasing Riddle* (1845), George Flemwell's (1865-1928) *An Embarrassing Question* (c. 1880's-1900s), an unnamed painting by W. H. Furse (fl. 1831-1850) depicting a baptism, George Elgar Hicks' (1824-1914) *The General Post Office at One Minute to Six* (1860), Thomas Musgrave Joy's (1812-1866) *Travelling Past 1760 'Your Money or Your Life'* (1861) and *Travelling Present 1860 'Tickets Please'* (1861), Henry Nelson O'Neil's (1817-1880) *The Parting Cheer* (1861) and details from larger O'Neil paintings *Eastward Ho!* (1857) and *Home Again* (1858), Thomas Falcon Marshall's (1818-1878) *Returning Health* (n.d. c. 1860-1870), George Smith's (1829-1901) *The Rightful Heir* (1874) and *Into the*

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Wood, 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector', *The Connoisseur*, September 1981, pp. 30-34.

*Cold World* (1876), Rebecca Solomon's (1832-1886) *The Industrious Student Reading for Honours* or *The Virtuous Undergraduate* (1859) and *The Idle Student Reading for Pluck* or *The Dissolute Undergraduate* (1859) and Eduard Svoboda's [Edward Svoboda] (1814-1902) *The Connoisseurs* (19<sup>th</sup> century).

Waugh's collection of Pre-Raphaelite pictures was considerably smaller, but nonetheless significant. He owned Michael Frederick Halliday's (1822-1869) *The Measure for the Wedding Ring* (1855), *L'efant Perdu* (1866-87) by Arthur Hughes (1832-1915), two paintings by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Oriana* (c. 1895) and a portrait of George Waugh<sup>2</sup> (c. 1872-74) and two Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) drawings, *The Spirit of the Rainbow* (1876) and *Woman Holding a Dog* (c. 1863). Waugh also owned a painting by Frank Cadogan Cowper (1877-1958) an artist who is often referred to as the 'last of the Pre-Raphaelites',<sup>3</sup> though the piece in question, *Jealous Husband, disguised as a priest, hears his own wife's confession* (1952) cannot be described as belonging to the movement.

Waugh also owned two pieces by contemporary artist Richard Eurich (1903-1992), *Travel in 1950* (1951-3), commissioned to form a triptych with the pair of Victorian paintings by Musgrave Joy, and *The Critics* (1956), which Waugh potentially saw as a modern retelling of Svoboda's *Connoisseurs*. In 1951 Waugh commissioned Martin Battersby (1914-82) to produce a trompe l'oeil mural that contains references to Waugh's writing and art collection. Other pictures that do not fit into a particular genre of painting include John Atkinson Grimshaw's (1836-1893) *Fleet Street* (c. 1880s) *Liverpool Quay by Moonlight* (1887) and an untitled nude by William Mulready mentioned in a letter to Margaret Waugh in 1955.<sup>4</sup> He also owned an undated and unsigned copy of Allan Ramsay's (1713-84) portrait of George III (1761-69).

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<sup>2</sup> George Waugh (1835-69), brother of Fanny. Evelyn Waugh was Fanny's grand-nephew.

<sup>3</sup> It is not clear who first coined this term in relation to Cadogan Cowper as articles and journals tend to state it as an established fact without a solid reference. The earliest reference to Cadogan Cowper as a follower of the Pre-Raphaelites I can find in the press is in 1905 with various reviews of his work in exhibitions.

<sup>4</sup> EW to Margaret Waugh, 10 January 1955; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.

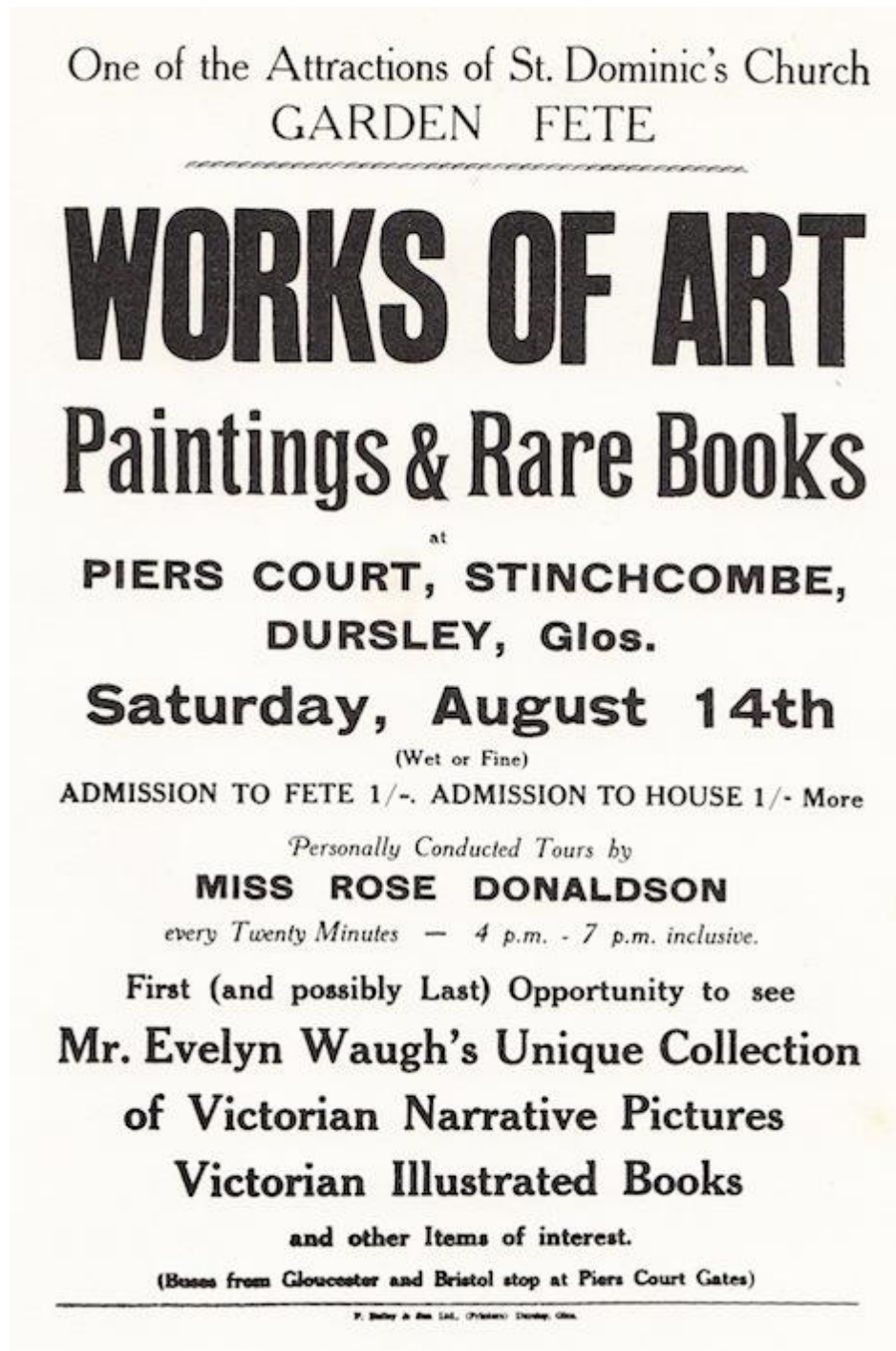


Fig. 1. Poster for the Piers Court fête, 1954. Reproduced in *Evelyn Waugh and his World*, ed. David Pryce-Jones (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), p. 112.

It was an impressive collection, and Waugh often wrote letters to his friends inviting them to come and see particular paintings he thought his correspondents would be interested in. He was particularly keen to host Maurice Bowra to show him his 'fine Arthur Hughes.'<sup>5</sup> The notion of creating a private museum in one's home to display a collection of art works is of course, not unique to Waugh. Anne Higonnet's book, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift*, deals mainly with the notion of private collections which were later developed in one way or another into public museums, such as the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, or the Wallace Collection in London. This was not the fate of Waugh's collection. With the exception of the pair of Solomon paintings, the Battersby mural and the Ramsay copy which can all be found in the Harry Ransom Center, Waugh's other paintings are now either in private hands or public galleries and are no longer physically part of the collection he curated. Nevertheless, Higonnet provides an insight into the effect of these individually curated collections that bears on Waugh's own: 'When collectors install an object, they are creating value in a visual and spatial mode, by declaring affinities, establishing hierarchies, and sometimes, simply, by exhibiting something for the first time.'<sup>6</sup> Waugh certainly declares affinities in which paintings he chose to collect, and he made interesting spatial choices when deciding where to hang his pictures, something that will be dealt with later in this chapter. What is perhaps most pertinent to Waugh's collection in Higonnet's analysis of collection museums is the notion that:

Somewhere in their museum, collectors installed signs of their personal identity [...] And there, at the heart of the museum, is a puzzle. Signs have to be decoded and pieced together. Much more complicated than simple portraits, let alone biographical records, the images of selfhood in collection museums are about hopes and fears to which no single picture could do justice.<sup>7</sup>

One way Waugh used his collection to express selfhood was, surprisingly, a public exhibition when he agreed to open the doors of Piers Court for a garden fête to raise money for St. Dominic's, a Catholic Church in Dursley some two miles from

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<sup>5</sup> EW to Maurice Bowra, 29 November 1951 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Mark Amory (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 411; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own: Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh and New York: Periscope Publishing Ltd., 2009), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

the house. The letter Waugh sent to Edward Sheehan<sup>8</sup> inviting him to attend is playful:

I suggest you [...] come here on the fourteenth for the fete. You would find material for an article on a typically English rural event and you could be of great help to us. [...] Have you any accomplishments other than writing – conjuring, ventriloquism, contortionism – that you would be willing to display? [...] Perhaps you play the trumpet? The Stinchcombe Silver Band would welcome a solo while they rest.<sup>9</sup>

Considering the unsettling ‘Frankly Speaking’ interview was just a year behind him, and subsequent mental health issues only just resolved, the whole idea of a garden fête at Piers Court sounds like an elaborate hoax or piece of fiction. The reference to a brass band is certainly reminiscent of the disastrous sports day described in *Decline and Fall* (1928).<sup>10</sup> The fête is surprising for two reasons; first, it is surprising that such a private man would open his house to the scrutiny of the public, and second, that he should invite a perfect stranger (an American journalist no less) to stay as a guest and write an article on the event. Sheehan was a devout Catholic though, and perhaps whilst preparing for the religious fundraiser Waugh had, for a time at least, become a little more trusting. Importantly, it was also an opportunity to exhibit his pictures and library. Frances Donaldson<sup>11</sup> records her memories of the event in her memoir, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of a Country Neighbour* (1967):

The fête was really Laura’s. She conceived the idea of raising money for St. Dominic’s [...]. But, as Evelyn watched her preparations, he became appalled by what he regarded as the incompetence of her arrangements, the paucity of the entertainment she proposed to offer. And so he took it over, merely to save his poor wife from public discredit.<sup>12</sup>

This exposes the side of Waugh that was guided by aesthetic principles and obsessed with presentation; taking on the organisation of the event was probably not just to save Laura from ‘public discredit’ but an opportunity to flex his creative muscle. Frances’s daughter, Rose Donaldson, who was seventeen at the time, was given the task of guiding visitors around Waugh’s collection of paintings. Waugh

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Sheehan (1930-2008), author and foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* and *Harper’s Magazine*.

<sup>9</sup> EW to Edward Sheehan, 6 August 1954, in *Letters*, p. 486; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>10</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* (1928; London: Penguin Books, 1937), pp. 59–83.

<sup>11</sup> Frances Donaldson (1907-1994), Baroness Donaldson of Kingsbridge. Writer and biographer.

<sup>12</sup> Frances Donaldson, *Evelyn Waugh Portrait of a Country Neighbour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 48–49.



had given Rose a script and 'on the afternoon of the fête her childish voice was to be heard, echoing innocently through his house, voicing remarks of his invention.'<sup>13</sup>

The fête's poster (see fig 1) advertises the event as the 'First (and possibly Last) opportunity to see Mr. Evelyn Waugh's Unique Collection of Victorian Narrative Pictures, Victorian Illustrated Books and other Items of interest'. It was a formidable collection as we have seen, including works by Rossetti, Holman Hunt, George Hicks and Arthur Hughes. There was one contemporary piece on display however - Richard Eurich's<sup>14</sup> *Travel in 1950* (1951-3) (see fig. 2) – which Waugh commissioned in 1951 as a companion piece to two paintings he bought in 1948 by Victorian artist Thomas Musgrave Joy (see figs. 3 and 4). These paintings are incorrectly titled *Travel in 1750* and *Travel in 1850* in many accounts of Waugh's collection, including Christopher Wood's article 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector' and in a letter Waugh sent to John Betjeman in 1948.<sup>15</sup> They are in fact titled *Travelling Past 1760 'Your Money or Your Life'* (1861) and *Travelling Present 1860 'Tickets Please'* (1861). The pair of Musgrave Joy paintings glorify the superior comfort and safety offered by the Victorian railways by comparing the calm and civilised interior of the railway carriage in *Travelling Present 1860* to the terror and chaos of the stage coach being held up by highwaymen in *Travelling Past 1760*. Waugh, by commissioning Eurich's painting of 'an aeroplane full of flames and roasting passengers'<sup>16</sup> makes the statement that advances in technology do not necessarily mean advances in civility or safety. It is a comment on the untenability of ceaseless progress, at some point there is a trade-off between technological development and the natural vulnerability of the human condition. Waugh does not want to accept the entropic nature of the universe, but is able, through personal faith, to find some humour in it. The scene pictured in Eurich's painting is more alarming than *Travelling Past 1760*. In Eurich's vision of contemporary air travel, passengers are thrown around the cabin of a Dakota aircraft that is clearly losing altitude – the very model in which Waugh experienced

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Eurich (1903-1992), British painter and war artist.

<sup>15</sup> EW to John Betjeman, c. 6 March 1948, in *Letters*, p. 309; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>16</sup> EW to Diana Cooper, 2 August 1951; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

a plane crash in Yugoslavia in 1944. Eurich has taken some artistic liberty in depicting the passengers as sitting opposite one another,<sup>17</sup> in order to echo the composition of the Musgrave Joy paintings. Waugh's memory of the crash is remarkably matter-of-fact considering eleven of his fellow passengers were killed on impact. His diary entry from the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1944 is very similar to the letter he wrote to Laura the day after:

The aeroplane accident is a complete blank to me as I was smoked unconscious at the time [...]. My first memory is of walking in a cornfield by the light of the burning aeroplane & discussing the progress of the war in a detached manner with a totally strange officer who kept saying 'I say skipper hadn't you better lie down?' It was some hours before I remembered why I was in that particular country and, as I say, I do not yet remember anything of the fall. I was burned in several places, on both hands, legs & head, but as I was anaesthetized by shock my sufferings were negligible. The chief annoyance of the incident was the total destruction of all my luggage most of it irreplaceable. I still have no shoes except gym shoes, of different sizes but made for the same foot.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This is a configuration not usually seen in commercial aeroplane interiors, but did exist in military craft – however the seats were against the windows rather than at ninety degrees to them.

<sup>18</sup> EW to Laura Waugh, 17 August 1944 in *Letters*, pp. 212–13; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.



Fig. 2. Richard Eurich, *The Pleasures of Travel 1950*, (1951-3). Private Collection.



Fig. 3. Thomas Musgrave Joy, *Travelling Past 1760 'Your Money or Your Life'* (1861). Private Collection.



Fig. 4. Thomas Musgrave Joy, *Travelling Present 1860 'Tickets Please'* (1861). Private Collection.

Having a personal experience of the dangers of air travel surely provided inspiration for the commission as Eurich's painting, indeed Waugh had never been particularly keen on travelling by aeroplane.<sup>19</sup> After the painting was finished and hanging in Piers Court, Eurich received a postcard from Waugh asking him to come and add 'a few flames in the foreground'.<sup>20</sup> Waugh's rather morbid sense of humour diminishes what must have been a traumatic experience (as with his approach to *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*), and perhaps commissioning the painting was his way of working through and making sense of the accident. If anything, it shows that Musgrave Joy's *Travelling Present 1860* is an oasis of civility between two periods of disorder – an allegory of society as Waugh saw it, crashing inexorably into chaos. Noticeably, the active agent in *Travel in 1950* is not human, as it is with the highwaymen and ticket collector in Musgrave Joy's *Travelling Past*

<sup>19</sup> 'One does not feel nearly as ill being airsick as seasick; it is very much more sudden and decisive, but I was acutely embarrassed about my bag.' Waugh had vomited into a brown paper bag shortly after take-off. See Evelyn Waugh, *Labels: A Mediterranean Journal* (1930; London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> EW to Richard Eurich, 16 February 1953; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.



and *Travelling Present*, but technological. One hundred years of advancement may have put people in the air, but in Eurich and Waugh's vision of the world, nothing can stop them crashing back down to earth. Even the priest on the right hand side of the painting holds up a steadying hand in a futile gesture. The horrified faces of the terrified passengers are not something Waugh would have sympathised with; in fact, it is more likely that he saw this reaction to chaos as an image of the failure of humanist optimism. It is also a matter of religious faith. As a devout Catholic, and one seemingly unafraid of death, Waugh used his faith to shield himself from such chaos. Yet a letter to Laura betrays some fear of death in wartime: 'during the time when we expected to be sent into an operation which could only be disastrous, I realised how much you have changed me, because I could no longer look at death with indifference. I wanted to live & I was pleased when we ran away.'<sup>21</sup>

Wood notes that Eurich's *Travel in 1950* 'must be an unique example of a Victorian collector trying to bring Victorian painting up to date.'<sup>22</sup> It is certainly an interesting example of private patronage, something that Waugh had written about in response to a letter published in *The Times* by William Emrys Williams.<sup>23</sup> Waugh's letter to *The Times* is dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 1954, around a month before the garden fête at which he would showcase his paintings, and, one might conclude, establish himself as the kind of 'private patron' he refers to in his letter:

The private patrons, whom Mr Williams supposes to be extinct, delighted and competed to possess objects of beauty. In spite of taxation there are still many who deny themselves grosser pleasures in order to live with a few things which give them delight. Sale prices attest this.<sup>24</sup>

This was not the first time Waugh had adopted the role of patron. In a 1951 letter to Christopher Sykes, Waugh compares himself to perhaps the greatest patron of the arts, the Renaissance ruler Lorenzo de' Medici:

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<sup>21</sup> EW to Laura Waugh, 28 September 1940 in *Letters*, p. 163; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>22</sup> Wood, 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector', p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> William Emrys Williams (1896-1977) Secretary-General for the Arts Council between 1951-1953.

<sup>24</sup> EW to Editor of *The Times*, 'Painter and Patron Responsibilities to Each Other', 17 July 1954; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

The mantle of Lorenzo de Medici seems to have fallen on my shoulders. I have in the last few days commissioned a trompe l'oeil painting from the Master of Chantilly<sup>25</sup>, a painting of an aeroplane accident by a Mr. Eurich.<sup>26</sup>

*The Spectator* picked up on Waugh's correspondence with *The Times* and used it to discuss the Eurich painting, and the Piers Court fête:

Mr. Evelyn Waugh, who lately intervened in *The Times* correspondence about the difficulties confronting young artists with the suggestion that patrons still had a part to play in this context, has set an example which might well be followed by those who are deterred from ever commissioning a picture by not quite knowing what to commission a picture of. Mr. Waugh possesses a pair of paintings done by Thomas Musgrave Joy in 1850 and designed to show how the amenities of travel had been improved [...] Mr. Waugh has now got Mr. Richard Eurich to bring the sequence up to date with a painting, done in the same vein and style as Joy's, of passengers meeting with disaster in a mid-twentieth-century aeroplane. Anyone wishing to verify Mr. Waugh's claim that the result is a striking success could not do better than go to what I hope he calls his seat—Piers Court, near Dursley in Gloucestershire—on Saturday, August 14, when his pictures and library will be open to the public view for the first and probably the last time.<sup>27</sup>

These *Travel* paintings show us two things about Waugh: firstly that he was fond of Victorian painting (that much is obvious) but secondly that he valued Musgrave Joy's idealised vision of a more genteel world. The commissioning of Eurich's companion piece suggests a return to an old-fashioned relationship between patron and artist.

Eurich's painting is significant not only because of its intertextual relationship with the Musgrave Joy pictures, but also in what it has to say about Waugh's taste in art. Writing to John Betjeman in 1948 Waugh states: 'My taste is receding not advancing. I really only like pre Great Exhibition post Waterloo art.'<sup>28</sup> This did not stop him commissioning works by contemporary artists such as Eurich and Battersby but he was only interested in contemporary art when it fulfilled what he thought to be art's purpose – to provide delight:

"Modern art" is no longer modern. Its inventors are dead or in their dotage. It is no longer a question of something being unwelcome because it is strange. There is no animus against

<sup>25</sup> Waugh calls Battersby the Master of Chantilly because of his work on a series of murals at Diana Cooper's French residence, Château St-Firmin, Chantilly.

<sup>26</sup> EW to Christopher Sykes, 29 July 1951; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Fleming, 'Patronage at Piers Court', *The Spectator*, 6 August 1954, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> EW to John Betjeman, c. 6 March 1948 in *Letters*, p. 310; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

the contemporary: merely a failure among certain contemporaries to provide the delight for which artists exist.<sup>29</sup>

Waugh defines what makes 'good art' in a letter to Robin Campbell: 'aesthetic value is often a bye-product of the artist straining to do something else; the result of a rigid discipline undergone and a difficult craft mastered.'<sup>30</sup>

Eurich worked as an artist in the Second World War. His painting *Withdrawal from Dunkirk* (1940) 'created a public sensation and led to Eurich being appointed a full-time, salaried war artist to the Admiralty in March 1941.'<sup>31</sup> Richard Dormont argues that Eurich 'made few concessions to the art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When contemporaries [...] were noisily abandoning representation for abstraction, Eurich carried on drawing and painting from nature.'<sup>32</sup> Primarily a landscape artist, *Travel in 1950* departs from his usual subject matter, but there is another uncharacteristically satirical painting of Eurich's that Waugh also owned, *The Critics* (1956) (see fig. 5). The five critics of the painting's title gather around a sparse canvas consisting solely of geometric shapes and lines, literally turning their backs on figurative art represented by the Cézanne inspired still life to the left of the canvas. This, surely, must have appealed to Waugh, who once described modern art as 'unqualified hideosity'.<sup>33</sup> But *The Critics* also shows the possibility for redemption for both the critics and contemporary art. As Dormont (whose wife, Harriet Waugh inherited the painting) points out:

In the sunlit studio in the background, a real artist, in the form of Eurich himself, shows a just-finished canvas to his nude model. Whereas the critics live in darkness and without colour, Eurich uses a palette of light pinks and radiant yellows to evoke the vitality and optimism that suffuse his own artistic values.<sup>34</sup>

Eurich is thus 'enlightened' in this painting, in contrast to the critics, who are not only 'in the dark' but further obscure their perception by wearing sunglasses

<sup>29</sup> EW to Editor of *The Times*, 17 July 1954; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>30</sup> EW to Robin Campbell, 27 December 1945 in *Letters*, pp. 246-8; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>31</sup> 'Eurich, Richard Ernst (1903–1992), Painter; Oxford Dictionary of National Biography' <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-51025;jsessionid=B45435000A9B8E7FFAE48C7D1BEFCE26>> [accessed 8 March 2018].

<sup>32</sup> Richard Dormont, 'A Curse on Critics', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 2003 <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3591057/A-curse-on-critics.html>> [accessed 8 March 2018].

<sup>33</sup> EW to Lord David Cecil, 7 August 1949 in *Letters*, p. 348; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>34</sup> Dormont, 'A Curse on Critics'.

indoors. 'The contrast between the foolishness of the impotent critics and the moral clarity of the virile artist is the picture's unmistakable point.'<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 5. Richard Eurich, *The Critics* (1956). Private collection.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



Intertextual moral themes can be found in other paintings in Waugh's collection. W. A. Atkinson's<sup>36</sup> *The Upset Flower Cart* (c. 1860s) (see fig. 6) also referred to as *The Upturned Barrow*, is a classic Victorian narrative picture. It depicts the moment when a prosperous family offer a poor flower seller money for the ruined contents of her cart, upturned due to the carelessness of the barrow boy. Little is known about Atkinson, Christopher Wood's *Dictionary of Victorian Painters* describes him as a 'genre and historical painter [...]'. Now only known for one exceptional picture, "The Upturned Barrow".<sup>37</sup> This canvas was in Waugh's possession at least by 1950, when he explained his extensive interpretation of the scene in a letter to Diana Cooper:

The picture. There have been suggestions of a romantic theme - that the barrow woman is a former mistress and so forth - but though I hate socio-economic [criticism?]. The poor family are coming into North London from Finchley or Edgware with their produce - not cut flowers but pot plants of some value. The father is a brute and the woman's consternation is the thought of the beating she will get on her return. The loutish boy is responsible for running into the fatal brick. He is so loutish that he just scratches his head and doesn't even try to find out what can be salvaged. The other proletarians have nothing but delight in their fellows' disaster. 'Look here, mates, here's a lark'. But the good rich man (why is he sauntering with his family in Sunday clothes and not at business? is it Sunday? If so, is there a reflexion on the iniquity of Sunday trading?) comes to the rescue. Moreover he trains his little girl in charity by giving her the two half crowns to give. The poor girl sees this and wakes her stupefied mother. 'Look, everything is all right. No beating. The good rich man has forked out.' The painting is brilliantly coloured. Spring everywhere. Is it Easter Monday perhaps?<sup>38</sup>

The tone of voice in this letter is vaguely school-masterish, a role Waugh often adopted in his letters to his female friends.<sup>39</sup> It also shows him in the character of the self-made, educated man. Unlike Cooper, Waugh (as he attempts to show here) was not born into an environment with an "innate" understanding of the arts; he has had to learn how to "read" a painting. It is this perceived notion of the aristocracy having an intuitive relationship with the aesthetic world that really

<sup>36</sup> W. A. Atkinson (fl. 1849-1867). British genre painter.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Wood, *Dictionary of Victorian Painters* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1971), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> EW to Diana Cooper, 12 December 1950; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>39</sup> See the following letter for a rather hectoring lesson on what constitutes writing paper. Evelyn Waugh to Nancy Mitford, 19 October 1955 in *Letters*, p. 514; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.

attracted Waugh - an intellectual rather than a material wealth. This is what Waugh intends with Sebastian Flyte's understanding of Clive Bell's theories of art and 'Significant Form' in *Brideshead Revisited*. Sebastian, unlike Charles Ryder, was born an aesthete, and inspired the same kind of admiration as Waugh's Oxford friend, Harold Acton. Acton, from a notable Anglo-Italian family, grew up surrounded by aesthetic splendour at the Villa La Pietra near Florence. He was a self-professed aesthete of the original type (rather than the *fin-de-siecle* iteration). 'I love beauty' he wrote in his autobiography *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (1948):

For me beauty is the vital principle pervading the universe – glistening in stars, glowing in flowers, moving with clouds, flowing with water, permeating nature and mankind. By contemplating the myriad manifestations of this vital principle we expand into something greater than we were born. Art is the mirror that reflects these expansions, sometimes for a moment, sometimes for perpetuity.<sup>40</sup>

There is certainly a glimmer in Acton's statement of Sebastian's assertion that the emotions evoked by art and nature are comparable: "Does anyone feel the same kind of emotion for a butterfly or a flower that he feels for a cathedral or a picture?" Yes. I do'<sup>41</sup> could easily appear amidst Acton's musings on beauty. At Oxford in 1924 Waugh wrote a reverential biography of Acton for *The Isis* for the appropriately titled "Isis Idol" series. In it he states: 'Only after one has known him for quite a long time does one realize that there is no subject on which he has not got complete and highly specialized knowledge. It is a quality which, combined with exuberance, is of immeasurable value.'<sup>42</sup> But there is another contradiction here in Waugh's apprehension of art and aesthetic theory. He is torn between a desire to possess the 'innate understanding' of Acton and yet, as we see in his letter to Diana Cooper, he is proud of having learnt to read pictures and having developed his own theories of art. As always Waugh takes pride in the notion of 'work', with knowledge its own kind of wealth.

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<sup>40</sup>Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1948), p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 30. Hereafter *BR*.

<sup>42</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Isis Idol No. 594 Mr. Harold Acton (Christ Church)', *The Isis*, 20 February 1924, p. 7.



Fig. 6. W. A. Atkinson, *The Upset Flower Cart* (c. 1860s). Private collection.



Fig. 7. Ford Madox Brown, *Work* (1863). Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, England.

*The Upset Flower Cart* invites a fairly complicated reading that goes further than the explanation Waugh offers to Diana Cooper, and it is likely that as a satirist and a critic he was not content with the unproblematic depiction of morality he describes. I would argue that Waugh was attracted to the Atkinson picture because of the symbolism of ineffectual progress it contains. The notion of irresistible progress is undeniably Victorian but it is also untenable. *The Upset Flower Cart* shows fragility in the face of urban development, the flower seller and her wares belong to an older world than the respectable neighbourhood that provides the setting for the painting.<sup>43</sup> The cause of the accident that has led to the destruction of the delicate flowerpots and bouquets appears to be a loose cobblestone, perhaps a remnant of the road works to the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas. This detail recalls Ford Madox Brown's *Work* (1863), a similar painting in that it depicts a moment in urban life in which the individual lives of the different social classes intersect (see fig. 7).

It is worth looking in more detail at the religious insight Waugh brings to *The Upset Flower Cart*. He suggests that the ruined flowers are the direct outcome of the immoral practice of selling produce on the Christian Sabbath, but the kindness shown by the wealthy family in spite of this is inherently 'Christian' in its emphasis on charity. This is a particularly Victorian outlook, when it was 'accepted as a law of life that there is a great gulf fixed between rich and poor' and this 'common attitude is shown by Atkinson's *The Upturned Barrow*'.<sup>44</sup> The painting certainly belongs to the tradition of the problem picture, a popular sub-genre of Victorian narrative painting. Usually depicting a revelatory moment, often with a moral imperative, these paintings present a puzzle to be solved and a lesson to be learned. William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) (see fig. 8) is one of the most famous problem pictures of the genre. It shows the moment a mistress realises her precarious and sinful position as she rises from the lap of her dissolute lover. With its symbolic images of entrapment and redemption, the

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<sup>43</sup> The author of the lot essay for the 1992 sale of *The Upset Flower Cart* identifies the road as Caledonian Road, Islington. Considering Atkinson lived in the area between 1859 and 1866 it is likely that the painting is indeed of the more respectable end of Caledonian Road, north of King's Cross. See: Anonymous, 'W.A. Atkinson (Fl.1849-1870)' <[https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot\\_details.aspx?intObjectID=2955276](https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=2955276)> [accessed 9 March 2018].

<sup>44</sup> Graham Reynolds, *Painters of the Victorian Scene* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1953), p. 26.



viewer can literally read the painting. As Pamela Fletcher argues, for the Victorian audience 'The process of reading a painting was based on the expectation that a visual image could be translated into text, that is to say, that pictures told stories.'<sup>45</sup>



Fig. 8. William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience* (1853). Tate Britain, London.

What is notable about Waugh's collection of narrative paintings is the way works like the *Travel* series and *The Upset Flower Cart* form an unlikely conversation about the untenable nature of progress. Waugh was not only

<sup>45</sup> Pamela M. Fletcher, 'Virtue, Vice, Gossip, and Sex: Narratives of Gender in Victorian and Edwardian Painting', in *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, ed. by Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2013), pp. 532–51 (p. 532).

interested in the intertextual elements *in* his narrative paintings, but also between seemingly unrelated works in his collection. His theories on the unsustainable nature of endless progress were solidified in a BBC broadcast 'To an Unknown Old Man' from the 'To an Un-named Listener' series, broadcast in November 1932. Waugh refers to a belief in progress, 'that is to say in a process of inarrestible, beneficial change' as belonging exclusively to the previous generation. Addressing the older generation directly, he argues:

You were told that man was a perfectible being already well set on the last phase of his ascent from ape to angel, that he would yearly become healthier, wealthier and wiser until, somewhere about the period in which we are now living, he would have attained a condition of unimpaired knowledge and dignity and habitual, ecstatic self esteem.<sup>46</sup>

The same could not be said for Waugh's generation, deeply aware of the destabilised world created by the First World War. Thus we can see Waugh's penchant for Victorian narrative pictures as informed by two things at this point; firstly that they adhere to his ideals of aesthetic value, clearly the 'result of a rigid discipline undergone and a difficult craft mastered'<sup>47</sup> and secondly that they offer a glimpse into the golden age of progress, something Waugh is able to undermine by means of juxtaposition.

Sam Lewisohn argues in 'Is Collecting an Art?' that:

[...] one can create a work of art in itself in the effect given to the individual on entering the room in which the paintings are properly arranged. A new beauty is created in the total effect over and above the beauty inherent in the separate paintings themselves. The collector who "hangs" such a room has the satisfying experience of an interpretive artist who creates a new aesthetic cosmos.<sup>48</sup>

Though Lewisohn focuses primarily on the aesthetic qualities of a collection here, it is not too much of a stretch to see the same impetus in Waugh's collection – the whole being more valuable than any individual piece due to the conversations between these paintings.

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<sup>46</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'To an Unknown Old Man', 1932; MS, HRC.

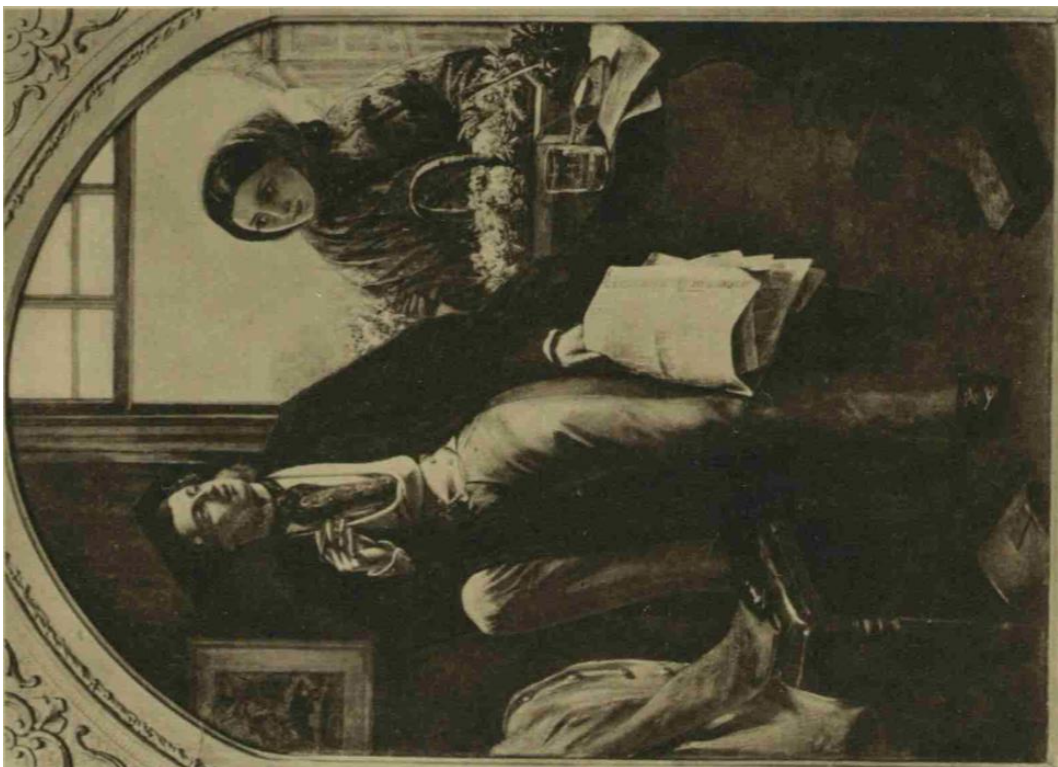
<sup>47</sup> EW to Campbell, 27 December 1945.

<sup>48</sup> Sam Lewisohn, 'Is Collecting an Art?', *Parnassus*, 6.5 (1934), 14–15 (p. 14) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/770868>>.



Fig. 9. Rebecca Solomon, *The Industrious Student Reading for Honours or The Virtuous Undergraduate* (1859). (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Fig. 10. Rebecca Solomon, *The Idle Student Reading for Pluck or The Dissolute Undergraduate* (1859). (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Other problem pictures in Waugh's collection that invite subversive readings include a pair of paintings by Rebecca Solomon,<sup>49</sup> titled *The Industrious Student Reading for Honours or The Virtuous Undergraduate* (1859) and *The Idle Student Reading for Pluck or The Dissolute Undergraduate* (1859). There are interesting symbols at work in these paintings that make the titles and their subjects somewhat interchangeable. *The Virtuous Undergraduate* is of a youthful undergraduate on an outside balcony, wearing his cap and gown. He gazes wistfully at a young woman, not noticing that his essay has slipped out of the books in his hand and is being fouled by the small dog at their feet. On the other hand, *The Dissolute Undergraduate* is bearded, older looking and appears to be occupied with the pretty flower girl at the window of his rooms. A copy of *Bell's Life in London*, a Victorian sporting paper, dangles idly in his hand. Contemporary accounts of these pictures focus on the attitude each student takes toward the female figure in the composition, and it is this attitude, rather than the conscientiousness of the student that is judged 'virtuous' or 'dissolute'. *The Globe* argued that:

'Reading for Pluck,' and 'Reading for Honours,' should be engraved for the benefit of wavering undergraduates – making evident to the eye that hard reading – with a nice young lady tenderly contemplated as the ultimate prize – is a much more elevated and judicious line of proceeding than *fast* reading; with the aid of a cigar and soda water; and with a gipsy hussy of a flower girl looking in at the window; and unblushingly conscious whereabouts she is in the vagrant fancy of the to-be-plucked and to-be-bubbled in many ways young gentleman inside the room. The 'Reading for Pluck' reminds [one] of [William Powell] Frith. The pair are clever tableaux *de genre*.<sup>50</sup>

Wood describes Solomon's paintings in a similar fashion, with the industrious student 'wooing a respectable and demure young lady' and the dissolute student 'seducing flower girls, and devoting himself to drink and gambling.'<sup>51</sup> He notes that 'a copy of *Bell's Life in London* [...] which also makes an appearance in the third scene of Frith's *Road to Ruin* series'<sup>52</sup> appears in the hand of the dissolute student,

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<sup>49</sup> Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886). British painter and sister of Abraham and Simeon Solomon, also notable painters.

<sup>50</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Exhibition of British Artists', *The Globe*, 19 November 1859, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Wood, 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector', p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.



and probably accounts for the Frith<sup>53</sup> reference by *The Globe*. Another analysis of these paintings appears in *The Illustrated London News*:

Miss Rebecca Solomon, who delights in smart, telling character-subjects, will find favour for her two episodes of college life – “Reading for Pluck” and “Reading for Honours.” In the former we see a dissipated-looking gownsman, smoking his cigar, and gossiping with an itinerant flower girl, who stands at the window; in the latter an exemplary, studious, and steady collegian is snatching half an hour to saunter and sweet converse hold with the very demure and well-dressed young lady who is to be his future wife.<sup>54</sup>

Interestingly, both contemporary readings seem to ignore the fact that neither student seems particularly engaged with his academic work; indeed, one might argue that either student could be described as ‘dissolute’ in this regard. Pamela Garrish Nunn criticises the iniquity at the heart of Solomon’s paintings where ‘woman is seen through male eyes as falling into two types, according to men’s moral intentions towards her.’<sup>55</sup> Thus the ambiguity and potential for subversive reading Solomon’s paintings offered in posing the question of what one may consider virtuous or dissolute in any given situation would have greatly appealed to Waugh.

The controversy surrounding Rebecca Solomon’s brother Simeon’s ‘dissolute’ life may also have inspired Waugh to purchase the paintings. Simeon Solomon, as Wood notes ‘illustrated books for Swinburne, but the corrupting influence of the poet is generally thought to have hastened his moral and artistic decline. In 1873 he was arrested for homosexual offences, and became a complete social outlaw.’<sup>56</sup> Though Rebecca was not directly involved in the scandal, it had an effect on her reputation as an artist and a woman. Gerrish-Nunn argues that ‘Rebecca and Simeon led a very full social life in the sixties, and a certain eccentricity in both brother and sister was [...] a matter for gossip and anxiety among their friends.’<sup>57</sup> This eccentricity has been distorted over the years into a suggestion that Rebecca Solomon was an alcoholic, and that this was the cause of her death, when in fact she was ‘knocked over by a cab in the street in which she

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<sup>53</sup> William Powell Frith (1819-1909). British narrative painter.

<sup>54</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Winter Exhibition’, *The Illustrated London News*, 26 November 1859, pp. 515–16 (p. 516).

<sup>55</sup> Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Problem Pictures: Women and Men in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> Wood, *Dictionary of Victorian Painters*, p. 157.

<sup>57</sup> Pamela Gerrish-Nunn, ‘Rebecca Solomon’, in *Solomon A Family of Painters* (London: Inner London Education Authority, 1986), pp. 19–23 (p. 22).

lived.’<sup>58</sup> Waugh was obviously aware of this reputation as he references Rebecca in a letter to Ann Fleming:

Very many thanks for your letter, card and press cutting. I got into touch with Walkers at once but fear the Rebecca Solomon has been snapped up. I have two pictures of hers which I greatly enjoy. She led a life sadly at variance with the teachings of your new guru, Mr Riddell. I have brooded darkly about your description of Enton Hall.<sup>59</sup>

The Mr Riddell referred to was likely a member of staff at Enton Hall, a health farm in Surrey where Ann and Ian Fleming were regular guests. The regime involved abstinence from alcohol, which is why Waugh considers Rebecca Solomon’s life incompatible with the kind of ‘lay asceticism’<sup>60</sup> offered by the health farm. That Solomon’s *Dissolute Undergraduate* is pictured with a glass of brandy could be seen as a hypocritical bit of Victorian moralising by Waugh, and another example of his penchant for narrative painting that either overtly or inadvertently exposes the deceit at the heart of presentations of the era as an undisputed golden age.

There is another reason Waugh would have been attracted to the work of Solomon, and that is her connection to the Pre-Raphaelites through her work with Millais and others. She ‘helped several artists to produce studio replicas, including Millais, Frith, [John] Phillip and T[homas] Faed’.<sup>61</sup> She collaborated with Millais on a later copy of *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1866; original 1850) and also worked with Burne-Jones. Her later works show the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites through her brother Simeon whose work was greatly admired by the group.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> EW to Ann Fleming, 30 January 1956 in *Letters*, p. 520; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 520.

<sup>61</sup> Wood, *Dictionary of Victorian Painters*, p. 157.



Fig. 11. George Smith, *The Rightful Heir* (1875). Private Collection.



Fig. 12. George Smith, *Into the Cold World* (1876). Private Collection.

In what is likely a purposeful choice, Waugh owned another painting that contains a reference to Frith, as in *The Dissolute Undergraduate*: a picture titled *The Rightful Heir* (1875) (see fig. 11) by George Smith.<sup>62</sup> The aforementioned *Road to Ruin* series, itself inspired by Hogarth's *Pilgrim's Progress*, ends with its main character contemplating suicide; the pistol he intends to use lies on the table amidst signifiers of extreme poverty caused by an addiction to gambling. *The Rightful Heir* shows an angelic, fair-haired child being presented to the man who has frittered his inheritance, if the cards scattered on the floor and upturned glasses are anything to go by, on gambling and alcohol. It is a classic Victorian narrative painting, portraying immorality and injustice: a villain, an innocent child and an appeal to the rectitude of the viewer. *The Rightful Heir* demands to be read, as does another of Waugh's George Smiths, *Into the Cold World* (1876) (see fig. 12), which took precedence in Piers Court over Frank Cadogan Cowper's work.<sup>63</sup> In a letter to his daughter Margaret, Waugh tells her that "‘Into the Cold World’ is back from Bourlets, cleaned & reframed and very beautiful [...]. It now hangs in the dining-room & Cadogan Cooper [sic] is in the dark in the back-hall.'<sup>64</sup> As Susan P. Casteras notes in her book *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, *Into the Cold World* depicts a typically Victorian attitude toward the widow 'often delineated as a pathetic creature'<sup>65</sup> along with the governess, the seamstress and the 'fallen woman'. In the painting a 'beautiful young widow, head and posture downcast, has no recourse but to leave her home [...]. Unprotected by any male, the woman is now emotionally and financially at sea'.<sup>66</sup> *The Rightful Heir* and *Into the Cold World* show families at their most dysfunctional and contrasts with the depiction of the middle-class family in *The Upset Flower Cart*, these family relationships are strained by infidelity and the relative powerlessness of a single or widowed woman. *Into the Cold World* depicts an all too familiar situation. According to Casteras 'until 1880, [four years after *Into the Cold World* was painted] even a widow had to struggle for legal recognition, since before then often

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<sup>62</sup> George Smith (1829-1901). British painter.

<sup>63</sup> Frank Cadogan Cowper RA (1877-1958). British painter and illustrator, occasionally referred to as "the last Pre-Raphaelite".

<sup>64</sup> EW to Margaret Waugh, 20 October 1955; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.

<sup>65</sup> Susan P. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art* (Cranbury, NJ, London and Ontario, Canada: Associated University Presses, 1987), p. 123.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.



only a third of her husband's estate might go to her after his death, the majority bequeathed instead to his male heirs.'<sup>67</sup> As the widow is led out of the house by the butler once in her employ, the house is being dismantled around her and her child. Without recourse to her late husband's entire wealth, she is forced to leave the literal and metaphorical warmth of the home for the snow. As a painting it has echoes of Robert Martineau's *The Last Day in the Old Home* (1861) (fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Robert Martineau's *The Last Day in the Old Home* (1861). Tate Britain, London.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

In Martineau's work a family are in the process of selling their ancestral home and its contents due to the profligacy and alcoholism of the paterfamilias. Waugh references *The Last Day in the Old Home* in Rossetti to explain the difference between the emotion evoked by Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* (1864-70)<sup>68</sup> (see fig. 14) and that of narrative realist painting:

You can if you are so disposed dismiss with a clear conscience half at least of Rossetti's work as artistically negligible; you can go further and denounce his whole reputation as a fraud, but as long as *Beata Beatrix* hangs in the Tate Gallery there is a problem to be faced. You can say that this picture simply does not rouse any emotion in you and therefore is not a work of art; you are then in the position of the old-fashioned Academicians who cannot imagine what all these people see in Matisse; there is no contact for argument. Or you can say that it does arouse very definite and deep emotion, but that, as it is not a picture which can be explained by the same standards as Poussin or Picasso, this emotion is not æsthetic but some other kind of emotion altogether improper to a picture. Now if this emotion were the sort that is roused by pure illustration, you are well armoured to resist it. But this is not the case. The heart does not go out in human sympathy in the way that it does to the unlucky family of Martineau's *Last Day in the Old Home*. It is not romantically aroused by Lizzie Siddal's beauty or pathetically reminded of her death or stirred by some remembered quotation from Dante, though no doubt all these considerations are present to a certain extent. Is this illicit emotion so different from that aroused by, say, the Mona Lisa or the mosaics at Daphne?<sup>69</sup>

This is a complicated statement and bears unpacking. Waugh is essentially trying to find a discourse into which Rossetti's work can be judged. *Beata Beatrix* sits awkwardly in the middle of two artistic movements; it is not in the mode of traditional painting like Poussin, but neither is it modern like Picasso. The conclusion Waugh comes to is that despite *Beata Beatrix* not evoking the same emotion as a Victorian narrative painting, it does indeed evoke an emotion, and is therefore unlike the work of Matisse or Picasso. It is, in fact

a test case in the objective and plastic theory of painting to which almost all our modern critics are committed. This theory, [...] has been devised very lately in comparison with the antiquity of graphic and plastic art, owing to the necessity of interpreting to the public and the art editors and advertising managers who have usurped the places of Leathart and

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<sup>68</sup> This painting was a tribute to Rossetti's late wife, Elizabeth Siddal, who died in 1862.

<sup>69</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti His Life and Works*, ed. by Michael G. Brennan (1928; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 97.

Leyland as patrons of the Arts, the intentions and achievements of the schools of painting since Cezanne.<sup>70</sup>

Here Waugh suggests that *Beata Beatrix* might in fact be un-interpretable by modern objective critics and it is precisely the emotion in the painting that renders it so. The moral implications of the *type* of emotion *Beata Beatrix* evokes however clearly troubles Waugh, he describes it as 'illicit' and 'altogether improper'. Moral criticism of Rossetti's work was an established mode, beginning with an essay by Robert Buchanan under the pseudonym Thomas Maitland. His polemic, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti' was published in *The Contemporary Review* in 1871. In it Buchanan claims that Rossetti 'is an artist who conceives unpleasantly, and draws ill. Like Mr. Simeon Solomon,<sup>71</sup> however, with whom he seems to have many points in common, he is distinctively a colourist'.<sup>72</sup> Buchanan has little time for Rossetti's painting or poetry, finding that in both:

There is the same thinness and transparence [sic] of design, the same combination of the simple and the grotesque, the same morbid deviation from healthy forms of life, the same sense of wearing, wasting, yet exquisite sensuality; nothing virile, nothing tender, nothing completely sane; a superfluity of extreme sensibility, of delight in beautiful forms, hues, and tints, and a deep-seated indifference to all agitating forces and agencies, all tumultuous griefs and sorrows, all the thunderous stress of life, and all the straining storm of speculation.<sup>73</sup>

The main arguments against Rossetti's painting here are that it appeals solely to the senses on an aesthetic level and that the sensuality of the subject has nothing to do with healthy fecundity. One might argue that if there were a place for 'morbid deviation from healthy forms of life' it would be in a memorial portrait of a late loved one but the rapt expression on the model, Elizabeth Siddal's, face is nonetheless unsettling. Rossetti has romanticised the wan weakness of his model at the moment of her death. She is made saint-like, the soft diffused light around her head recalling a halo. The title itself, *Beata Beatrix* refers to the character of Beatrice Portinari in Dante Alighieri's *La Vita Nuova* (1295) but is also suggestive of beatification, that the deceased person was either a martyr or lived a holy life

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>71</sup> This comparison to Simeon Solomon may hint at the subversive sexuality Buchanan observed in Rossetti's work, and might also suggest Waugh's tentative attraction to Rossetti, given the fluidity of his own sexuality in his youth.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Buchanan, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry', *The Contemporary Review*, October 1871, 334–50 (p. 336).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 336–37.

and is therefore a suitable subject of religious veneration. All this is at odds with the sensuality of the painting, where the subject's heavily lidded eyes and parted mouth recall Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa* (1647-52), another work that makes clear the association between Transverberation and sexual pleasure.

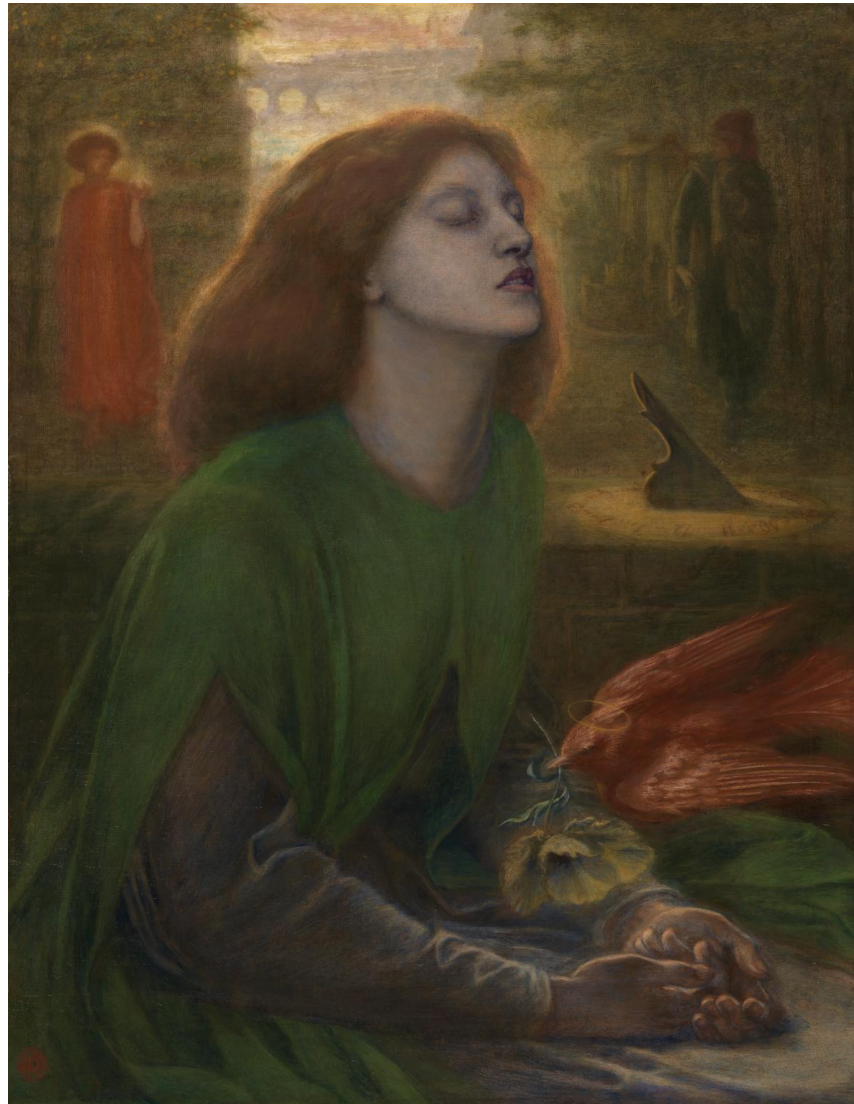


Fig. 14. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix* (1864-70). Tate Britain, London.

Waugh, it seems, is acutely aware of this problematic association in *Beata Beatrix* and in doing so presents a microcosm of what he also sees as 'wrong' with Rossetti as an artist:



To the muddled Victorian mind it seemed vaguely suitable that the artist should be melancholy, morbid, uncontrolled, and generally slightly deranged. [...] In Rossetti's own day, no doubt, not a little of the adulation he aroused came from this romance of decay—a sort of spiritual coprophily characteristic of the age. [...] it seems to me that there we have the root cause of Rossetti's failure. It is not so much that as a man he was a bad man—mere lawless wickedness has frequently been a concomitant of the highest genius—but there was fatally lacking in him that essential rectitude that underlies the serenity of all really great art. The sort of unhappiness that beset him was not the sort of unhappiness that does beset a great artist; all his brooding about magic and suicide are symptomatic not so much of genius as of mediocrity. There is a spiritual inadequacy, a sense of ill-organisation about all that he did.<sup>74</sup>

So two years before his conversion to Catholicism, and in a period that was not marked by any particular religious inclination, Waugh damns Rossetti for his lack of spiritual morality. He echoes this statement towards the end of his life when reflecting on the concept of perfectionism in his diary:

“Perfectionist” means one who believes in the perfectibility (in the eyes of God) of human nature. It is now used of one whose aim is to perform a task perfectly, i.e., the artist. Drunkenness, despair and suicide among artists comes from their concentration on the task rather than on their own souls.<sup>75</sup>

Great art, Waugh posits, can only come from an artist who has this sense of spiritual orderliness, a type of order that would seem to influence the balance of a composition. One of the problems with *Beata Beatrix*, according to Waugh, is that its subject matter is unfit for beatification and shows exactly what he means by the ‘romance of decay’. Indeed, Rossetti was not the only person to admire the apparent aesthetic qualities of Siddal's decline in health. Waugh quotes Ford Madox Brown as writing ‘Saw Miss Siddal, looking thinner and more deathlike and more beautiful and more ragged than ever.’<sup>76</sup> This morbid appreciation of deathly beauty is what Buchanan means by ‘wearing, wasting, yet exquisite sensuality’, and is ultimately what damns Rossetti as an artist in the final paragraphs of *Rossetti*. Yet Waugh claims not to agree with Buchanan's criticisms elsewhere in *Rossetti*: ‘One can really assume very little patience with Robert Buchanan's thesis [...] a coarse, ill-intentioned tirade upon the moral standards of the Pre-Raphaelite poets,

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<sup>74</sup> Waugh, *Rossetti*, p. 171.

<sup>75</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 826.

<sup>76</sup> Waugh, *Rossetti*, p. 44.

particularly of Swinburne, Morris, and Rossetti.<sup>77</sup> He further clarifies the issue by stating:

[...] the charge for which Rossetti is held answerable comes under two heads; first that as a man he had a coarse and shallow attitude toward sex, in which he regarded the physical pleasures of union as more important than the emotion aroused; and secondly, that as an artist he had broken through the wholesome reticence of civilisation in expressing his attitude.<sup>78</sup>

Waugh then claims that the second charge is fully justified, but that the first is not. This would give credence to the idea that it was not so much that Rossetti as a *man* was inclined toward sensual pleasure, but rather that as an *artist*, he had chosen to convey this inclination, and in such a way that implied the potential veneration of the subject.

The two Rossetti drawings in Waugh's collection are not particularly demonstrative of the *Beata Beatrix* problem. *Spirit of the Rainbow* (1876) (see fig. 15) is a nude portrait, allegedly of Theodore Watts-Dunton's<sup>79</sup> mistress<sup>80</sup>, illustrating one of Watts-Dunton's sonnets, *The Wood-Haunter's Dream*. It is undoubtedly a sensual drawing, but it is neither a 'morbid deviation from the healthy forms of life'<sup>81</sup> nor does it present a problematic attitude toward spirituality. It is a fairly straightforward portrait, illustrating the following lines from *The Wood-Haunter's Dream*: I rose, I found her—found a rain-drenched girl/ Whose eyes of azure and limbs like roseate pearl/ Coloured the rain above her golden head. James Douglas describes the drawing in his book about Watts-Dunton:

Rossetti meant to have completed the design [of the *Spirit of the Rainbow*] with the 'woods and plains' seen in perspective through the arch; and the composition has an additional and special interest because it is the artist's only successful attempt at the wholly nude—the 'Spirit' being extremely graceful in poise and outline.<sup>82</sup>

It is an aesthetically-minded artwork which is illustrative rather than allusive, but that is not to say that Waugh could not find a way to subvert it. Photographs of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>79</sup> Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914). English poet, critic and friend of D. G. Rossetti.

<sup>80</sup> Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), I, p. 145.

<sup>81</sup> Buchanan, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry', p. 336.

<sup>82</sup> James Douglas, *Theodore Watts-Dunton Poet Novelist Critic* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p. 277.

Piers Court, now collated in an album at the Harry Ransom Research Center, show the *Spirit of the Rainbow* on the wall in the dining room in the alcove next to the fireplace. Above the fireplace hung Atkinson's *Upset Flower-Cart*. This placement is deliberately shocking, and when juxtaposed with the elaborate dress of the figures in Atkinson's picture, Rossetti's nude is rendered all the more exposed by comparison. Hardly the display one might expect to find in the dining room of a 'country gentleman', but then Waugh never took this role seriously. When reviewing Frederick J. Stopp's biography *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* for *The New Republic*, Malcolm Muggeridge suggests that Waugh's 'impersonation of a country gentleman is as integral a part of his writing as was George Orwell's equally absurd converse impersonation of a down-and-out. [...] Mr. Waugh's masquerade has been essential to his work.'<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, 'My Fair Gentleman: On Evelyn Waugh', *The New Republic*, 25 January 1959 <<https://newrepublic.com/article/86079/my-fair-gentleman-evelyn-waugh>> [accessed 8 September 2018].



Fig. 15. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Spirit of the Rainbow* (1876). Collection of Andrew Lloyd Webber.



Fig. 16. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Woman Holding a Dog* (c. 1863). Private collection.

The other Rossetti drawing Waugh owned is *Woman Holding a Dog* (c. 1863) (see fig. 16), the sitter of which has been suggested to be Fanny Cornworth.<sup>84</sup> Cornworth was Rossetti's mistress but there is no suggestion of passion in this portrait, compared to say, *Bocca Baciata* (1859) or *Lady Lilith* (1867). It is a loving rendering of an intimate moment between a woman and her pet; the gaze of the artist or potential viewer is of little consequence to the model. These Rossetti drawings were undoubtedly a source of great pride for Waugh, and he was even contacted by Virginia Surtees during the research for her *Catalogue Raisonné*. He was able to tell Surtees that the *Spirit of the Rainbow* was given to Watts-Dunton by Rossetti 'in payment for professional services in connexion with the dissolution of the Morris firm.'<sup>85</sup>

So what was it about Rossetti that so fascinated Waugh? An observation from Frances Donaldson on visiting him at home at Piers Court gives an insight: 'Evelyn's books and his personality were the result of a kind of dislocation of spirit'.<sup>86</sup> This 'dislocation of spirit' is precisely what Waugh identifies in Rossetti who he sees as a 'baffled and very tragic figure of an artist born into an age devoid of artistic standards [...] a mystic without a creed; a Catholic without the discipline or consolation of the Church; a life between the rocks and the high road'.<sup>87</sup> It is a stretch to claim that Waugh thought he was living in an age devoid of artistic standards in 1928; he does after all refer to the 'pellucid excellencies of Picasso' in *Rossetti*, but it is certainly something he insisted on later in life, claiming that 'the arts absolutely capsized'<sup>88</sup> under the influence of Modernism. Waugh's biographers have often highlighted the similarities between Waugh and Rossetti, for example Paula Byrne points out that 'they both hated music, loved craftsmanship, suffered from insomnia and felt that they had been born in the wrong time'.<sup>89</sup>

However, in terms of work ethic, Waugh was critical of the inconsistency of Rossetti's output:

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<sup>84</sup> Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, I, p. 227.

<sup>85</sup> Evelyn Waugh to Virginia Surtees, 28 October 1961; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XL.

<sup>86</sup> Donaldson, *Portrait of a Country Neighbour*, p. xv.

<sup>87</sup> Waugh, *Rossetti*, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Evelyn Waugh, Stephen Black, Jack Davies and Charles Wilmot, 'Frankly Speaking Interview', in *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (1964; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, 525–37 (p. 531).

<sup>89</sup> Paula Byrne, *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead* (London: Harper Press, 2010), p. 106.

The problem is that here and there in his life he seems, without ever feeling it, to have transcended this inadequacy in a fashion that admits of no glib explanation. Just as the broken arch at Glastonbury Abbey is, in its ruin, so much more moving than it can ever have been when it stood whole and part of a great building, so Rossetti's art, at fitful moments, flames into the exquisite beauty of Beata Beatrix. It is the sort of problem that modern æsthetics does not seem capable of coping with. It has been the object of this book to state, though, alas! not to solve, this problem.<sup>90</sup>

The sense that Rossetti's brilliance occurred only in fitful bursts is the quintessential practice of the romantic artist figure, whereas Waugh makes it clear that his work is the product of laborious editing and remaking. In a letter to Thomas Merton he offers the following advice:

I know in my own heart that most of what we like to call "artistic integrity" is really pure pride. I fiddle away rewriting any sentence six times mostly out of vanity. I don't want anything to appear with my name that is not the best I am capable of. [...] In the mere economics of the thing a better return for labour results in making a few things really well than in making a great number carelessly.<sup>91</sup>

In seeing his writing as the result of this laborious process Waugh appeals yet again to the role of the craftsman. Indeed, Waugh applied the same obsessive method to his research on Rossetti. Acton recalls that:

'Robert [Byron], Peter [Quennell], and Evelyn settled on any subject that aroused them like grim death and clung to it tenaciously until they had extracted every drop of essence. Robert clung to Byzantium; Peter to Baudelaire's *dandisme*; Evelyn to Rossetti and social satire and, eventually, to Rome.'<sup>92</sup>

Here Acton suggests that Waugh's interest in Rossetti was matched by his calling to Catholicism, and it becomes clear that Waugh saw good craftsmanship as one of the most important qualities of an object, a piece of writing or religious ceremony. As Selina Hastings argues:

Evelyn was a perfectionist, and his desire for perfection penetrated every aspect of his life, its lack often causing him acute distress. The Catholic Church was the nearest to perfection this earth could offer. [...] He appreciated the workmanlike attitude of its officers, the priest as craftsman.<sup>93</sup>

Hastings also quotes from one of Waugh's final diary entries where he states:

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<sup>90</sup> Waugh, xvi, p. 171.

<sup>91</sup> Evelyn Waugh to Thomas Merton, 10 August 1948; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>92</sup> Acton, *Memoirs*, p. 201.

<sup>93</sup> Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995), p. 229.

When I first came to the Church I was drawn, not by splendid ceremonies but by the spectacle of the priest as craftsman. He had an important job to do which none but he was qualified for. He and his apprentice stumped up to the altar with their tools and set to work without a glance to those behind them, still less with any intention to make a personal impression on them.<sup>94</sup>

Yet even though *Beata Beatrix* is a product of Rossetti's inconsistent craftsmanship and 'spiritual coprophily', it still manages 'exquisite beauty'.<sup>95</sup> It is difficult, as Waugh states to 'solve' this problem, and he cannot be too harshly judged for not coming to a conclusion. After all, response to art is often intensely subjective and it could be that the very fact *Beata Beatrix* seems to defy modern aesthetic criticism is enough for Waugh. Neither he, nor the reader, come away from *Rossetti* with the sense that there is a winning aesthetic position between the romantic and rational ideologies of Rossetti and Fry, but what Waugh is attempting to do here is find a balance.

One thing is clear however, and that is how different Waugh's aesthetic ideology was in 1928 as he wrote *Rossetti* compared to later in life. When he discusses his opposition to *Beata Beatrix* Waugh states that: 'The heart does not go out in human sympathy in the way that it does to the unlucky family of Martineau's *Last Day in the Old Home*.'<sup>96</sup> In suggesting Robert Martineau's (1826-69) narrative painting evoked his sympathy, Waugh reveals a more compassionate side to his personality. As previously discussed, Waugh did not buy Victorian narrative paintings because of their appeal to the heart and morals of the viewer, but these were the purchases of an older, worldlier man. I am hesitant to analyse Waugh's choices as solely directed by the heartbreak that occurred with his divorce from Evelyn Gardner in 1930 but it is impossible not to take this life changing event into account, especially when Waugh was writing *Rossetti* during their engagement. It is therefore, not difficult to imagine that the family tragedy in Martineau's painting would have evoked sympathy, rather than humour in the young, romantic Waugh. After his divorce, and even in his subsequent happy marriage to Laura Herbert, Waugh's disillusion with the idea of the 'perfect' Victorian family unit was

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<sup>94</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 832.

<sup>95</sup> Waugh, *Rossetti*, p. 171.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

solidified. Any suggestive painting of the period that aligned with his scepticism was therefore attractive.



Fig. 17. Frank Cadogan Cowper's *Jealous Husband, disguised as a priest, hears his own wife's confession* (1952). Private collection.



This may indeed provide a reason for Waugh buying Frank Cadogan Cowper's *Jealous Husband, disguised as a priest, hears his own wife's confession* (1952).<sup>97</sup> Waugh had wanted to buy this picture when he saw it exhibited at the Royal Academy, but after enquiring after the price found that seven hundred guineas was too expensive: 'I could get a [François] Boucher for that' he wrote to Nancy Mitford.<sup>98</sup> Cadogan Cowper's painting shows the corruption of what should be a private sacrament, confession, with a husband driven by jealousy to disguise himself as a member of the clergy in order to discover his wife's transgressions. The title of the painting is again intertextual, referring to a scene in Boccaccio's *Decameron* where a woman deliberately misleads her husband, whom she recognises through his priest's disguise, into believing she is 'enamoured of a priest',<sup>99</sup> implicitly that she is having an affair with him. She only transgresses in fact once she realises her husband has exploited the act of confession due to his uncontrollable possessiveness. Waugh read the *Decameron* in 1934,<sup>100</sup> and so it is likely that he recognised the scene depicted by Cadogan Cowper in *Jealous Husband*. A.D. Peters was not keen on the painting and was appalled that Waugh wanted to buy it, 'I am horrified to think that you could possibly want that frightful picture. It almost makes me glad to be able to tell you that the Trust has no money'.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, Cadogan Cowper decided to give the painting to Waugh as a gift on the understanding that it would be displayed in a prominent position at Piers Court. As we know from his letter to Margaret, however, Waugh then moved the picture, and Wood tells of the subsequent commotion when Cowper 'arrived at the house one day unannounced. He was hastily manoeuvred into the drawing room for a drink, while his picture was retrieved and hung once again in its place of honour.'<sup>102</sup> It is a rare example of poor taste in Waugh's collection. Not only is the subject controversial, the execution of the two figures is coarse and caricature-like, quite unrecognisable as the work of the artist who painted *Vanity* (1907).

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<sup>97</sup> The title of this painting refers to a scene in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and is a direct quote of one of James M. Rigg's summaries.

<sup>98</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, 1 June 1952 in *Letters*, p. 427; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>99</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio and James Macmullen Rigg, *The Decameron*, 2 vols (London: Privately printed, [n.d.]), II, p. 136 <<http://archive.org/details/decameron02boccuoft>>.

<sup>100</sup> EW to A.D. Peters, Waugh, c. 1 March 1934 in *Letters*, p. 102; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

<sup>101</sup> A.D. Peters to Evelyn Waugh, 23 May 1952; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>102</sup> Wood, 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector', p. 34.

*Jealous Husband* caused a minor outrage at the time of its exhibition, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that a Wallasey magistrate had complained to the Administrator of Westminster Cathedral about the painting, which he described as 'an abomination'<sup>103</sup> before passing the complaint on to Cardinal Bernard Griffin. In response Cadogan Cowper said that the painting 'is quite harmless. Roman Catholics have made this kind of protest in the past, but the Academy is not concerned with religion but with art. I did not intend to offend anyone. I think the Catholics like to assert themselves.'<sup>104</sup> The *Daily Herald* reported that Cadogan Cowper 'has produced a shock picture which may offend some susceptibilities [...]' The confession must have been a startler. The husband is goggle-eyed with horror.'<sup>105</sup> Thus, despite the anti-Catholic sentiment many viewers inferred and its substandard execution, something about *Jealous Husband* attracted Waugh. If he recognised the scene from the *Decameron* it is likely he found the painting humorous, as having been a jealous husband himself (with cause) he has sufficiently moved on to see the folly of the jealous man who inadvertently enables his wife to have an affair. It is interesting too, that Cadogan Cowper, an artist associated in style with the Pre-Raphaelites, would have tried his hand at painting in traditional narrative style, that is, depicting the very moment of revelation. Indeed, the *Birmingham Gazette* suggested that the Royal Academy was seeing a return to the 'Victorian "problem" or story picture',<sup>106</sup> in their 1952 exhibition, giving *Jealous Husband* as an example.

Victorian narrative or problem pictures may not seem to have a great deal in common with the work of the more romantic and aesthetically minded Pre-Raphaelites Waugh also admired, but members of this group were not above this kind of moralising. Ford Madox Brown's unfinished painting *Take Your Son Sir!* (1851) and Rossetti's *Found* (1854-55, 1859-81), also unfinished, deal with the issues of sexual immorality. Another of these moral paintings is the aforementioned Holman-Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853), which is used by Waugh to make a comment on the immorality of Charles and Julia's relationship in *Brideshead Revisited*. At the dinner in which Brideshead announces his

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<sup>103</sup> Anonymous, 'Protest at Picture in Royal Academy', *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1952, p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Frank Cadogan Cowper quoted in Anonymous, 'Protest at Picture in Royal Academy'.

<sup>105</sup> Anonymous, 'Shock Stuff', *Daily Herald*, 3 May 1952, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Anonymous, 'Academy Problems', *Birmingham Gazette*, 29 April 1952, p. 4.

engagement to Beryll Muspratt he explains why he has not been able to bring her to the house:

You must understand that Beryl is a woman of strict Catholic principle fortified by the prejudices of the middle class. I couldn't possibly bring her here. It is a matter of indifference whether you choose to live in sin with Rex or Charles or both – I have always avoided inquiry into the details of your *ménage* – but in no case would Beryl consent to be your guest.<sup>107</sup>

Brideshead seems at least slightly disdainful of her middle class prejudices, but it is clear that he agrees with her Catholic principles. This outburst proves to be highly upsetting for Julia, and ultimately serves as the catalyst for the breakdown of her relationship with Charles later in the novel after the death of Lord Marchmain. The scene reminds Charles of Holman-Hunt's painting:

‘“Julia,” I said later, when Brideshead had gone upstairs, “have you ever seen a picture of Holman Hunt's called ‘The Awakened Conscience?’”

“No.”

I had seen a copy of Pre-Raphaelitism in the library some days before; I found it again and read her Ruskin's description. She laughed quite happily.<sup>108</sup>

Though Waugh mistakenly refers to *The Awakening Conscience* as *The Awakened Conscience*, it is clear that as in the painting, we are witnessing the moment of ‘awakening conscience’ in *Brideshead* and whether he realises it or not at the time, Charles has had his own conscience *awakened* by Bridey.

Neither Victorian narrative painting nor the work of the Pre-Raphaelites was popular at the time Waugh purchased the majority of his pictures; his collection was, in an odd way, ‘avant-garde. These works were very much out of favour, both commercially and by the standards of “good taste”. Indeed, there is a certain irony in the posthumous sale of Waugh's art collection. In 1971 a great many pieces from the Waugh estate were sold at Sotheby's Belgravia, a branch of Sotheby's which was specifically set up that very year ‘to deal with the enormous upsurge of interest in Victorian decorative art which became apparent in the late ‘sixties.’<sup>109</sup> Thus Waugh's collection, eccentric and, above all, affordable when purchased, became very desirable and valuable in the matter of a few years after

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<sup>107</sup> Waugh, *BR*, p. 272.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Nahum, *Prices of Victorian Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours from the Records of Sotheby's Belgravia* (London: Carter Nash Cameron Limited, 1976), p. 1.

his death. *The Upset Flower Cart*, sold for £700 in 1971 (approx. £6900 in 2018), and in a sale in 1992 it went for £66,000 (approx. £90,000 in 2018).

Pater Nahum argues that the reason mid-Victorian art became popular at this time was due in part to the increase in Victorian scholarship, but that it was the opening of Sotheby's Belgravia where 'the full range of Victorian artistic production could be viewed in its proper context' which really proved to be the catalyst. In the following years the re-appraisal of Victorian decorative art and painting allowed its era to re-emerge 'from being a sort of poor man's eighteenth century into its correct place as a distinct, thoroughly understood period.'<sup>110</sup> The idea has particular significance when thinking about Waugh's self-confessedly "Georgian" aesthetic sensibility and outlook. Certainly his budget would not have stretched to a Reynolds or a Hogarth at the time he was collecting paintings, and so it is fair to say that the scope of his collection reflects both his taste and resources.

It is perhaps odd to think of Waugh as a pioneer art collector, given how both Victorian narrative and Pre-Raphaelite painting is valued today but critics like Wood make a convincing argument. 'He liked to give the impression that his collecting was a light-hearted affair, a mildly eccentric hobby, but in fact he took it much more seriously. His collection is certainly an exceptional one by the standards of the period, and he deserves to be remembered as one of the most distinguished pioneers of Victorian collecting.'<sup>111</sup> But, although Wood does a good job of listing the paintings Waugh owned, and compiling references to these works in his diaries and letters, he rarely offers much in the way of explanation as to why Waugh was drawn to the paintings he bought. He suggests that Waugh's interest in the Pre-Raphaelites was 'undoubtedly stimulated by his own family connection with Holman Hunt',<sup>112</sup> who was related to the Waugh family through marriage. But beyond repeating this (fairly widespread) assumption there is little to help us understand how the collection related to Waugh's thinking as an artist.

Indeed, there are even gaps in Wood's knowledge of the links between the PRB and Waugh's collection. He, for instance, appears not to know that Waugh owned a portrait of George Waugh, by Holman Hunt, (c. 1872-74) (see fig. 18) which hung in the library at Piers Court. This painting, bought in 1962 from Diana

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Wood, 'Evelyn Waugh: A Pioneer Collector', p. 34.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

Holman-Hunt, was sold after Waugh's death in the Sotheby's Belgravia 1971 sale. In her *Catalogue Raisonné* of Hunt's paintings Judith Bronkhurst notes that the portrait is uncharacteristic work: 'The head and shoulders format, wooden expression, and undifferentiated background [...] suggest that [it] was executed posthumously from a carte-de-visite.'<sup>113</sup> It certainly lacks the lustre of *Oriana* (after 1895), another painting of Hunt's which Waugh purchased in 1961 (see fig. 19). As previously mentioned, there were definite financial imperatives involved in Waugh's art collection, and so the portrait of George Waugh may have been purchased more for the connection between the subject matter and the artist than for any aesthetic reason. A diary entry from 1925 gives further insight into Waugh's attraction to Holman Hunt. He writes:

The Pre-Raphaelites still absorb me. I think I can say without affectation that during this last week I have lived with them night and day. Early in the morning with Holman Hunt – the only Pre-Raphaelite – untiring, fearless, conscientious. Later in the day with Millais – never with *him* but with my biography of him – a modish Lytton Strachey biography. How he shines through Holman Hunt's loyal pictures of him. Later, when firelight and rum and loneliness have done their worst, with Rossetti, soaked in chloral.<sup>114</sup>

The way in which Waugh categorises the three founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is revealing. Holman Hunt, beyond reproach, the 'only Pre-Raphaelite'; Millais, seen only through the lens of Hunt's pictures and Lytton Strachey's words; and finally Rossetti, who seems to appeal most to Waugh when he is in a melancholic mood. Hunt is a peculiar choice for Waugh to declare as 'the only Pre-Raphaelite', especially considering he would later publish a monograph on Rossetti, and who in 1925 at least, appears to have been the artist Waugh likes the least of the three, if only because he, and his work, amplify Waugh's own loneliness. In fact, this simultaneous attraction and repulsion to an artist is something he feels for all three, all of whom, and especially Rossetti, reflected the more unstable characteristics of Waugh's personality back to him.

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<sup>113</sup> Judith Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), I, p. 231.

<sup>114</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 246.



Fig. 18. William Holman Hunt, *George Waugh* (c. 1872-74). Private collection.

Fig. 19. William Holman Hunt, *Oriana* (after 1895). Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.



Holman Hunt also appeared the more conventional and pious of the trio, painting many religious scenes during his career, the best known being *The Light of the World* (1851-53). This respectability was certainly what Edith Holman Hunt née Waugh, Holman Hunt's second wife, wished to impress upon her granddaughter Diana after Holman-Hunt's death. She was, according to Diana, 'ruled by lofty moral principles, and inspired by extreme idolatry of her husband. Like many Victorian widows she devoted her life to canonizing him [...]. Any weaknesses or foibles were ruthlessly suppressed.'<sup>115</sup> Yet Diana realised that 'he had not decided to become a religious painter for religious reasons, but because the subject of Christianity appealed to him historically and satisfied not only his passion for the Orient, but his obsession with the intense study of natural appearances, and the representation of detail in different lights.'<sup>116</sup> Holman Hunt was, she argues, interested in 'painting for painting's sake'<sup>117</sup> even though the moralising Edith would have considered such an idea sinful. Hunt would stay true to the ideals of the PRB more than Millais for example, whose work became increasingly commercial. Waugh mocks Millais in *Vile Bodies* for setting a 'record in rock-bottom prices'<sup>118</sup> and also uses *Bubbles* or *A Child's World* (1886) to criticise Sebastian's occasionally insipid conversation in *Brideshead Revisited*.<sup>119</sup>

Waugh spent some time in the late nineteen-forties meeting and corresponding with Diana Holman Hunt, with the notion of collecting information and recollections for use in a biography which he never wrote, but which was to be the catalyst for Diana's own books *My Grandmothers and I* (1960) and *My Grandfather, His Wives and Loves* (1969). Waugh reviewed *My Grandmothers and I* for the *Spectator* and in doing so encapsulates exactly what it was that made Hunt 'the only Pre-Raphaelite'.

Pre-Raphaelitism to Hunt meant the intense study of natural appearances devoted to the inclusion of a lofty theme. He was obsessed with the structure of objects [...] and with the

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<sup>115</sup> Diana Holman-Hunt, *My Grandfather, His Wives and Loves* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, ed. by Martin Stannard, 43 vols (1930; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), II, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> Waugh, *BR*, p. 56.

exact tincture of shadows. While his contemporaries in France [...] sought to record a glimpse, he sought to record months of intense activity.<sup>120</sup>

In short, Hunt was a master craftsman with a dedicated work ethic and a need to represent the sublime. He was everything Rossetti was not.

Diana Holman Hunt recalls her surprise by Waugh's genuine interest in her grandfather's art, an interest that she had assumed was only due to their familial connection. When she stayed at Coombe Florey near Taunton; Waugh's last house, Diana found that her guest room contained a 'fascinating nineteenth-century painted washing stand, and a Rossetti nude over the fireplace called *The Spirit of the Rainbow*.'<sup>121</sup> This washing stand we know to be a William Burgess piece, given to Waugh by John Betjeman, and from the photographs of Piers Court it appears that the item was always situated in a guest room. The Rossetti drawing, however, once hung with pride of place in the dining room of Piers Court. The relocation of *The Spirit of the Rainbow* to a less trafficked area of his new house may hint at a change in Waugh's disposition, a symbolic decision that expressed a desire for privacy and a deliberate move away from his role of provocateur, a change Frances Donaldson also noticed. She argues that:

[...] the happy days at Piers Court came to an end in 1956. Evelyn began to be restless, ostensibly because he believed the town of Dursley was creeping up to his gates, but really I think because he wished for change, to break the rut of boredom in which he was sunk.<sup>122</sup>

It is likely both reasons are valid, given the invasion of Waugh's privacy a year after the fête at which he had proudly exhibited his art collection to the public. On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1955 Lord Noel-Buxton and Nancy Spain (a reporter for the *Daily Express*) visited Piers Court with the intention of conducting an interview and found little in the way of hospitality. Waugh flew into a rage at the pair, neither of whom had been invited, in fact they had been told on the telephone not to come. Waugh describes the incident as follows:

That evening at 7.45 a hullabaloo at the front door. Miss Spain and Lord Noel-Buxton were there trying to force an entry. I sent them away and remained tremulous with rage all the evening. And all the next day.<sup>123</sup>

Waugh wrote to his estate agent shortly after this intrusion stating that:

<sup>120</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'The Only Pre-Raphaelite', in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Donat Gallagher (1960; London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 550–53 (p. 553).

<sup>121</sup> Holman-Hunt, *My Grandfather*, p. 25.

<sup>122</sup> Donaldson, *Portrait of a Country Neighbour*, p. 78.

<sup>123</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 763.



I have the idea of moving anywhere. I am sick of the district. [...] I don't want the house advertised. But if you happen to meet a lunatic who wants to live in this ghastly area, please tell him. [...] I don't want frivolous sight-seers. Only serious lunatics who want to live near here.<sup>124</sup>

Waugh's desire for privacy even extends to advertising Piers Court for sale and the idea that sight-seers might make their way to the house clearly disturbs him, a serious shift between the garden fête of 1954 and the events of summer 1955. This need for privacy will also bear on Waugh's criticism of modern architecture, explored in chapter four of this thesis, and is particularly pertinent in relation to the effects of the Second World War on his notion of the homestead.

Overall Waugh's art collection highlights many concerns of Waugh's that appear consistently throughout the development of his aesthetic theories, the most important being the following: that the notion of unstoppable progress as hoped for by the Victorians was untenable and led to the kind of chaos depicted in Eurich's *Travel* painting; that art should provide delight and offer opportunities for intertextual and subversive readings; and that the artist should aspire to spiritual morality, a way of ensuring the consistent work ethic that was essential to the production of what Waugh saw as good art.

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<sup>124</sup> EW to Oldfield, 4 July 1955; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.

## Chapter 2 – Waugh the Artist

In 1974 Alain Blayac published an article in *The Library Chronicle* on Evelyn Waugh's drawings after the contents of Waugh's library had been sold to the Humanities Research Center<sup>1</sup> in Austin, Texas in 1967. The article notes that Waugh's 'gifts as a cartoonist and designer have had little recognition'<sup>2</sup> and this is still mostly true. There is no major scholarship on the topic of Waugh as an artist in his own right, and this chapter will work to rectify this. There has, however, been more recognition of Waugh as an artist since 2017, due in part to 'E.W. Pinxit: An Exhibition of the Graphic Art of Evelyn Waugh' at Maggs Bros booksellers in London in 2017 and its subsequent publicity. Blayac states that 'There is plenty of Waugh material in the [HRC] Iconography Collection which warrants further historical, biographical and literary research; and much more remains to be done in the study of Waugh's artistic progress'. That, ultimately, is the aim of this chapter. Indeed there are exciting revelations in regard to previously unrecognised illustrations for Waugh's short story 'The Balance' (1926) which will be discussed in detail in this chapter. The argument here will progress roughly chronologically and will flesh out the context and significance of Waugh's artworks, offering some new insights into his creative process. It will cover Waugh's juvenilia, his work while at Oxford, including both book-jackets for Chapman and Hall, and the illustrations he produced for the University magazines, his time at Heatherley's Art School, and finally his drawings for his novels. Waugh often referred to the practice of the visual arts in his letters and diaries, and access to previously unpublished manuscripts has allowed a more complete impression of the writer both as a visual artist and aesthetician.

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Some of the earliest items in the HRC collection date from 1908-1915 when Waugh showed great interest in decorating his diaries, and producing small books, some illustrating days out and some juvenile fiction. Even at this young age Waugh paid unusual attention to detail. No doubt influenced by watching his publisher father at work, Waugh internalised the production of books as an artistic process,

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<sup>1</sup> Now the Harry Ransom Center; hereafter HRC.

<sup>2</sup> Alain Blayac, 'Evelyn Waugh's Drawings', *The Library Chronicle*, 1974, 42-57 (p. 43).

and even later in life when he had moved away from illustrating his own novels, he still maintained this workmanlike approach to his writing.

The earliest item in the HRC Iconography Collection is a drawing produced by Waugh at the age of four and nine months, thus dating from July 1908 (see fig. 1). It depicts a scene at sea with four figures. The largest figure, to the left of the piece is ascending a ladder wearing a top hat with what appears to be a fish bone or a feather stuck into it. Another figure in the background hangs out of a hot air balloon; a man with a sword falls backwards off a cliff while the final stick figure is pictured aboard an ocean liner. The lack of scale and perspective in the drawing is typical of a child of four, but it is interesting to see how much the young Waugh enjoyed depicting scenes of relative chaos that contain many small stories, a defining characteristic of his early novels. This can also be seen in another drawing dated September 26<sup>th</sup> 1909, (see fig. 2) which is a riot of activity featuring jesters and animals with musical instruments. We also know that Waugh sent at least one drawing to his brother Alec around this time, as a postscript to a letter Alec sent to his parents on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1909 shows: 'Thank you very much for the picture. All of us like it. It is quite good'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Personal Writings (1903-1921)*, ed. by Alexander Waugh and Alan Bell, The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxx, p. 5.

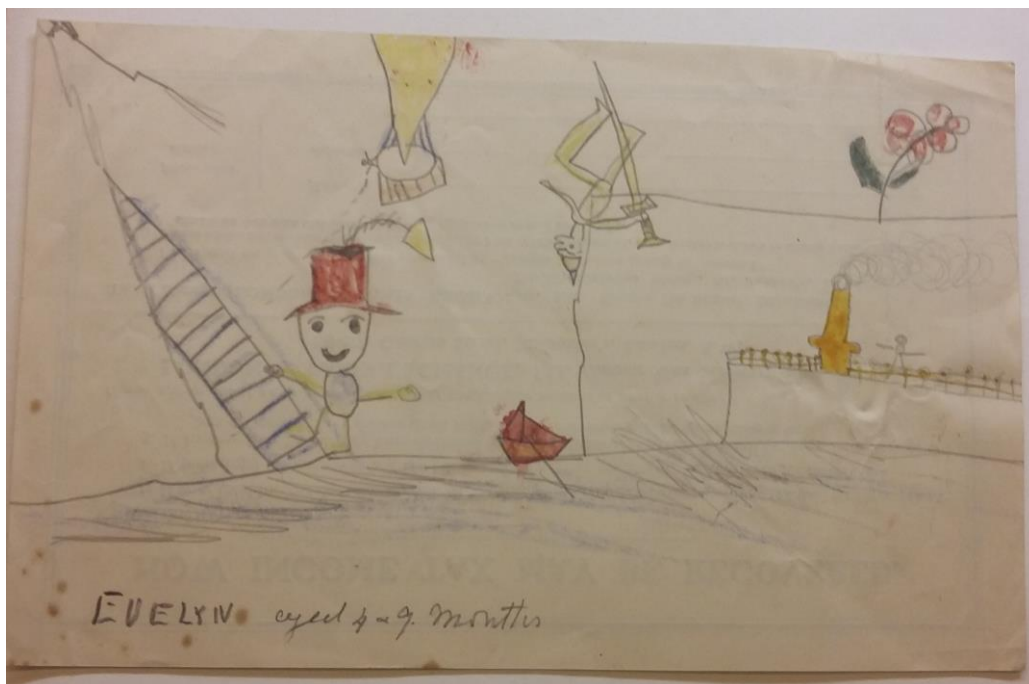


Fig. 1. Untitled pencil and crayon drawing by Evelyn Waugh, July 1908. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig. 2. Untitled pencil and crayon drawing by Evelyn Waugh, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1909. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

A particularly accomplished example of one of Waugh's booklets is 'In Quest of Thomas Lee' from 1914 (see fig. 3). Unusually for Waugh, this creation mostly consists of images with very little text. It is also unusual in its execution – most of the watercolour paintings are made without pencil lines, meaning that Waugh painted spontaneously, using a fine brush to outline figures where necessary. The tale is set in Brazil. In the first part, a group of explorers, including the eponymous Thomas Lee, is caught by a local tribe called the Kio. Part two documents the search for Thomas Lee, which involves a dramatic journey by boat. A container of oil aboard the ship explodes and the search team, consisting of Christopher Lee and his friend Leonard, are forced to abandon ship. Washed ashore, Leonard kills a bird, and both men are later pursued through the swamps by a Bigfoot-type creature. Part three shows the Kio tribe in conflict with 'the Cults' who win the battle. Christopher and Leonard are reunited with Thomas and a passing boat rescues the three men. It is the sort of action-filled nonsense tale that young children have amused themselves with for centuries, but there is a chance that Waugh was responding to current events when he created 'In Quest of Thomas Lee'. In 1913 Theodore Roosevelt left for the 'River of Doubt' in Brazil with local explorer Cândido Rondon, which at the time was unchartered. The expedition was a perilous one, permanently affecting Roosevelt's health, and to make matters worse, when he returned to the United States in 1914 many people did not believe his version of events. In an attempt to prove his critics wrong, Roosevelt gave several lectures that year, including one in June 1914 at the Royal Geographical Society in London, which was reported on in detail by British press. The *Illustrated London News* commented on how Roosevelt drew 'a masterly picture which "sings" at once of the gorgeousness and the terrors of life in the Tropics. Beauty and Danger tread on each other's heels.'<sup>4</sup> The author also states that 'to the true sportsman a seasoning of danger adds piquancy to any adventure',<sup>5</sup> exactly the kind of "derring-do" that Waugh depicts in 'Thomas Lee'. Indeed, Waugh sought some of this adventure himself in 1932 when he travelled to South America, an experience that inspired the events of *A Handful of Dust* (1934). Unlike Thomas Lee

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<sup>4</sup> W. P. Pycraft, 'Mr Roosevelt and Brazil', *The Illustrated London News*, 27 June 1914, p. 1104 (p. 1104).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1104.

however, Tony Last, the novel's protagonist, does not escape the jungle and is forced to spend the rest of his life reading Dickens to Mr Todd, his saviour turned captor. In the twenty years between 'In Quest of Thomas Lee' and *A Handful of Dust* Waugh learned a great deal about the chaos and unpredictability of the world, and learned to embrace it in his own darkly satirical style. Tony Last's fate is grotesque, but it does have its own horrible routine. 'Our life here is so retired ... no pleasures except reading' Mr Todd tells Tony, 'Your head aches, does it not? ... We will not have any Dickens today ... but tomorrow, and the day after that, and the day after that.'<sup>6</sup>

There were, of course, other events in 1914 that would inspire Waugh to pick up his pen. The First World War is ever-present in Waugh's childhood diaries, mostly in references to sentries guarding signal boxes alongside the railway,<sup>7</sup> watching soldiers drilling,<sup>8</sup> and disruption to trains.<sup>9</sup> He draws some of these soldiers in his diary<sup>10</sup> and it is clear that the increasing militarisation of the civilian world had an effect on the subjects of his artworks in this period. One particularly chilling ink illustration titled 'Aerial Spies' shows a zeppelin balloon over the coast (see fig. 4). Waugh experienced a Zeppelin raid first hand in September 1915:

Alec woke me up in the night at about 11 o'clock saying the Zeps had come. [...] We heard two bombs and then the Parliament Hill guns were going and the Zep went away in their smoke to do some baby-killing elswear [sic].<sup>11</sup>

It is interesting to see how he transmuted these horrifying events into works of art, and it could be argued that one of the reasons for his doing this was to make sense of his rapidly changing environment. Waugh would perform similar imaginative transformations in his later fiction too, although mostly taking a satirical approach in which he could observe the chaos of the world from a safer, more removed position. In contrast, 'Aerial Spies' shows the airship with an unusually close perspective, and we are able to see the human figures manning it.

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<sup>6</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1997), p. 221. Hereafter *HOD*.

<sup>7</sup> Waugh, *Personal Writings*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.



Fig. 3. Watercolour illustration, 'The Horror of the Swamp' from 'In Quest of Thomas Lee' by Evelyn Waugh, 1914. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig. 4. Pen and ink drawing 'Aerial Spies' by Evelyn Waugh, 1914. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

The First World War inspired other drawings, including a piece titled 'Fierce hand to hand fighting at Arras',<sup>12</sup> 'Mons',<sup>13</sup> '9<sup>th</sup> Lancers at Mons', 'German Use of Red Cross Waggons', 'British Airmen Drop Bombs', 'Cosacks [sic] Wipe Out Turkish Atillery [sic]',<sup>14</sup> 'A Story Without Words',<sup>15</sup> 'America's Note Arrives' and an untitled comic strip showing a German soldier attempting to deliver a message. He also made a tiny booklet explaining 'Why Britain is at War'. All these drawings show Waugh reacting to current events, and are, with the exception of 'A Story Without Words' and 'America's Note Arrives' scenes of horrific violence. Again, the urge to condense such shocking scenes into two-dimensional illustrations lessens their impact, and this is true both of Waugh's drawings, and the source material he drew on to produce them. As a child it would have been difficult to escape images of the War, even in the pre-television era; Pathé newsreels with footage from the Front introduced films at the cinema, and various magazines with illustrations and photographs were published with the ostensible intent of spreading news to the home-front while also spreading propaganda against the Germans. Waugh's drawing 'Cosacks [sic] Wipe Out Turkish Atillery [sic]' (see fig. 5) is inspired by an illustration titled 'Turkish artillery company wiped out by Irresistible Cossack Charge' (see fig. 6) in one of these magazines, *The War Illustrated Album de Luxe*.<sup>16</sup> His drawing 'German Use of Red Cross Waggons' (see fig. 7) is based on 'A German Invention – The Red Cross machine-gun!',<sup>17</sup> (see fig. 8) which in turn is based on an apocryphal story about the German army using Red Cross vehicles to launch surprise attacks on the Allies, contrary to the 1906 Hague Convention.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> There were four major battles at Arras during the First World War in 1914, 1915, 1917 and 1918.

<sup>13</sup> The Battle of Mons in Belgium was the first major battle involving the British army in the First World War.

<sup>14</sup> Potentially depicts the Battle of Sarikamis, 1915.

<sup>15</sup> Depicting Kaiser Wilhelm and his son.

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, 'Turkish Artillery Company Wiped out by Irresistible Cossack Charge', ed. by John Alexander Hammerton, *The War Illustrated Album de Luxe; the Story of the Great European War Told by Camera, Pen and Pencil*, 2 (1915), 562 (p. 562).

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, 'The German Army in Belgium and France', ed. by John Alexander Hammerton, *The War Illustrated Album de Luxe; the Story of the Great European War Told by Camera, Pen and Pencil*, 1 (1915), 191 (p. 191).

<sup>18</sup> William Le Queux, *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds* (London: George Newnes Limited, 1914), p. 173.



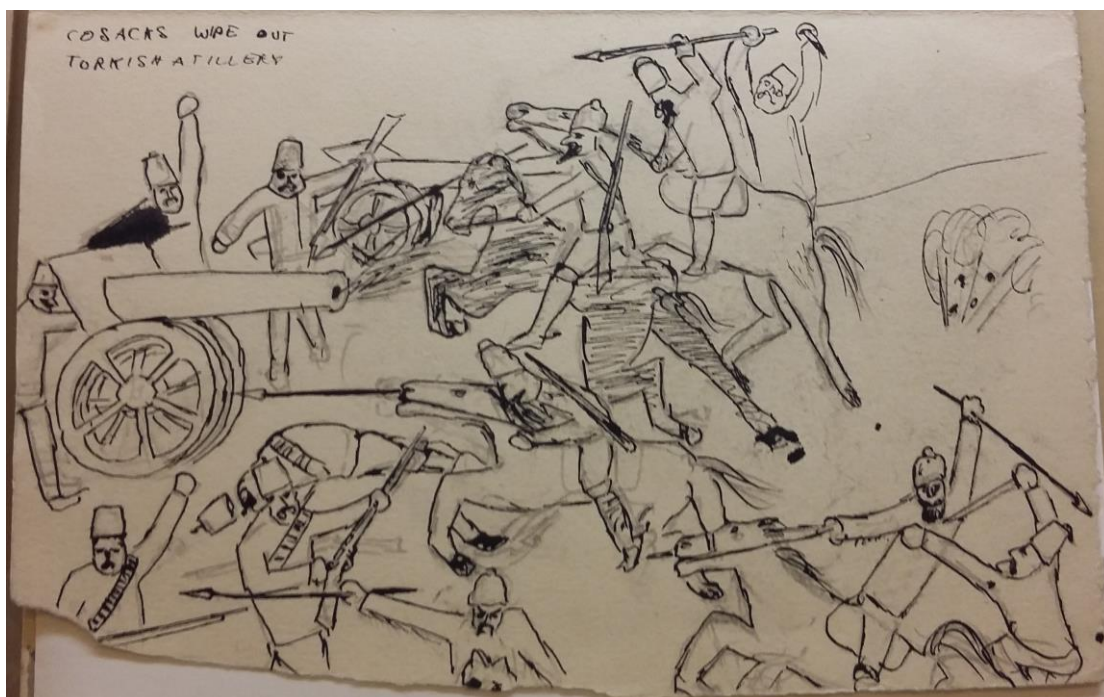


Fig. 5. Pen and ink drawing 'Cosacks [sic] wipe out Turkish Atillery [sic] by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1915. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig 6. Reproduction of illustration 'Turkish Artillery Company wiped out by Irresistible Cossack Charge', 1915. (*The War Illustrated Album de Luxe; the Story of the Great European War Told by Camera, Pen and Pencil*)





Fig 7. Pencil, pen and ink drawing 'German use of Red Cross Waggons' by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1915. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig 8. Reproduction of illustration 'A German invention - The Red Cross machine-gun!', 1915. (*The War Illustrated Album de Luxe; the Story of the Great European War Told by Camera, Pen and Pencil*)

The most interesting of these First World War illustrations, however, is 'A Story Without Words' (see fig. 9) which depicts Kaiser Wilhelm reading Britain's ultimatum. It is probably the earliest example of the style Waugh would later adopt for his *Decline and Fall* illustrations. Its lines are spare and precise without any attempt to create perspective or setting. It is a quintessential Wavian drawing and dates from around 1914 when Britain delivered an ultimatum to Germany to leave Belgium by midnight on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August. Though it is difficult to say with certainty where Waugh got the inspiration to produce drawings in this style, examination of satirical cartoons from the period reveal a likely candidate.

William Haselden, cartoonist for the *Daily Mirror* during the First World War and after, often employed this simple line style in his illustrations, particularly those of 'Big Willie and Little Willie',<sup>19</sup> (see fig. 10) his satirical depictions of Kaiser Wilhelm and his son Wilhelm, the crown prince. There is only one reference to Haselden in Waugh's writing, but he was clearly aware of his work as he commiserated with John Betjeman in 1953: 'Sad about Haselden's death. I thought he would see us out.'<sup>20</sup> Haselden's cartoons appeared every day in the *Mirror*, a newspaper Arthur Waugh would not have taken due to his political inclinations, but the first six months' worth of drawings were collated into albums by the Fine Art Society in 1915 and these Waugh may well have seen. These juvenile works, then, are far from insignificant in plotting the development of Waugh's artistic style as they show the development and origin of this unusual single line drawing technique.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> W. K. Haselden and Clifford Hosken, *The Sad Experiences of Big and Little Willie during the First 6 Months of the Great War* (London: The Fine Art Society and Chatto & Windus, 1915), p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> EW to John Betjeman, 29 December 1953 in Evelyn Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Mark Amory (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 474; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>21</sup> There are many other juvenile art works by Waugh but space prohibits their in-depth analysis. I have tried to chose the most representative pieces for the purposes of this thesis, but future researchers may also find 'Fidor's Confession', 'The Beauty of the East', 'The Curse of the Horse Race', 'The Sherriff's Daughter', 'The Slaves of Hurre Len' and 'Told by the Refugee' (all part of the Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin) useful examples.



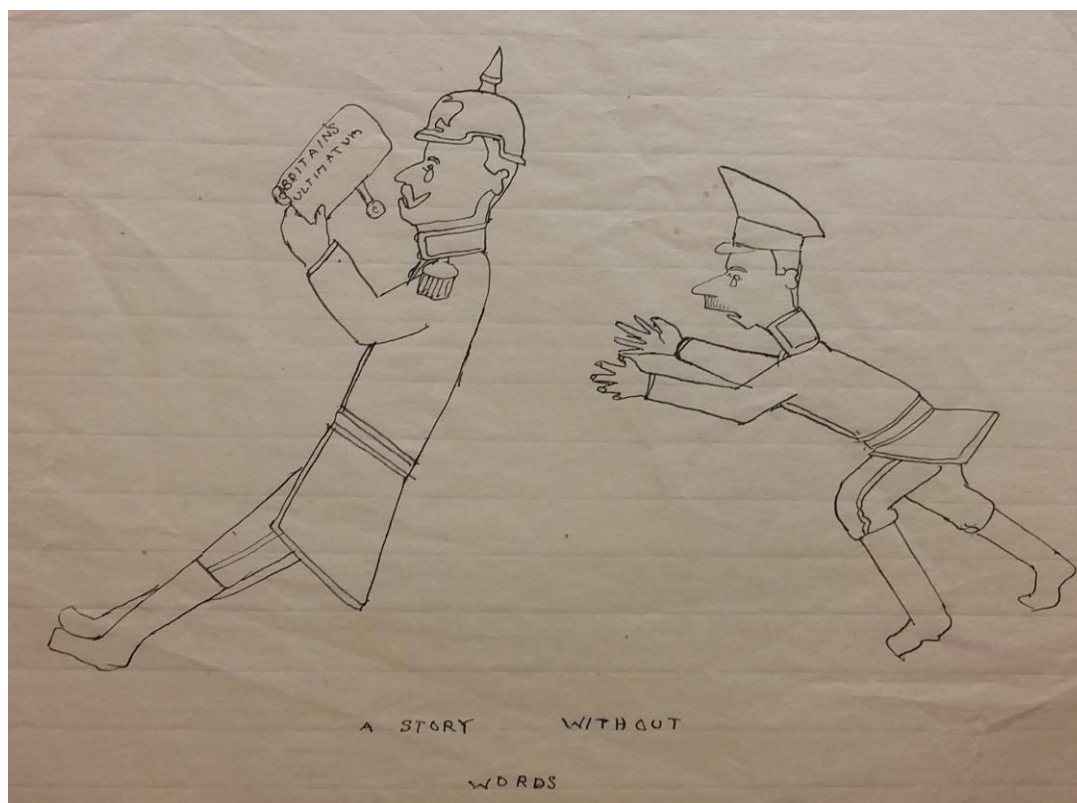


Fig. 9. Pen and ink illustration 'A Story Without Words', by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1915. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin)

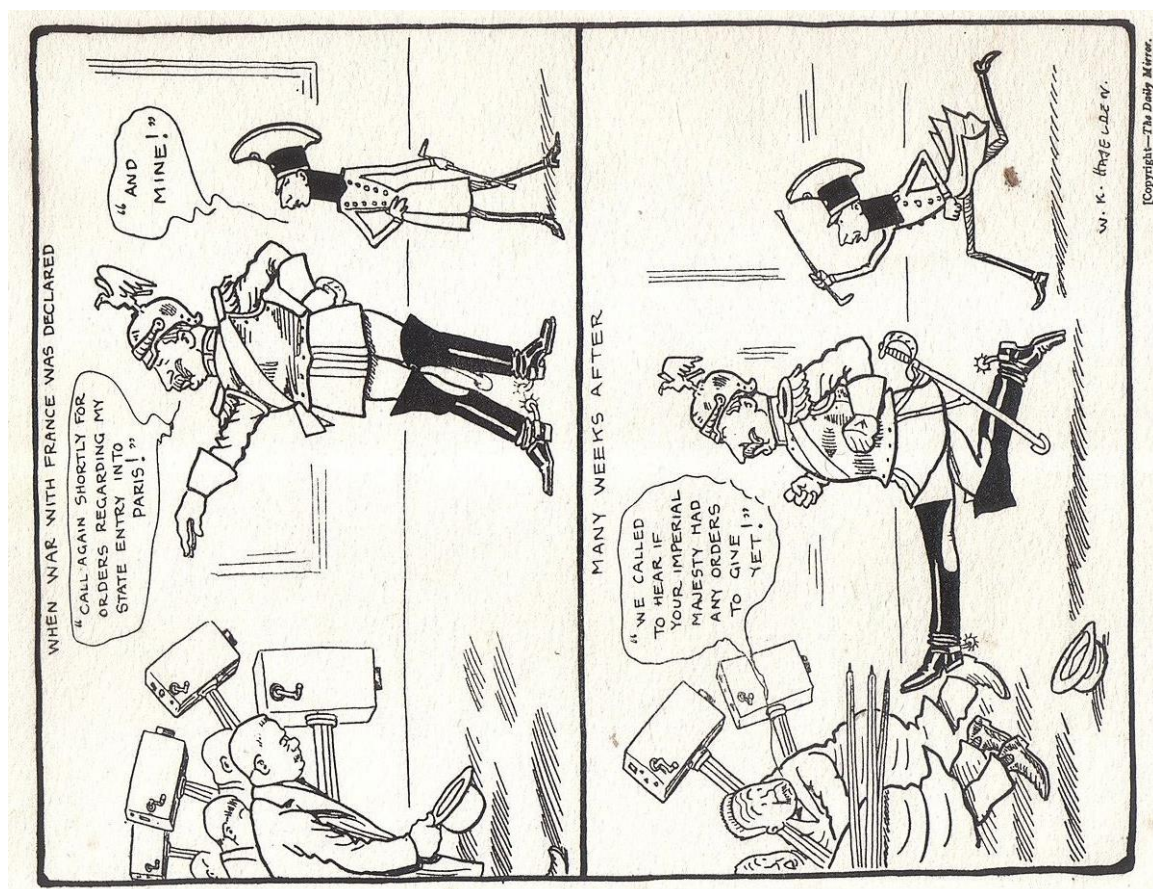


Fig. 10. Reproduction of pen and ink illustration 'When War with France was Declared' by William Haselden, 1914.

Waugh had a brief flirtation with the aesthetic ideals of Cubism in 1917 under the tutelage of Barbara Jacobs, the first wife of his brother Alec. She introduced him to Futurism and its British cousin Vorticism,<sup>22</sup> and, in Waugh's own words, 'made an aesthetic hypocrite'<sup>23</sup> of him. Together they visited art galleries and exhibitions and even decorated the walls of the old nursery at Underhill with Cubist style paintings.<sup>24</sup> His first published piece, 'In Defence of Cubism' (1917), was a textbook example of adolescent Modernist thinking, and strangely, considering his later assertion to the opposite, praises Picasso and Nevinson as artists who will take their 'well-deserved places among the masters who paved the way for their coming.'<sup>25</sup> There are no known visual art works in the Cubist style produced by Waugh at this time, save for the lost Underhill murals, and so it is fair to assume that Waugh's interest in its tenets were fleeting.<sup>26</sup> The important lessons to take from Waugh's sympathy with Cubism is that he was, at one time, open to the influence of more radical art movements and attracted to "the new." In 1919 Arthur Waugh wrote a dedicatory epistle on the subject in a copy of his book *Tradition and Change: Studies in Contemporary Literature* that reveals the duality of his young son's influences:

You are born into an era of many changes; and, if I know you at all, you will be swayed and troubled by many of them. But you are not yet so wedded to what is new that you seem likely to despise what is old. You may copy the Cubist in your living room, but an Old Master hangs above your bed.<sup>27</sup>

In this letter Arthur shows that he is acutely aware of the aesthetic stimuli operating on his son at this time and attempts to dissuade him from becoming too attached to abstraction. Essentially the advice he gives is that it is acceptable to profess modernity in one's outward life (the cubist in the living room) as long as one recognises the importance of tradition (the Old Masters).

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh The Early Years: 1903-1939* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1986), p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, p. 98. Hereafter *ALL*.

<sup>24</sup> Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995), p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'In Defence of Cubism', in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Donat Gallagher (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 6–8 (p. 8). Hereafter *EAR*.

<sup>26</sup> Donat Gallagher has recently attributed the article 'A Note on the Assumptions of Cubism' (1922) to Waugh from *The New Oxford* that suggests a continuing sympathy toward Cubist art.

<sup>27</sup> Waugh, *Personal Writings*, p. 111.

Arthur had a strong sense of tradition that partly came from pride in the Waugh lineage. Arthur's father, Alexander, moved 'the repository of family tradition'<sup>28</sup> to Midsomer Norton, a village in north-east Somerset, and when he died his three daughters, Connie, Trissie, and Elsie (Evelyn's aunts) lived there together. Midsomer Norton proved highly influential to Waugh's aesthetic sensibilities; in *A Little Learning* he states that 'the place captivated my imagination as my true home never did'.<sup>29</sup> It was there that Waugh developed a taste for the relics of the past where 'There was nothing worth very much, but it all belonged to another age which I instinctively, even then, recognised as superior to my own'.<sup>30</sup> Thus there was coherence to the interior design of the house, something that Waugh attempted to emulate with his collection of Victorian paintings and furniture at Piers Court. Midsomer Norton was full of knick-knacks and nineteenth-century antiques that Waugh remembers fondly as a kind of cabinet of curiosities, his favourite item being somewhat grotesque: a vial of blood from an anaemic patient. He states that:

I am sure that I loved my aunts' house because I was instinctively drawn to the ethos I now recognise as mid-Victorian; not, as perhaps psychologists would claim, that I now relish things of that period because they remind me of my aunts.<sup>31</sup>

Another important influence Midsomer Norton had on the young Waugh was his attraction to the decorative parts of religious practice. He was interested in his Aunt Constance's ecclesiastical embroidery, noting that 'she was gently impelling the parish into ritualistic practices',<sup>32</sup> a hint at the Anglo-Catholic tendency toward ornamentation usually lacking in evangelical Protestant churches. Waugh recalls his aunt making 'a whole altar frontal, framed and stencilled in an elaborate design which she laid out in gold thread and later filled with silk. I tried to emulate her, but was discouraged in this girlish pursuit; not, however, before I had acquired some proficiency.'<sup>33</sup> The house was a female-dominated environment, quite different from Underhill where his older brother Alec and their father, with more traditionally masculine interests, reigned. Waugh

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<sup>28</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Waugh, *ALL*, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

discusses making a shrine in his 1916 diary, no doubt influenced by Constance. Reproductions of his preparatory drawings for this are published in the first volume of *Personal Writings*,<sup>34</sup> and it is clear that the notion of creating this shrine aligned with his impulse to collect: 'I had started a shrine and mentioned this to the aunts who instantly promised to make me a frontal,' Waugh wrote. 'Aunt Elsie is going to give a crucifix when I'm confirmed and Aunt Trissie has given me two sweet brass vases to fill with flowers.'<sup>35</sup> It is a very different aesthetic environment to the masculinity depicted in Waugh's First World War drawings. Waugh uses illustrations in his diary to gather together the component objects and produces an image of what he hopes his shrine will look like in a few months. Stuck into diaries from this period (1915-17) are pressed flowers, tickets and postcards, showing how Waugh, even as a child, was recording and collecting in almost obsessive detail the world around him, trying to fix it in time. There is very little difference between the joy Waugh takes in 'cataloguing and label[ling] [his] museum'<sup>36</sup> as a twelve-year-old and the pride he took in assembling his art collection in middle age. In the 1915 diary there are some particularly interesting self-portraits of Waugh excavating fossils, alabaster and strata on the beaches of Watchet,<sup>37</sup> Dunster and Cleve.<sup>38</sup> In each he shows himself at work with hammer and chisel, an early identification with the craftsman he would spend his life aspiring to be.

Indeed, Midsomer Norton loomed large in Waugh's consciousness throughout his life. He wrote of it nostalgically many years later while posted in Croatia in 1944, a trick of the light leading him to recall the arts and crafts he was exposed to at his aunts' house:

My window is almost covered with vine leaves & I could not understand why, on waking and seeing the light come through the leaves, I spent the first quarter of an hour of every day thinking of Midsomer Norton. I thought it was because the pattern was like my aunt Constance's church needlework, or like the borders of nineteenth century printed texts. Then I realised that it was quite simple & direct & that this was how the light came into the smoking- room through the vines on the verandah.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Waugh, *Personal Writings*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>39</sup> EW to Laura Waugh, 27 September 1944 in *Letters*, p. 214; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

Waugh's reminiscences are shaped by the art of Midsomer Norton, to the extent that they overlap with the actual physical experience of being in the house. His first thought was not that the natural light in his Croatian barracks was similar to that of the light at Midsomer Norton, but that it was somehow imitating needlework or illumination.

Such a profound connection to the decorative arts was further strengthened by Waugh's time with the artist Francis Crease<sup>40</sup> during his Lancing school days. Crease was an artist whose designs, according to Waugh:

[...] belong[ed] to no period; they are the outcome of no particular school or training, but of an individual sensibility patiently concerned with the beauty of natural form [...] They have little about them that is capricious, nothing that is mannered or superficial, nothing assertive, nothing crude, nothing debased.<sup>41</sup>

In *A Little Learning*, Waugh devotes a chapter to the influence of Crease, and one of his schoolmasters, J. F. Roxburgh<sup>42</sup> titled 'Two Mentors'. Where Crease was gentle and effeminate, 'Everything about J.F. was calculated to impress.'<sup>43</sup> Crease fostered Waugh's burgeoning talent for illumination, and his house nearby at Lychpole offered, as Stannard argues, 'tranquil isolation [...] a harbour from the rough seas into which ambition constantly pushed him.'<sup>44</sup> Yet Waugh could not resist the flashy persona of Roxburgh, and found that though he 'did not exactly turn coat [he] knew that Mr Crease and J. F. were opposites and at about that time I transferred my allegiance to the more forceful and flamboyant person.'<sup>45</sup> Waugh then states: 'I do not yet know which of the lessons these two sought to teach me was the more valuable nor to whom I have proved more faithful.'<sup>46</sup> In artistic sensibility Waugh certainly proved more faithful to Crease. Barring his brief flirtation with Cubist and Modernist ideas, when he 'thought it more showy to express the new', Waugh aspired to the arts-and-crafts ideals of the 'amateur scribe'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Francis Crease (fl. 1917-1928). English artist and calligrapher.

<sup>41</sup> Evelyn Waugh and Francis Crease, 'Preface to the Decorative Designs of Francis Crease', in *Thirty-Four Decorative Designs* (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd, 1927).

<sup>42</sup> John Ferguson Roxburgh (1888-1954). Housemaster at Lancing 1919-23.

<sup>43</sup> Waugh, *ALL*, p. 131.

<sup>44</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 58.

<sup>45</sup> Waugh, *ALL*, p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.





Fig. 11. Pen, ink and watercolour illustration 'Assumption and Coronation of Our Blessed Lady' by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1920. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig. 12. Pen, ink and watercolour illumination of the Lord's Prayer by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1920. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Examples of Waugh's works under the tutelage of Crease are evident in the HRC's collection. These include various pages of script, illuminated prayers and depictions of figures in medieval dress (see figs. 11 and 12). He also practised his calligraphy on the cover pages of his Lancing diaries. Waugh returned to these diaries in the preparation of his autobiography:

When I left school I had them bound and seldom looked at them until I did so lately for the purpose of this autobiography. I found them painful reading. Most adolescent diaries are naïve, trite and pretentious; mine lamentably so. The cover of each section bears a quotation: 'A tale told by a madman full of wind and fury signifying nothing'; 'We play out our days as we play cards'; 'I have lived, I shall say, so much since then', and so forth, but the shame of re-reading springs from deeper sources. If what I wrote was a true account of myself, I was conceited, heartless and cautiously malevolent.<sup>48</sup>

The first quotation is an inaccurate quote from *Macbeth* (it should read 'A tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury'); the second is from *The Note-books of Samuel Butler*<sup>49</sup>; the third a line from Robert Browning's poem 'Evelyn Hope'. The second is accompanied by an illustration, very likely a self-portrait, of a sullen looking young man wrapped in a decorated blanket throwing cards onto a baize-topped table (see fig. 13). The full quotation from Butler's *Note-books* is as follows:

'We play out our days as we play out cards, taking them as they come, not knowing what they will be, hoping for a lucky card and sometimes getting one, often getting just the wrong one.'<sup>50</sup>

It is a quote that highlights the seemingly random nature of a Godless universe, something that Waugh would have empathised with at the time. The image of fortune telling cards also appears in *A Handful of Dust*, but it is notably different from Waugh's pre-Catholic notion of their capricious symbolism:

Mrs. Rattery sat intent over her game, moving little groups of cards adroitly backward and forwards about the table like shuttles across a loom; under her fingers order grew out of chaos; she established sequence and precedence; the symbols before her became coherent, interrelated.<sup>51</sup>

In *A Handful of Dust* cards are able to be organised, the chaos Waugh illustrated in his Lancing diary is eliminated, and some semblance of meaning is possible.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>49</sup> Waugh, *Personal Writings*, p. 258.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Butler, *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler*, ed. by Henry Festing Jones (London: A. C. Fifield, 1915), p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Waugh, *HOD*, p. 111.

Indeed, George McCartney argues that 'Mrs. Rattery's card playing echoes Waugh's esthetic practice [...] he believed that the artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own.'<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> George McCartney, *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 87.





Fig. 13. Watercolour illustration 'We play out our days as we play out cards' by Evelyn Waugh, c. 1920. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

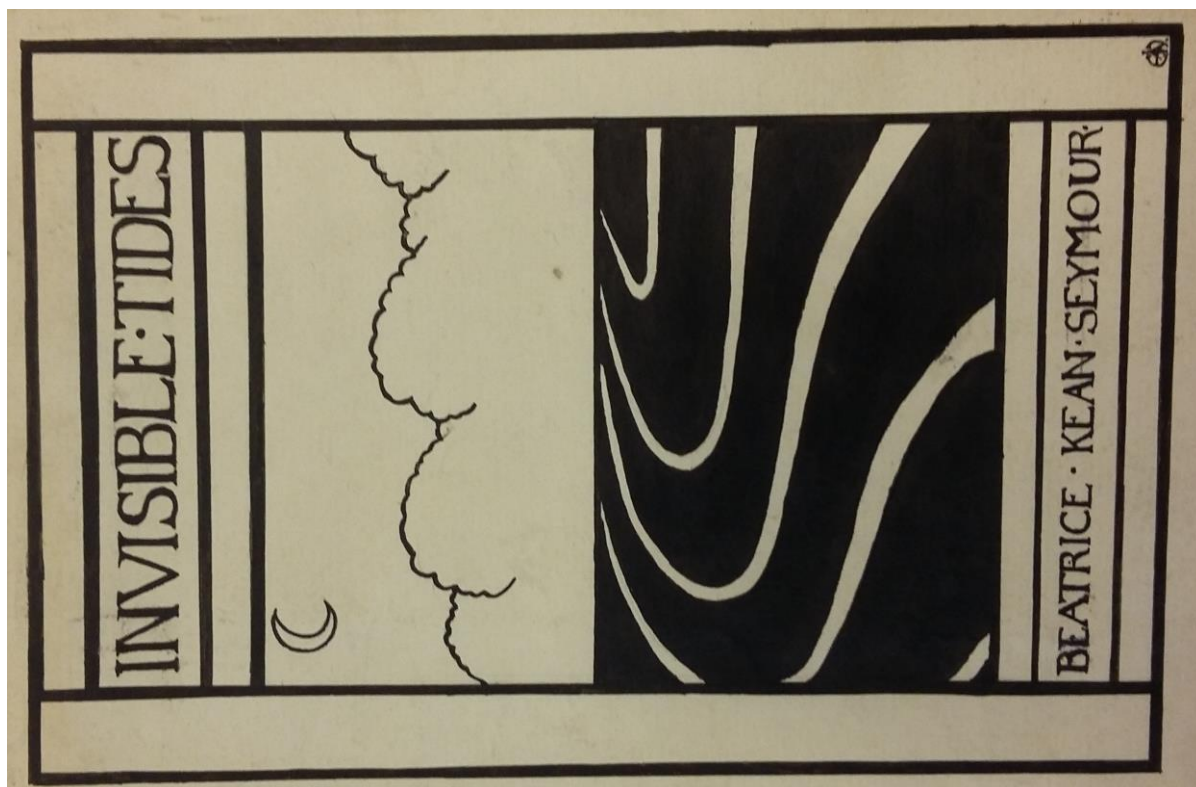


Fig. 14. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for the book-jacket of Beatrice Kean Seymour, *Invisible Tides* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1919). (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Waugh produced a variety of book jacket designs for authors published by Chapman and Hall between 1919 and 1930. Whilst still a schoolboy at Lancing, Waugh designed a cover for *Invisible Tides* (1919) by Beatrice Kean Seymour (see fig. 14). It is remarkable that a sixteen-year-old schoolboy was employed to carry out a task with such commercial implications, and it reveals not only Arthur's confidence in his son's artistic ability, but also Waugh's own conviction in his skills. It is a simple composition consisting of thick line work that evokes the woodcuts of the period, but examination of the original design at the HRC reveals this is in fact an ink drawing. Nevertheless woodcuts were a clear influence on Waugh's graphic work in this period, as seen in both book jackets and his illustrations for *Isis* and *The Cherwell*. The German Expressionist movement was an important proponent in the use of woodcuts in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the harsh, jagged lines resulting from this technique serving to reflect the increasingly tortured socio-political environment in Germany. There are only a few references to the movement in Waugh's writing, though he was clearly aware of its work. In an article attributed to Waugh, 'A Note on the Assumptions of Cubism' (1922) he uses the German word 'expressionismus' to describe work tending 'towards "abstractionism"'. He uses the same word in 'The Balance', put into the mouth of the student at the cinema who describes the whirling vortex of text and image on screen as 'expressionismus'.<sup>53</sup> Waugh, then, was aware of German Expressionism in both graphic art and film. Indeed, we know that Waugh saw at least two highly influential films of the genre: Fritz Lang's expressionist masterpiece *Metropolis* in 1927<sup>54</sup> and Arthur Robison's *Warning Shadows* in 1924.<sup>55</sup> There were also calls for *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) to be shown at the Oxford super cinema in 1924 by an anonymous contributor to *Isis*,<sup>56</sup> and given Waugh's close work with the magazine and his interest in cinema, it is hard to imagine that he wouldn't have at least been aware of the film. There is very little written evidence to suggest where Waugh was getting his aesthetic inspiration from at this point in his life, and so

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<sup>53</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'The Balance', in *The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), pp. 3–42 (p. 6).

<sup>54</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 299.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous, 'We Want Caligari', *The Isis*, 655 (1924), p. 6.

these films are important because they offer a possible source for the more Expressionistic art Waugh created.

At Oxford Waugh drew other book jacket designs, with 1923 proving a particularly fruitful year, in which he produced the cover image for *Circular Saws* (1923) by Humbert Wolfe, *Colleagues* (1923) by Geraldine Waife and *Grass of Parnassus* (1923) by Mary Fulton. The dust jacket of *Circular Saws* (see fig. 15) is much more complicated than any other design produced in this period. Its cluttered composition recalls Waugh's childhood cartoons and his impulse to illustrate many scenes at once, but also shows Waugh refining the style that defines most of his University artworks. Again, as in the jacket for *Invisible Tides*, Waugh employs a style that evokes the blocky line work and heavy shading of the woodcut, while retaining the small detail made possible with the fine nib of an ink pen. There are traces of some of the figures on the cover of *Circular Saws* in Waugh's other work, notably the convict in the upper left-hand corner, who resembles Paul Pennyfeather in prison garb on the cover of *Decline and Fall*. Waugh also seems to have reused one of the central glasses-wearing figures in his header image for *The Cherwell* book review section, as the hair and dress are very similar in both (see fig. 16).





The jacket for *Colleagues* (see fig. 17) is of the same sphere of influence, though it is noticeably less detailed which may suggest it was in fact a woodcut. Unfortunately the original drawing for this cover, at the time of writing, is missing. Nevertheless, the manner in which Waugh has created an image that is contiguous with its own border shows a level of maturity in compositional skill that was lacking in *Invisible Tides*. If the work for *Colleagues* was indeed a woodcut, it would require considerable aptitude to produce such a neatly realised contrast between positive and negative space. In contrast, the cover image for *Grass of Parnassus* is the most pastoral of Waugh's early designs, and is perhaps the least suited to the harsh woodblock style. It shows a stylised tree in the foreground with ruins of a house in the middle ground.

By 1924 Waugh's preferred style had changed dramatically. The cover of *The Scrap Heap* (see fig. 18) bears little resemblance to those that precede it, with the exception of the jagged shading on the dress of the figure. There is much more detail to the image, and for the first time Waugh has moved away from his usual monochromatic palette. The pained expression on the figure does however still owe a great deal to expressionism, which brought the inner emotional state of the artist to the fore. Expressionist art has been described as reflecting 'a heightened awareness of an inner world [...] marked by energetic gestures, distortions of form, and orgies of colour'.<sup>57</sup>

I have been unable to find the image Waugh produced for his brother Alec's book *Kept: A Story of Post-war London* (1925), but he does refer to working 'all day' on the wrapper in his diary and that he thought that 'it is going to be rather good'.<sup>58</sup> Waugh produced three other covers for his brother Alec between 1926 and 1930: *On Doing What One Likes* (1926), *Three Score and Ten* (1929) and *The Coloured Countries* (1930). The first of these is an armorial bookplate featuring a cricketer, two wheat-sheaves, a cherub and a pile of books. The phrase "Industria Ditat" [industry enriches], the family motto, is written in the centre of the image. It is drawn in the more detailed, single line style to which most of his later illustrations adhere. *Three Score and Ten* is different again, relying more on the variegated shading made possible by watercolours. Indeed, this style is reminiscent of the

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<sup>57</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Expressionism* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), pp. 13–14.

<sup>58</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 207.



artwork in Waugh's early stories, for example, *In Quest of Thomas Lee*, where a fluid paintbrush outlines the images. Waugh's cover design for *Children of the Peace* (1928) by Barbara Goolden (see fig. 19) is perhaps the most stereotypically "20s" of all the images he produced for other writers in that it borrows a great deal from the Art Deco style. Bevis Hillier suggests that

In the visual arts, as elsewhere, it was the day of the Bright Young Things. A generation starved of superfluity did not relish stark cubist paintings or the "purism" of Ozenfant. They wanted colour, fizz and bubble. The iridescent bubble about to burst is almost the official symbol of the twenties.<sup>59</sup>

Waugh's illustration for *Children of the Peace* is symbolic of this "bursting bubble" exuberance. The cover is framed by stylised balloons on one side and warlike barbed wire and explosions on the other. Waugh picked up this explosive imagery again in his cover for *Vile Bodies* (1930), and it is useful to see his design for *Children of the Peace* as a precursor to his own project. By contrasting the glamour of the Art Deco period with the horror of violence, Waugh foregrounds the innate instability of the world. Particularly so with his cover for *Children of the Peace*, Waugh makes it clear that the party-atmosphere of the era is fleeting and illusory. As these covers are inspired by the literary works of others, it is difficult to make assumptions about Waugh's choices as regards the actual subjects of these book jacket images, but their aesthetic qualities are nonetheless important in Waugh's development as an artist.

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<sup>59</sup> Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s*, rev. ed. (London: The Herbert Press, 1985), p. 61.

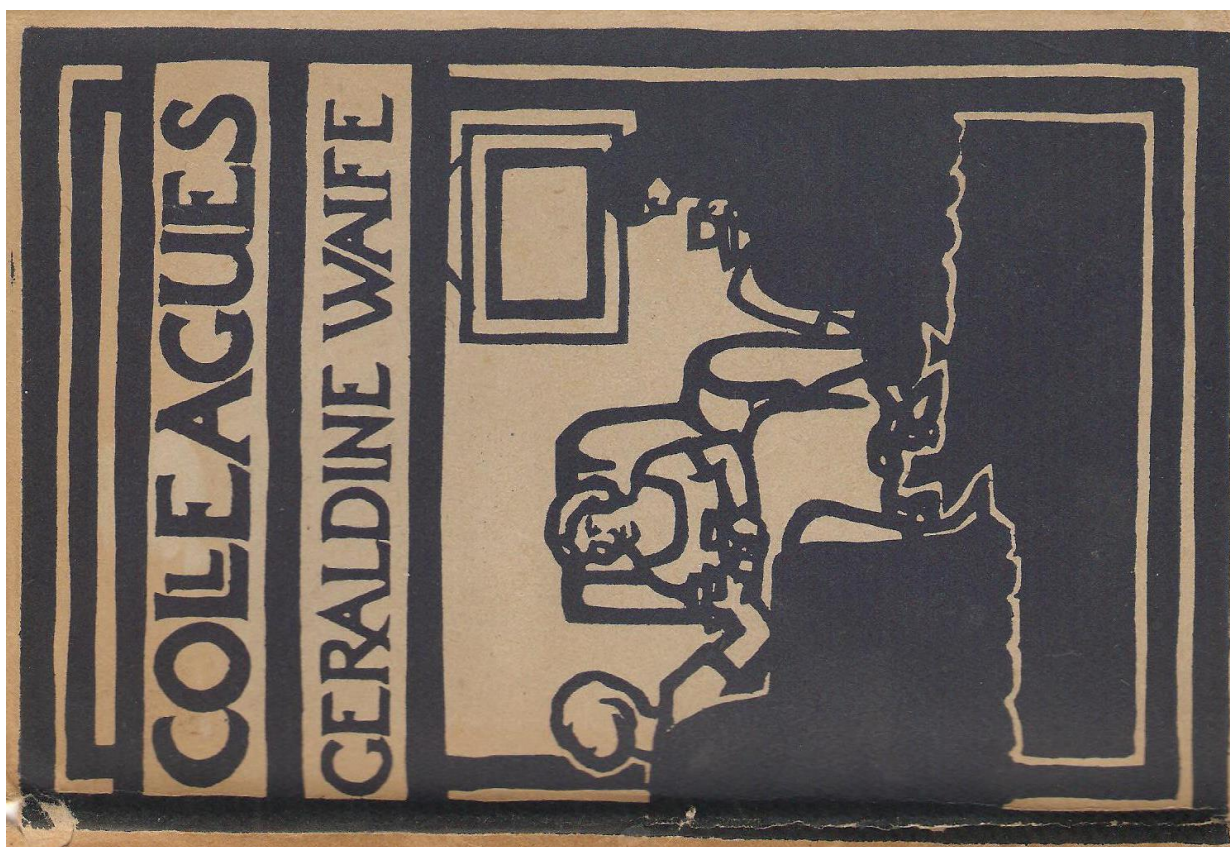


Fig. 17. Book jacket illustration by Evelyn Waugh for Geraldine Waife, *Colleagues* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1923). (Private collection).



Fig. 18. Book jacket illustration by Evelyn Waugh for Geraldine Waife, *The Scrap Heap* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1924). (Private collection)





Fig. 19. Book jacket illustration by Evelyn Waugh for Barbara Goolden, *Children of the Peace* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928). (Private collection).



Fig. 20. Reproduction of illustration 'Heard at the College Debating Society' by Evelyn Waugh for *Isis*, 1922.

Waugh's Oxford art works<sup>60</sup> on the other hand demonstrate the effect of multiple, and at times, contradictory aesthetics. The vast majority of illustrations he had published in *The Isis* are astutely realised yet simple line drawings of various scenes and characters from around the University (see fig. 20). Waugh's style at Oxford can be seen as a continuation of the cartoonish drawings of his childhood, inspired by the clean lines and uncluttered aesthetics of Modernism. He also experimented with woodcuts at this time, which show the influence of German Expressionism. Waugh entered pieces into exhibitions at various times during his two-and-a-half years at Oxford and is also mentioned in *The Isis* as having joined the hanging committee for the Arts Club Exhibition in 1924.<sup>61</sup> His illustration 'The Tragical Death of Mr. Will Huskisson' (see fig. 21) was lauded in the same publication, the reviewer noting that 'it is almost faultless in drawing; there is not a single line in it that is not required. The lettering is impeccable and the humour delicious [...]. Of course, there is plagiarism in it of the nineteenth century 'Punch' drawings, but – well, it has originality.'<sup>62</sup> The cluttered yet neatly-drawn composition prefigures the illustrations Waugh would later produce for *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *Black Mischief* (1932). The possible influence of cartoonist, William Haselden has already been mentioned, but as a style it also bears some similarity to Picasso's work. Indeed, in 1948, Robin Campbell wrote to Waugh to tell him that 'I came across a drawing by Picasso which made me jump by being exactly in the same style as your illustrations to your *Black Mischief*. Really no difference at all.'<sup>63</sup> Campbell does not specify which Picasso drawing he saw, but there are various works that bear some resemblance to Waugh's outline illustrations for the novel. One of these is *Seven Ballerinas* (1919). It is unlikely Waugh would have been pleased with this comparison, given that his correspondence with Campbell at this time concerned his distaste for Picasso. Nevertheless, there is something in this exchange, and in Campbell's remarks that suggests an unconscious Modernist streak in Waugh's aesthetic thinking.

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<sup>60</sup> There are a great many of Waugh's works produced for various university magazines, and it will not be possible in the scope of this thesis to discuss them all. There is a useful article that lists these works however, see: Charles E. Linck, 'Works of Evelyn Waugh, 1910 to 1930', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 10.1 (1964), 19–25.

<sup>61</sup> See: *Isis* No. 652 Mar. 12<sup>th</sup> 1924, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> M.A.E.F. 'Review' *The Isis*, 660 (1924), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Robin Campbell to Evelyn Waugh, 26 February 1948; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

Impressively, given Waugh's lack of formal art training at this point (he would later briefly attend Heatherley's School of Fine Art<sup>64</sup> in 1924), his drawing style is already established and distinctive. This technique is often described as contour drawing,<sup>65</sup> in which depth and shadow are disregarded in favour of the single line. As a drawing style it is highly effective at capturing movement and spontaneity and as such it is also associated with continuous line drawing, which should be carried out without removing one's pen or pencil from the paper. Waugh plays with these techniques in his illustrations for *Decline and Fall*. Its frontispiece, 'The Wedding was an Unparalleled Success Among the Lower Orders' (see fig. 22) looks like a continuous line drawing in which subjects merge into one single line that wriggles across the page. It is impossible not to compare this style of Waugh's work to Picasso's. *The Artist's Studio in the Rue La Boétie* (1920) gives one the same impression as many of Waugh's line drawings. Picasso's work is more fluid than Waugh's, but the sense of neatly arranged chaos is the same.

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<sup>64</sup> Heatherley's advertised regularly in *Isis* as 'A Paris Studio in London for Painters, Illustrators and Art Students'.

<sup>65</sup> Not to be confused with "blind" contour drawing, a technique that involves the artist producing an image without looking down at the paper as they work. The results of this technique are often abstract.



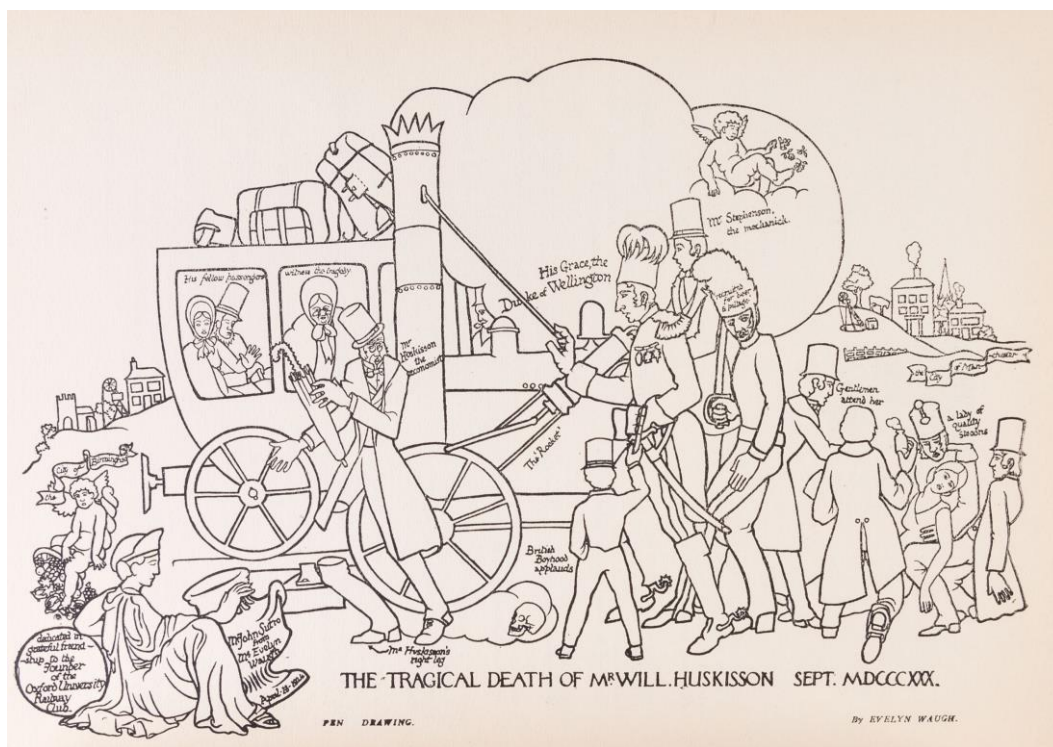


Fig. 21. Pen and ink illustration "The Tragical Death of Mr. Will Huskisson' by Evelyn Waugh, 1924.

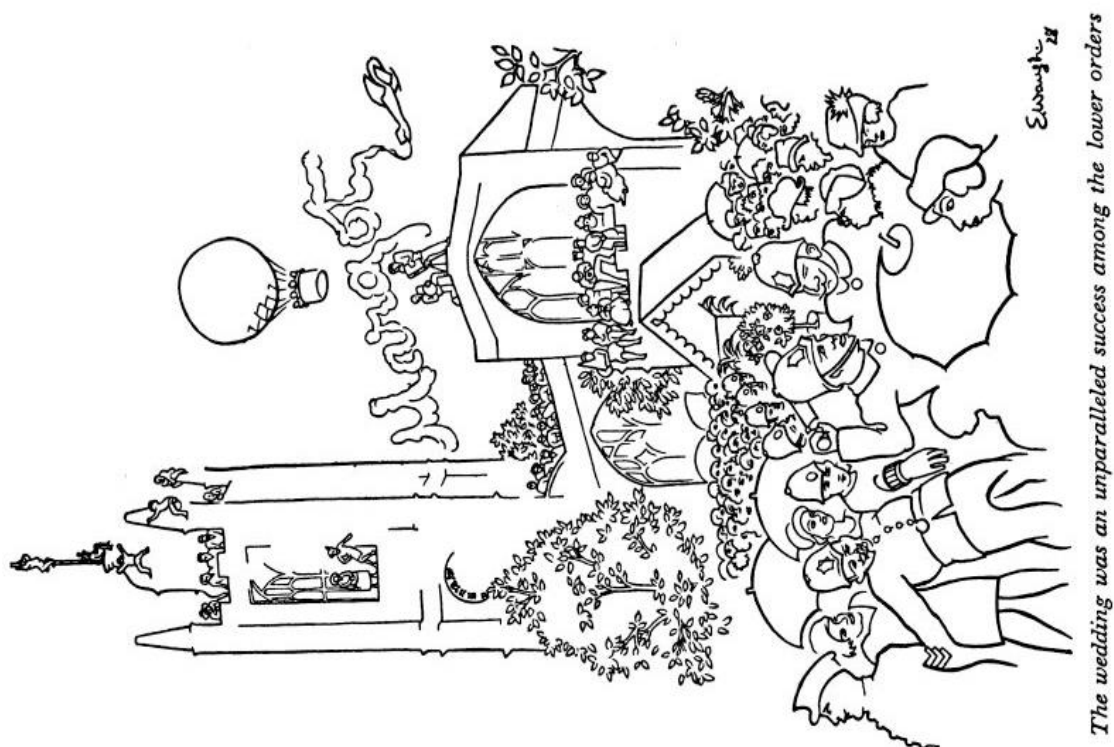


Fig. 22. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.

Earlier influences can be seen in Waugh's Oxford artworks, including 'Bertram, Ludovic and Ann' (1923) (see fig. 23) which features a young man sitting up in bed, accosted by over-sized and sinister-looking insects. The sharp contrast between the clean black lines and the white background, and the ornate detailing around the bedposts is undeniably Aubrey Beardsley inspired (see fig. 24). Indeed there is a specific reference to 'The Toilet of Salome' (see fig. 25), which Beardsley illustrated for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1894), which includes a small selection of books by, amongst others, Zola and de Sade. Waugh's illustration also includes a small pile of books in the corner; a 'who's who', a dictionary and a book of quotations, less licentious than the titles included by Beardsley, but no less of a visual reference of influence. The contrast of these empirical texts and the surreal insects that menace the boy in the illustration are perhaps a comment on the dual nature of Waugh's influences, another example of the pull between the rationalism of Fry and the romanticism of Rossetti. Here Waugh happily blends the practical and the fantastic.

While producing his satirical line drawings for the university magazines, however, Waugh was experimenting with a very different style. He was also learning how to make woodcuts, and these are undeniably Expressionist in execution. Stannard notes that between 1922 and 1924,

Two styles predominated: the perfect drawing of complex outlines [...] and the modern, angular designs of the pen and ink sketches and woodcuts. One is cool, dispassionate, totally without moral commitment; the other vital, distorted and intense, demanding attention.<sup>66</sup>

This duality is at the heart of Waugh's artistic intention in this period, and carries through to the aforementioned book-jacket design for *Children of the Peace* (fig. 19). It is perhaps a unique example of Waugh blending his ability to render the 'perfect complex outline' of the two glamorous figures with the intensity of his woodcut designs.

Three interesting examples of Waugh's woodcuts are 'Angostura and Soda', 'Brandy' and 'Beer' (see figs. 26-8). Appearing in different editions of *Isis* over a five-month period, these take Waugh's caricatures of fellow undergraduates to a deeper level of social examination.

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<sup>66</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 88.





Fig. 23. Reproduction of illustration 'Bertram, Ludovic and Ann' by Evelyn Waugh for *Isis*, 1923.

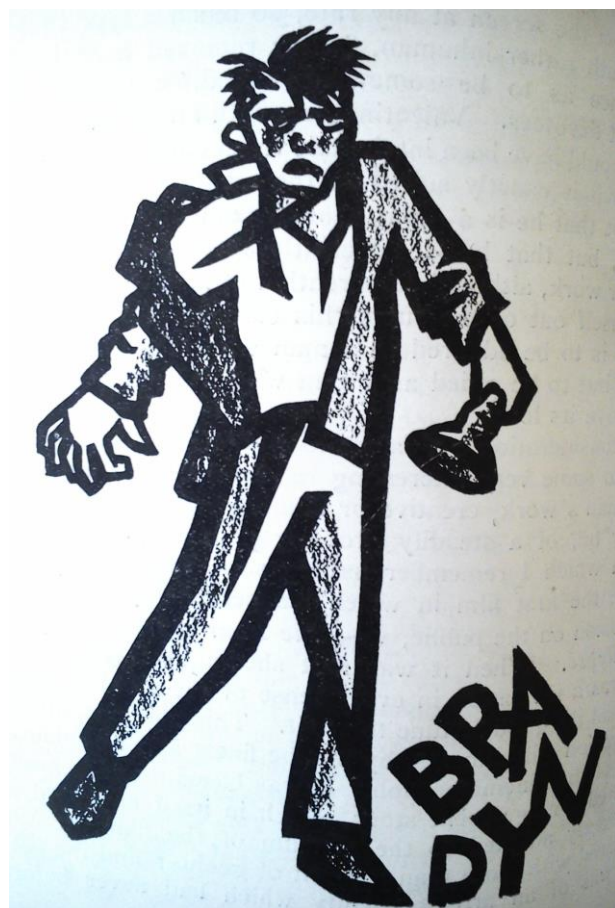


Fig 24. Pen and ink drawing, 'How four queens found Lancelot sleeping' by Aubrey Beardsley, 1893. (Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum).





Fig. 25. Pen and ink drawing 'The Toilet of Salome' by Aubrey Beardsley, 1894. (British Museum, London).



Figs. 26-8. Clockwise from top left: 'Angostura and Soda', 'Brandy' and 'Beer'. Woodcuts by Evelyn Waugh for *Isis*, 1924.

By using the intensity of the lines produced by the woodcut, Waugh has personified the way he views the effects of three different types of alcohol. 'Angostura and Soda' is the most refined of the three; the decadently lounging figure looks inwardly anxious and unlikely to cause a scene. The figure in this woodcut seems to merge with his background, until we are not exactly sure what constitutes the strangely formed chair and his body. 'Brandy' on the other hand, is dynamic and arresting as an image, showing the influence of both German Expressionist film and art. The dark shadows under the eyes reference the kind of makeup worn in silent films in the 1920s to further emphasise the contrast between light and dark areas on the face (see fig. 29), and the stiff angular pose, informed by the technique of the woodcut, can be seen in the work of artists such as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff<sup>67</sup> (see fig. 30). Even the lettering on the piece references the inter-titles of a silent film of the period, its off-kilter kerning again emphasising the intoxicating properties of alcohol Waugh represents. As Waugh possibly destroyed his Oxford diaries, we are unable to know if he ever wrote about specific expressionists he was influenced by during the period (as he did with the Pre-Raphaelites in later years) of his most prolific woodcut output. However, as previously mentioned, we do have the reference to the German Expressionist movement in 'A Note on the Assumptions of Cubism' (1922) and how their work 'tends towards "abstractionism"', something that Waugh's woodcuts also aspire to, particularly in the case of 'Angostura and Soda' which is almost Cubist in its approach to representing the intersection of different planes. 'Beer' is the least aesthetically accomplished of the three, offering little by way of symbolism or artistic expression, but then, perhaps that is how Waugh wanted to portray the average undergraduate beer drinker.

'The Balance' shows Waugh merging the influence of German Expressionist art and film into his fiction, by using the abstracted style to depict the nauseating experience of over-indulging on alcohol:

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<sup>67</sup> Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976). German expressionist artist and printmaker. Founded Die Brücke with Fritz Bleyl, Erich Heckel and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

He drinks and orders more with a mechanical weariness. At length, very unsteadily, they rise to go. From now onwards the film becomes a series of fragmentary scenes interspersed among hundreds of feet of confusion.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 29.





Fig. 29. Still showing the somnambulist Cesare in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) directed by Robert Wiene.





Fig. 30. Woodcut, *Crucifixion* (Gekreuzigter) by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, 1918. (Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Maine)



Fig. 31. Woodcut, cover design for *Oxford Broom No. 1* by Evelyn Waugh, 1923. (Private Collection)





Fig. 32. Woodcut, cover design for *Oxford Broom* No. 2, April 1923 by Evelyn Waugh, 1923. (Private collection).



Fig. 33. Woodcut, cover design for *Oxford Broom* No. 3, June 1923 by Evelyn Waugh, 1923. (Private collection)

'Angostura and Soda', 'Brandy' and 'Beer' may be representative of one side of Waugh's Oxford experience, but the most iconic woodcut he would produce is 'Fires of Youth' (1923), a much more introspective piece. This has already been discussed in the introduction, but it is worth mentioning again here as an example of Waugh's 'distorted and intense'<sup>69</sup> artistic impulse toward expressing emotion. Nothing else comes quite so close to pure Expressionism in the Waugh art collection, save for his covers for the *Oxford Broom*, a short-lived literary magazine founded by Harold Acton (see figs. 31-3). These intense images blend the jagged lines and monochromatic contrast of expressionist woodcuts with a sense of whirling motion, one of the primary impulses of Vorticism, a British art movement stemming from the Italian Futurism. 'Oxford Broom No. 1', is in fact an ink drawing masquerading as a woodcut, but its imagery is consistent with his covers for subsequent issues. Featuring Christchurch College, brooms, sinister rocking horses and a confusion of bodies, it is an intense and at times bewildering image. Later in this chapter I will discuss the significance of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in relation to an illustration of Captain Grimes in *Decline and Fall*. Waugh uses the same biblical symbolism here. Acton describes how he 'had started sweeping away *fin-de-siècle* cobwebs'<sup>70</sup> with his magazine, and Waugh's cover encapsulates this impulse perfectly. While the enormous brooms make short work of the stale art of the previous century, the Four (rocking) Horsemen of the Apocalypse sweep in to finish the job. One of the figures being struck by the fourth rocking horse (barely seen, but for a leg in the centre of the image) could be a caricature of Lytton Strachey<sup>71</sup> with his long beard and sideburns, and given his enthusiasm for the Victorian era, his demise would make sense in the context of this image. The rocking horses are a wry touch of Waugh's that add a sense of humour to the illustration. Either referring to the 'extreme youth'<sup>72</sup> of its authors, or the ease in which they saw the process of sweeping away the cobwebs of the past, it is a memorable image that also serves to create arcs in the composition which further emphasise its sense of movement.

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<sup>69</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 88.

<sup>70</sup> Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1948), p. 119.

<sup>71</sup> Lytton Strachey (1880-1932). English writer and critic.

<sup>72</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 112.



After Oxford Waugh convinced his father to pay for him to attend art school. He had attempted, and failed, to do the same during his third year at Oxford:

[...] struck by conscience and a momentary restlessness and knowing I was doing no good at my books, I wrote to my father asking to be taken away and sent to Paris to enjoy the full life of *Trilby*.<sup>73</sup>

This reference to George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1895) reveals a great deal about the kind of bohemian life Waugh imagined for himself at art school. More in the manner of Rossetti than Fry, the artist's studio in *Trilby* is described as an aesthetic grotto with plaster casts of hands and feet, copies of old masters, bronzes, oil studies, knick-knacks, animal skins and Persian rugs all jostling for position. Further, 'an immense divan spread itself in width and length and delightful thickness just beneath the big north window, the business window—a divan so immense that three well-fed, well-contented Englishmen could all lie lazily smoking their pipes on it at once without being in each other's way'.<sup>74</sup> It is an environment that is inherently artistic, without giving one the sense that much artistic effort is being exerted there.

In an attempt to experience this bohemian lifestyle, and being denied his escape to Paris, Waugh agreed to finish his degree at Oxford before enrolling at The Heatherley School of Fine Art in London. Often referred to simply as 'Heatherley's', it advertised regularly in the Oxford university magazines as 'A Paris Studio in London for Painters, Illustrators and Art Students', and it is likely that Waugh would have seen these notices and been drawn to this Parisian enticement. Established in 1845, the school was a stepping-stone to the Royal Academy and counted among its alumni artists such as Millais, Burne Jones, Rossetti, Lord Leighton, Walter Crane and Walter Sickert. A school boasting luminaries of Victorian art was another attraction to Waugh, with his family connections to the PRB, and Heatherley's also had the appealing reputation of at one time 'having the wildest, gayest and most reckless set of students in London.'<sup>75</sup> Waugh talks about the School in *A Little Learning*, stating that the main attraction 'was that students started at once in the life-school without the preliminary

<sup>73</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 146.

<sup>74</sup> George du Maurier, *Trilby* (New York: International Book and Publishing Company, 1899), p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> Cowan Shannon, 'The Heatherley at Play', in *The Heatherley School of Fine Art* (London: The Heatherley School of Fine Art, 1996), p. 22.

discipline of the 'antique' – plaster casts – which was still imposed in more professional institutions.<sup>76</sup> Thus the ability to draw directly from life was important to Waugh's artistic practice, and although much of his later work is cartoonish and simplified, knowledge of the underlying human form was essential to its success.

As we can see from his multiple attempts at drawing the same figure (see fig. 34), Art School was hard work, and though Waugh 'enjoyed making an agreeable arrangement of line and shadow on the paper' he was 'totally lacking in that obsession with solid form, the zeal for probing the structure of anatomy and for relating to one another the recessions of planes'.<sup>77</sup> This statement is an indication of the direction Waugh's artwork would take after he left Heatherley's. Indeed, it dictated the flat line arrangements of the illustrations for *Decline and Fall*. For example, 'The Llanabba Sports' does not employ traditional techniques of perspective. The eye is able to make sense of Llanabba Castle as belonging to the background of the piece even though it is joined by a single line to the canopy in the middle ground. Similarly 'All the street seemed to be laughing at him' (see fig. 48) plays with distorted perspective by arranging hotel signage at angles that could not exist in reality. Therefore rejecting the technique of 'relating to one another the recessions of planes' becomes a characteristic trait of Waugh's artwork, and single line drawings are perhaps the best method of achieving this. It is a method, for all Waugh's disdain for the movement, which has something in common with the Cubist work of artists like Braque, Picasso and Gris. Like Cubism, Waugh's method of drawing often ignores the traditional single perspective, and attempts to show the same scene simultaneously from different viewpoints. This is apparent in 'The Llanabba Sports' (see fig. 35) where Lord Tangent's foot is visible in the centre of the image where it should be obscured by the characters in the foreground.

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<sup>76</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 176.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

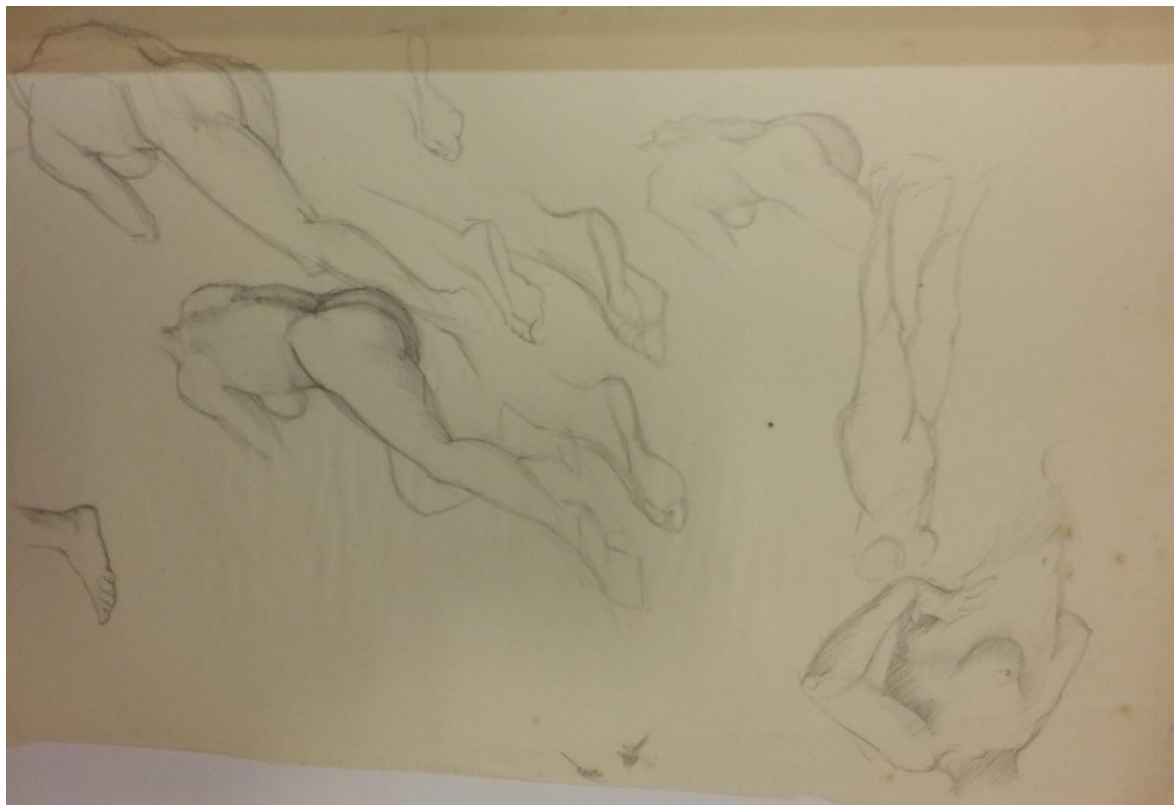
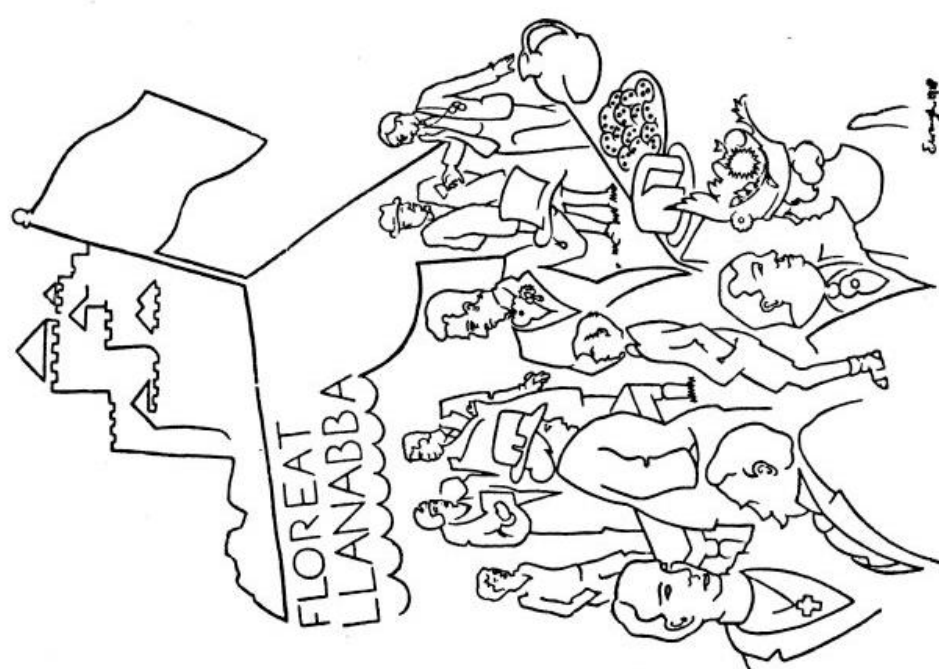


Fig. 34. Pencil drawing, Untitled by Evelyn Waugh c. 1924. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



*The Llanabba Sports*

Master Peter Beste-Chetwynde, the Hon. Mrs Beste-Chetwynde, Mr Sebastian Cholmondley, the Earl of Circumference, Mr Prendergast, the Countess of Circumference, Viscount Tangent, Dr Fagan, the Vicar of Llanabba, Colonel Sidebotham, Sir Solomon Philbrick, Miss Florence Fagan

Fig. 35. Pen and ink illustration, 'The Llanabba Sports' by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.

Waugh's obsession with line and aversion to three-dimensional forms can be seen as a visual expression of the way he deals with the characters in his written work. In a 1962 interview with Julian Jebb, Waugh stated the following: 'I regard writing not as investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed. I have no technical psychological interest.'<sup>78</sup> In the same way, Waugh's experiences at Heatherley's inspired an artistic practice which is an exercise in the use of line. An obsession with the use of language shows Waugh as a writer who is keenly aware of the underlying structure of literary expression; an obsession with line shows Waugh as an artist who is equally aware of the underlying structure of visual representation. After all, line drawing is the simplest and most immediate form of artistic expression. Waugh wrote what is essentially a definition of this style while still at Heatherley's, and before he had perfected it to the point we see it in *Decline and Fall*:

I have come to conclusion that accurate drawing only matters in this way, that one must have complete control of one's tool and that a very excellent test of this control is one's ability to draw a human figure accurately, because in doing so one is setting oneself a standard to which it is possible to apply pertinent criticism. I do not think that form or the vision of form matter at all. If one has control one may draw what one pleases and it cannot matter what one is pleased to see.<sup>79</sup>

This control of his tools is expressed in the simplest of styles. As with woodcuts there is very little room for error in a single line drawing, with the obvious exception of being able to erase any mistakes before committing pen to paper.

Not every sketch in the Heatherley sketchbooks dates from 1924 however, and there is significant evidence to suggest that several crucial drawings were completed around one to two years later. The first of these is a drawing of what appears to be a dog, labelled 'Androcles' (see fig. 36). However, Waugh's first wife, Evelyn Gardner, famously owned a handbag in the shape of a Pekinese that she called Androcles,<sup>80</sup> and so these drawings can be dated to around the time Waugh first met Gardner in 1927. These "Androcles" drawings are significant for two reasons - the first is that three years after leaving art school, feeling as though he

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<sup>78</sup> Interviewed by Julian Jebb, 'Evelyn Waugh, The Art of Fiction No. 30', *The Paris Review* <<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4537/evelyn-waugh-the-art-of-fiction-no-30-evelyn-waugh>> [accessed 7 July 2018].

<sup>79</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 194.

<sup>80</sup> Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh A Biography*, p. 155.

had failed, Waugh was still drawing, and more importantly, still drawing in his Heatherley sketchbook. The second reason is that they give a glimpse into Waugh's courting of Gardner. The drawings of her handbag-dog are silly, but such attention given to her eccentric taste in accessories won the favour of this 'nice girl'<sup>81</sup> he first met in April 1927. Furthermore, there is another page of drawings featuring both Androcles and a female head with a boyish hairstyle in profile, which are likely to be portraits of Evelyn Gardner. A further page featuring two drawings of a reclining female figure with the same hairstyle are also conceivably in Gardner's likeness (see figs. 37 and 38).



Fig. 36. Pencil drawing 'Androcles' (detail) by Evelyn Waugh c. 1927. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

<sup>81</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 299.



Fig. 37. Pencil drawing (detail) by Evelyn Waugh c. 1927. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



Fig. 38. Pencil drawing by Evelyn Waugh c. 1927. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Another sketch that dates from the post-Heatherley period is that of a cat ornament (see fig. 39). Waugh writes in his diary on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1926 that while in Barford House, home of Alistair Graham at the time, he 'lay in the sun and drew a green china cat.'<sup>82</sup> On the same page is a sketch of a balustrade with vines growing over it with indistinct buildings and a tree in the background. It is probably the view from the rear patio attached to the house, as can be seen in photographs taken around 1920.<sup>83</sup> As Selina Hastings notes,

Barford had claims to elegance and a kind of shabby, small-scale grandeur with which Evelyn was not familiar and which served to provide him with a form of transition, an ideal introduction to the sort of upper-class, country-house life which he had yet to encounter but which was to exercise a potent and lifelong fascination.<sup>84</sup>

Waugh's Heatherley's sketchbooks are therefore important when tracking his development as a visual artist, even if they do not contain any outstandingly accomplished works. Waugh recalls that he often finished the set work with time to spare, and spent his remaining hours 'sketching in the margins various aspects of the hands and feet (sadly misshapen appendages which did not approach the classical perfection of Trilby's).'<sup>85</sup> This second reference to Trilby, who in Du Maurier's novel is a figure model of outstanding classical beauty, exposes one aspect of Waugh's disappointment with the school. The models were unattractive, and the students themselves not much better. Heatherley's was:

[...] full of girls – underbred houris most of them in gaudy overalls; they draw very badly and get much in the way of the youths who seem to be all of them bent upon making commercial careers for themselves by illustrating Punch or advertising things. It does not seem to me likely that I shall find any pals among them.<sup>86</sup>

Ultimately it was his opinion that Heatherley's was not producing true 'artists' of the calibre he expected; what he saw there was art being practiced as a career, rather than as a vocation. Waugh was disillusioned with the kind of work he was expected to do and the kind of work his fellow students were interested in pursuing, and it was around this time that he abandoned his plans to become a full-

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>83</sup> Anonymous, 'Barford House' <<http://www.barfordheritage.org.uk/content/places/barford-house>> [accessed 27 May 2018].

<sup>84</sup> Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh A Biography*, p. 109.

<sup>85</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 177.

<sup>86</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 189.



time visual artist or craftsman of physical objects. The trouble seemed to be that at this time, as Stannard notes, 'Art was, in a sense, his surrogate religion in the desert of rationalism'<sup>87</sup> and he did not find that this was practised with sufficient solemnity at Heatherley's.



Fig. 39. Pencil drawing by Evelyn Waugh c. 1926. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

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<sup>87</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 144.

After the disappointment of Heatherley's, Waugh briefly entertained the notion of living and working in Sussex at the Pear Tree Press with James Guthrie,<sup>88</sup> its founder. The idea of an isolated arts and crafts life in the countryside seemed very appealing in contrast to London at this time where Waugh found it 'impossible to draw [...] between tube journeys and telephone calls'.<sup>89</sup> But as Stannard notes, Waugh's visit to the Pear Tree Press culminated in further disappointment; the printing methods were too modern, the lodgings too uncomfortable.<sup>90</sup> He was hoping to find an 'austere and secluded'<sup>91</sup> press, a kind of aesthetic monastery, but even here the modern world had intruded too far; Waugh discovered that 'the secret process used to reproduce the plates which had momentarily fascinated [him] proved to be entirely dependent on photography.'<sup>92</sup> The sense that Waugh was looking for a quasi-religious, mysterious artistic experience does in some way explain his disappointment in the Press. Short of working in a medieval scriptorium there are few places that would live up to Waugh's stringent standards in this regard. Heatherley's was certainly not a sacred establishment - 'no one seriously aspired to High Art'<sup>93</sup> - but it also lacked secular pleasures: 'There was little of the comradeship and none of the high jinks I had expected.'<sup>94</sup> The Press was unsuitable for similar reasons; Guthrie as a craftsman aspired to 'High Art', but the mechanisation of his artistic process was untenable in Waugh's estimation.

Waugh may have abandoned his plans to become an apprentice at the Press, but he continued to write to Guthrie, and once sent him an example of his wood engraving work, to which the artist replied:

Thanks for the block, which I shall pass on to Stuart<sup>95</sup> when he comes tomorrow. It is very nice in design, neat & complete, as I daresay your work is. Perhaps a little bit of the other foot should be seen? One missed it, somehow.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> James Guthrie (1874-1952), Scottish artist and printer. Founder of the Pear Tree Press.

<sup>89</sup> EW to Harold Acton, c. 15 December 1924, in *Letters*, p. 27; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.

<sup>90</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 105.

<sup>91</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 179.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>95</sup> Stuart Guthrie, James Guthrie's son.

<sup>96</sup> James Guthrie to EW, 13 February 1925; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.

There is no suggestion in Waugh's diaries or letters as to which piece he sent to Guthrie, but it is likely, given the reference to the missing second foot, that it was the Salome-inspired bookplate he designed for Olivia Plunket Greene (see fig. 40). Waugh received the first proofs for this design on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1925, which he described as 'pretty good, but disappointing'.<sup>97</sup> In the same letter Guthrie appears to offer Waugh specific advice regarding his artistic practice: 'Your impulse towards this art [wood-engraving] might weaken among many other interests & the general noise of things less arduous & more ready-made, until you felt merely bound to go on.' Here Guthrie expresses concern that the young man with an undeniably mercurial nature might find himself in a rut of some kind should he pursue this laborious method of creating artworks on a full-time basis. Warning Waugh off 'arduous' creation may be a misunderstanding of his artistic intentions, in his own words Waugh desired above all to be a craftsman of pleasant objects, and the laborious process involved in creating such things does not seem to trouble him.

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<sup>97</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 212.

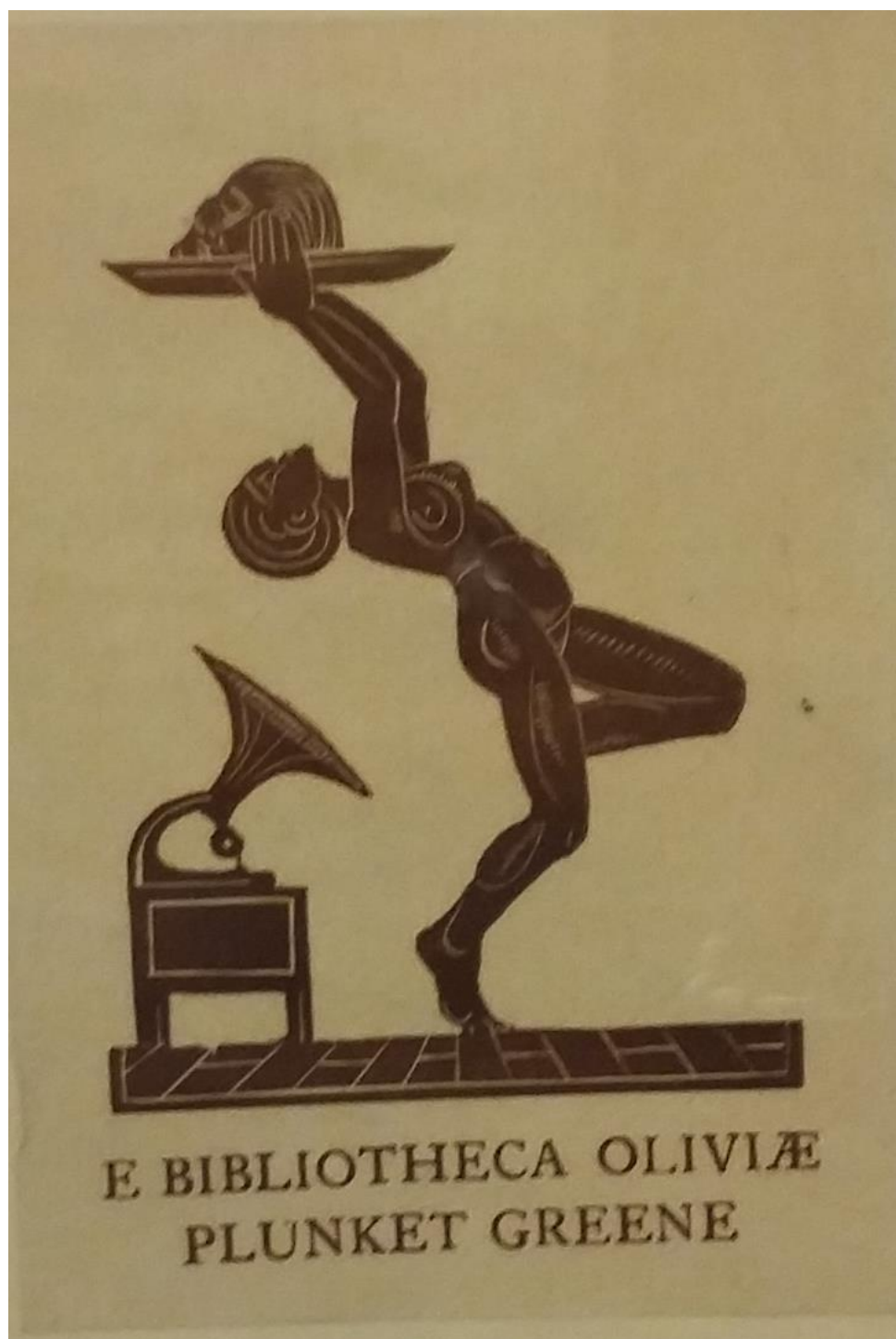


Fig. 40. Woodcut, bookplate for Olivia Plunket Greene by Evelyn Waugh c. 1925. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

It seems Waugh poured all this disappointment in the artistic profession into his short story 'The Balance', which he wrote in 1926. This story concerns the events of a few days in the life of Adam Doure, a partly autobiographical creation. He attends art school, is abandoned by his girlfriend, writes a suicide note, gets outrageously drunk at Oxford parties, attempts suicide but survives, and eventually comes to terms with his situation. This short story has a structure that demonstrates Waugh's brief flirtation with a modernistic fractured narrative style. It is, importantly, a narrative grounded by visual images. It oscillates between interior and exterior viewpoints in a disorienting manner, a written version of the film within the narrative in which 'faces flash out and disappear again; fragmentary captions will not wait until they are read'.<sup>98</sup>

Thus Waugh foregrounds the image as the most important element of his storytelling. With dialogue and narrative detail stripped back to the bare minimum, images are in fact, all the reader can hold on to. Within the cinematic narrative we are given a glimpse into the interior of The Maltby School of Art, which is a sketch of Heatherley's based on Waugh's experiences there. The Maltby School, where Adam studies, is described as a whirlwind of activity, and not all of it strictly academic. The young Mr. Maltby flirts outrageously with his students, young men argue with each other and copious cigarettes are smoked while an 'ungraceful' model with a 'dull pink body' shifts in and out of an established 'Art School pose', much to Adam's consternation. Waugh was equally disdainful of the models at Heatherley's and recalls in his diary on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1924 (his first day there) the unpleasant task of drawing a 'thin man with no clothes but a bag about his genitals'.<sup>99</sup>

There is another surprising link to Heatherley's in 'The Balance' and it relates to sketches executed on Heatherley's sketchbook paper, but produced after Waugh left the school in 1924. These sketches show something that has not been realised before now – that Waugh may have intended to illustrate his short story. The following image (see fig. 41), showing a male figure at a strange distorted angle with a shadow, illustrates a scene towards the end of the narrative in which Adam walks the towing path alongside the River Cherwell and has a strange vision:

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<sup>98</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 189.

All about him the shadows were beginning to dissipate and give place to clearer images. He had breakfasted in a world of phantoms, in a great room full of uncomprehending eyes, protruding grotesquely from monstrous heads that lolled over steaming porridge; marionette waiters had pirouetted about him with uncouth gestures. All round him a macabre dance of shadows had reeled and flickered, and in and out of it Adam had picked his way, conscious of only one instant need, percolating through to him from the world outside, of immediate escape from the scene upon which the bodiless harlequinade was played, into a third dimension beyond it.<sup>100</sup>

This description of the visual distortion of Adam's shadow pays tribute to the effects used in the Expressionistic silent films of the period, of which Waugh was a great admirer. He was a keen cinema-goer, but detested the 'talkies', which he maintained ruined the potential for film as an art form: 'A great, simple art should have come into existence. But nothing of the kind has in fact occurred.'<sup>101</sup> Perhaps Waugh was using 'The Balance' to pay tribute to the visual artistry of silent film. It certainly manifests itself in two ways in 'The Balance': Firstly, and quite literally, as a way to frame Adam's narrative, and then later, as a type of visual imagery as the following extract demonstrates:

And at length, as he walked by the river, the shapes of the design began to advance and recede, and the pattern about him and the shadows of the night before became planes and masses and arranged themselves into a perspective [...]<sup>102</sup>

If Waugh had produced finished illustrations for 'The Balance' then the association with silent film would have been all the more apparent. Image and text are inextricably linked in silent film because as an art form it relies on its sub and inter-titles for meaning. Instead, Waugh decided to evoke this relationship by transmuting the visual language of film into his fiction. 'The Balance' is therefore even more impressive as an early experiment because it succeeds in being a visual piece of writing without including any of these illustrations.

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<sup>100</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Why Hollywood Is a Term of Disparagement', in *EAR*, pp. 325–31 (p. 326).

<sup>102</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', pp. 37–38.



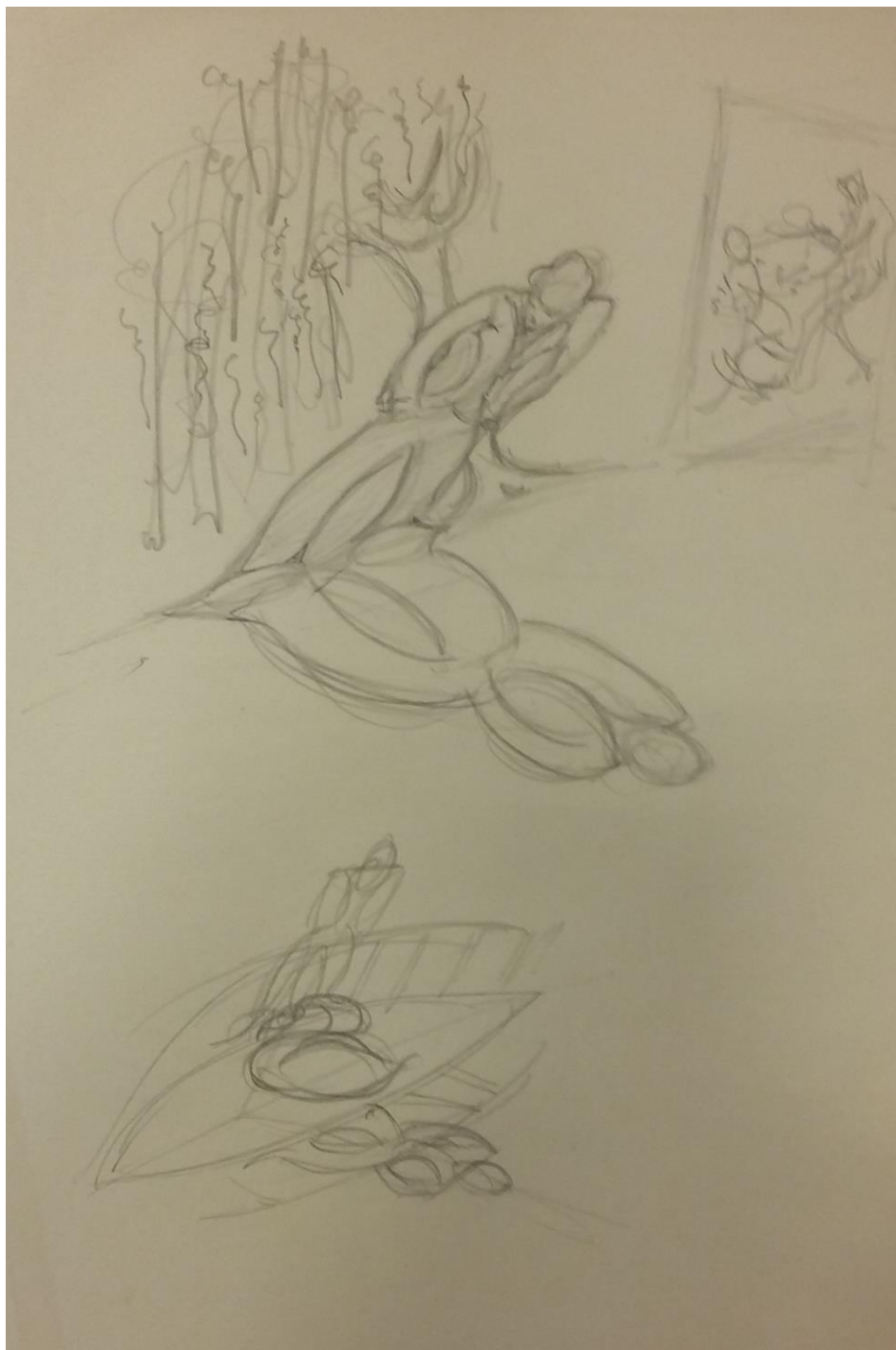


Fig. 41. Pencil drawing by Evelyn Waugh c. 1926. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

Arguably the most important of these previously unidentified drawings illustrates the final scenes of the story. Adam, suffering with a hangover and reflecting on his suicide attempt, begins to come to terms with life by talking to his own reflection:

On a white footbridge he paused, and lighting his pipe, gazed down into his ruffled image. A great swan swept beneath him with Spenserian grace, and as the scattered particles of his reflection began to reassemble, looking more than ever grotesque in contrast with the impeccable excellence of the bird, he began half-consciously to speak aloud:

“So, you see, you are after all come to the beginning of another day.” And as he spoke, he took from his pocket the envelope addressed to Imogen and tore it into small pieces. Like wounded birds they tumbled and fluttered, until reaching the water they became caught up in its movement and were swept out of sight round the bend of the river towards the city, which Adam had just left.<sup>103</sup>

Waugh drew this scene three times in his sketchbook, (see the bottom of fig. 41 and figs. 42-3), each version becoming more detailed until he shows the fragments of Adam’s suicide note floating in the river below him. This has its roots in reality, as like Adam, Waugh had also considered suicide. He records the attempt in some detail in *A Little Learning* and it is worth including it here for comparison:

I went down alone to the beach with my thoughts full of death. I took off my clothes and began swimming out to sea. Did I really intend to drown myself? That certainly was in my mind and I left a note with my clothes, the quotation from Euripides about the sea which washes away all human ills. I went to the trouble of verifying it, accents and all, from the school text:

Θάλασσα χλύζει πάντα Τ’ανθρώπων χαχά

At my present age I cannot tell how much real despair and act of will, how much play-acting, prompted the excursion.

It was a beautiful night of a gibbous moon. I swam slowly out but, long before I reached the point of no return, the Shropshire Lad was disturbed by a smart on the shoulder. I had run into a jelly-fish. A few more strokes, a second more painful sting. The placid waters were full of the creatures. An omen? A sharp recall to good sense such as Olivia [Plunkett-Green] would have administered?

I turned about, swam back through the track of the moon to the sands which that morning had swarmed under Grimes’s discerning eye with naked urchins. As earnest of my intent I had brought no towel. With some difficulty I dressed and tore into small pieces my pretentious classical tag, leaving them to the sea, moved on that bleak shore by tides

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

stronger than any known to Euripides, to perform its lustral office. Then I climbed the sharp hill that led to all the years ahead.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast, Adam's note is written in Latin, 'AVE IMPERATRIX IMMORTALIS MORITURUS TE SALUTANT'<sup>105</sup> but the parallels between these scenes are irresistible. By tearing the suicide note into pieces both Waugh and Adam do violence to the sentimental and self-deluding written word, rather than themselves, and again, in 'The Balance' the attention of the reader is brought back to the visual image, this time of paper swept up by the wind and out of sight, or, if you will, off screen.

This is clearly an acutely painful memory, even in fiction, but Robert Murray Davis is unimpressed by the way Waugh dealt with it in 'The Balance'. He notes that 'The last chapter of *A Little Learning* records the events of these years with more detachment than the short story [...]. When he wrote "The Balance," he was too close to the emotions of Adam Doure to treat them in other than solemn fashion.'<sup>106</sup> It is true that Waugh throws a darkly comedic veil over the incident in *A Little Learning*, and that the years have allowed him the detached viewpoint as an artist that he strove for almost exclusively from this point on, but 'The Balance' is important precisely because it is solemn. It stands apart from Waugh's other early writing because it offers a psychological insight into an otherwise elusive writer. But an unanswerable question remains - in what style might Waugh finished the illustrations for 'The Balance'? It is not detached enough narrative to warrant the perfect line drawings that followed in Waugh's later fiction, and so perhaps a series of German Expressionism-inspired woodcuts would be better suited to these images of shadows and reflections. What is so significant about these illustrations for 'The Balance', aside from their being an example of Waugh's continuing desire to decorate the written word through his juvenilia and beyond, is that they show the working of his mind. This image of Adam staring at his reflection was something that preoccupied him and part of the process of writing was this 'working out' of visual moments, or, if we are to continue the idea of 'The Balance'

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<sup>104</sup> Waugh, *A Little Learning*, p. 192.

<sup>105</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Murray Davis, 'Evelyn Waugh's Early Work: The Formation of a Method', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 7.1 (1965), 97-108 (p. 101).

as a story as much about the fragmentary and illusory world of experimental silent film, of frames, which 'flash out and disappear again.'<sup>107</sup>



Fig. 42. Pencil drawing (detail) by Evelyn Waugh c. 1926. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

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<sup>107</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 6.



Fig. 43. Pencil drawing by Evelyn Waugh c. 1926. (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).



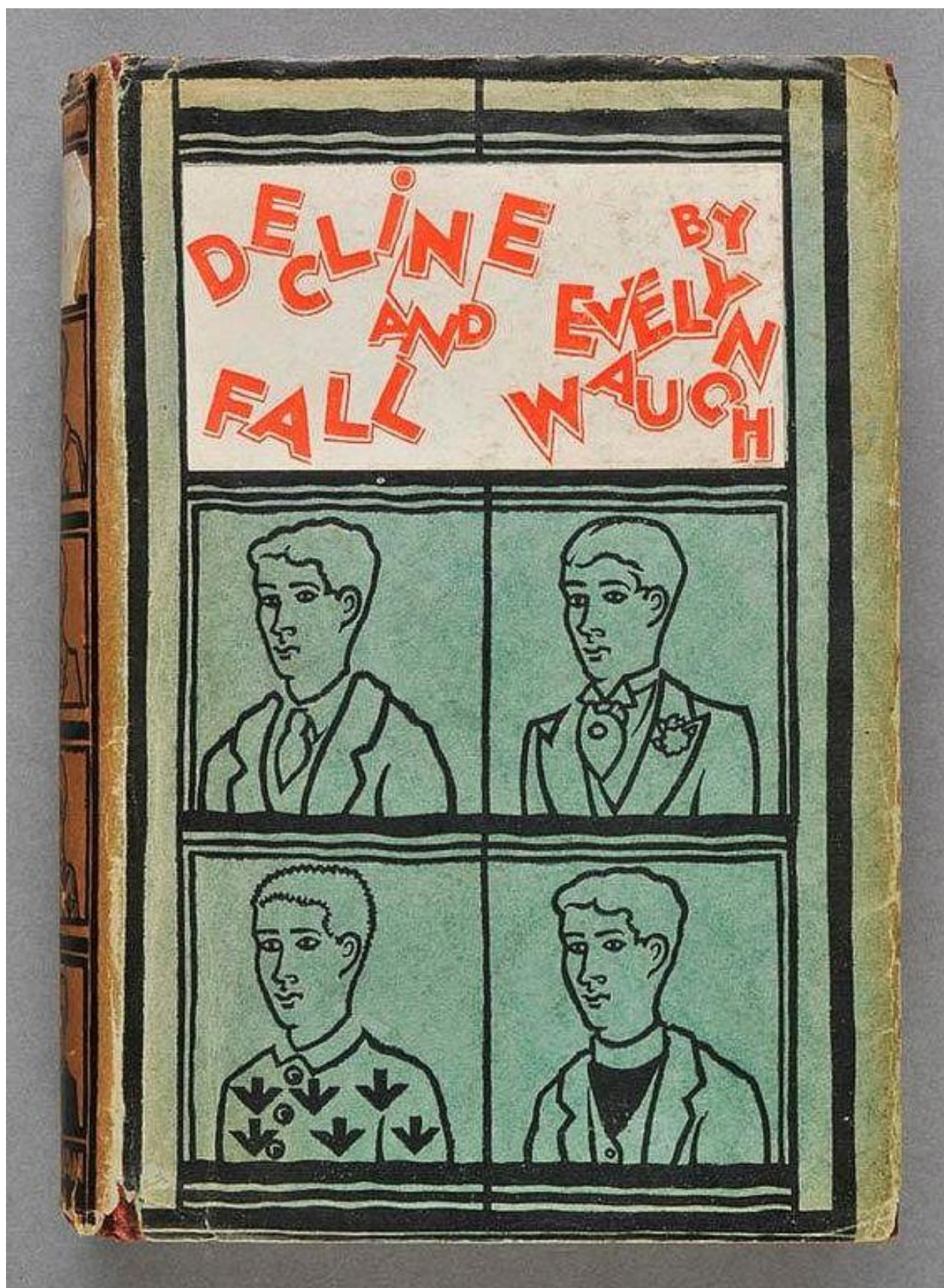


Fig. 44. Chapman and Hall first edition of *Decline and Fall* with dust-jacket design by Evelyn Waugh. 1928.



The rest of this chapter will deal with Waugh's illustrated novels from *Decline and Fall* (1928) to *Black Mischief* (1932) (*Love Among the Ruins*, 1953, is discussed in chapter four) and read them in the light of their decoration. Book illustration is part of an artistic tradition that stretches back millennia, as Walter Crane argues: 'We might go [...] back into prehistoric obscurity to find the first illustrator, pure and simple, in the hunter of the cave, who recorded the incidents of his sporting life on the bones of his victims.'<sup>108</sup> It is therefore out of the scope of this thesis to go into any great detail on the topic, yet it is important to note that Waugh's impetus to create book covers and illustrations are another example of his interest in the Arts and Crafts movement. Indeed, his simple illustrative style fits perfectly within the parameters set by William Morris who claimed that:

I do not think any artist will ever make a good book illustrator, unless he is keenly alive to the value of a well-drawn line, crisp and clean, suggesting a simple and beautiful silhouette. Anything which obscures this and just to the extent to which it does obscure it takes away from the fitness of a design as a book ornament.<sup>109</sup>

Morris established his own Kelmscott Press in 1891, where craftsmanship in all parts of book creation was of utmost importance. As David McKitterick argues, Morris, by 'using iron hand-presses rather than machine presses [...] demonstrated the importance of the skilled workman having as complete control as possible over his task.'<sup>110</sup> This was the kind of working environment Waugh was disappointed to find lacking at Guthrie's Pear Tree Press. Thus Waugh's book illustrations and covers can be seen as an attempt to capture the idea of the book as an art object, and to exercise 'complete control' over it. A selection of illustrations from Waugh's first fictional novel have already been mentioned in this chapter, but they are such iconic examples of the style of art Waugh made his own that they deserve further examination. The Chapman and Hall first edition of *Decline and Fall* has a green dust-jacket designed by Waugh which repeats the same four images of Paul Pennyfeather on the front, spine, and back of the jacket (see fig. 44). They show Pennyfeather at various points of his narrative journey; firstly as a schoolmaster,

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<sup>108</sup> Walter Crane, *The Decorative Illustration of Books* (London and New York: George Bell and Sons, 1896), p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> William Morris, 'The Woodcuts of Gothic Books', *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 40.2047 (1882), 247–57 (p. 256).

<sup>110</sup> David McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', in *The Cambridge History of The Book in Britain*, ed. by David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), VI, 75–116 (pp. 83–84).

secondly as a bridegroom, thirdly as a convict, and finally as a priest. Reading these images from left to right in conjunction with the book's jaunty title lettering, the first-time reader is led to the conclusion that the decline in question is indeed the protagonist's movement through these social strata. His face, however, is expressionless, unmarked by sorrow, as though he was a puppet, dressed up for each role, and each role were equally meaningless.

The aforementioned frontispiece (see fig. 22) 'The wedding was an unparalleled success among the lower orders', depicts a chaotic scene in which members of the public are held back by police on the occasion of Paul Pennyfeather and Margot Beste-Chetwynde's wedding. The name 'Margot' is spelt out in sky-writing by an aeroplane, leading the eye up to the roof and steeple of the church, where more figures are pictured recklessly climbing the building to get a better view of the couple. One is irresistibly reminded of Waugh's juvenile drawings. It is as chaotic as Waugh describes in the novel:

Inflamed by the popular Press, a large crowd assembled outside St Margaret's on the eve of the ceremony equipped, as for a first night, with collapsible chairs, sandwiches and spirit stoves, while by half-past two, in spite of heavy rain, it had swollen to such dimensions that the police were forced to make several baton charges, and many guests were crushed almost to death in their attempts to reach the doors, and the route down which Margot had to drive was lined as for a funeral with weeping and hysterical women.<sup>111</sup>

Waugh has effectively captured the chaos and movement of the occasion by giving the impression that the figures and architecture are joined by a single dynamic line. This is of course, not the case, but the stylistic decision Waugh has made to leave some areas of the illustration unfinished add to this effect. McCartney argues that 'These drawings serve as visual analogues to his writing. In both media he employed a firm, resolute stylization that portrays disorder without succumbing to it.'<sup>112</sup>

'You see, I'm a public school man' (see fig. 45) is a static image but is in recognisably the same style as 'The wedding'. The poster on the back wall in the staff room 'EISTEDDFOD' is a Welsh festival of literature and music, while the image above the fireplace depicts Moses and the Ten Commandments. Other than these simple adornments, the room is sparsely decorated and gives the distinct

<sup>111</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 148.

<sup>112</sup> McCartney, *Confused Roaring*, p. 30.

impression of the scarcity of glamour in Pennyfeather's condition at this point in the novel. Furthermore, Pennyfeather is effectively trapped into the corner of the room, just as he is trapped into his situation; Captain Grimes and his wooden leg dominate the composition. 'The Llanabba Sports', (see fig. 35) already discussed, returns somewhat to the chaotic group scene in 'The Wedding'. 'I do not think it is possible for domestic architecture to be beautiful, but I am doing my best' is very different. (see fig. 46) It shows a single figure, (the only illustration in *Decline and Fall* to do so) that of the architect Otto Silenus. In the illustration he stands triumphant over the ruins of King's Thursday, though it is interesting that these ruins look more like classical columns than the Tudor of the original house. Indeed, elements of the composition look similar to one of Waugh's bookplates for Alistair Graham that shows a faun amidst classical ruins (see fig. 47).

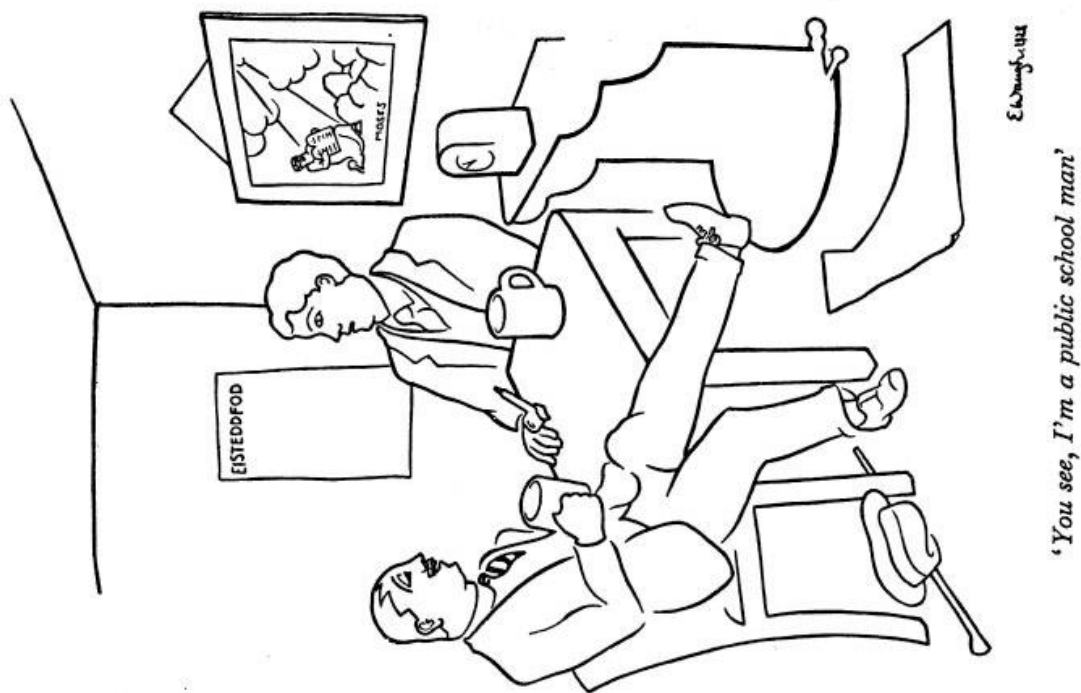


Fig. 45. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.

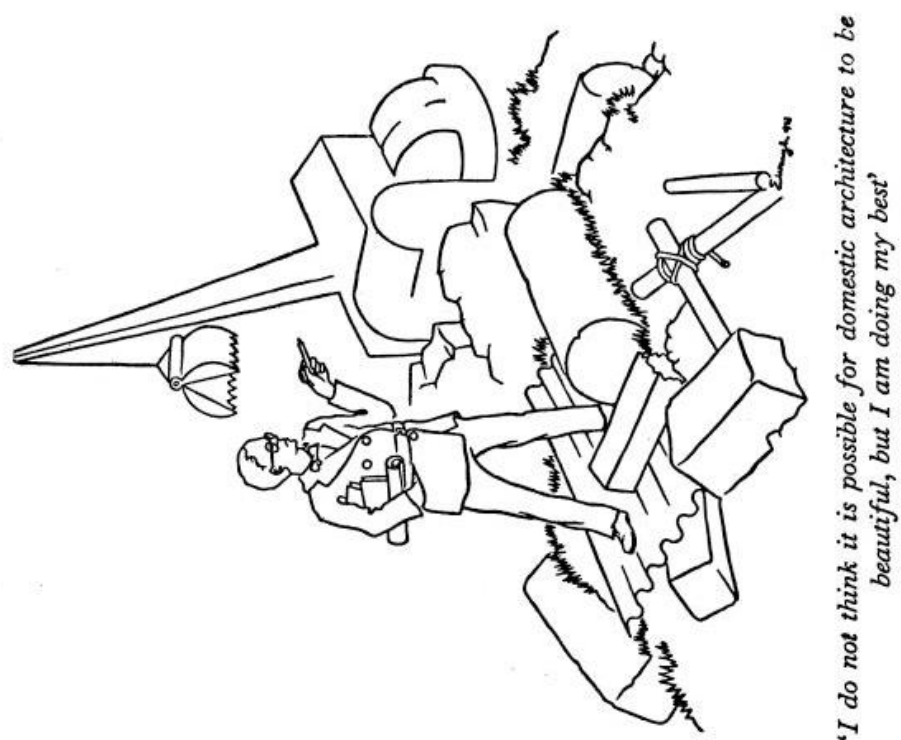


Fig. 46. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.



Fig. 47. Bookplate for Alistair Graham by Evelyn Waugh c. 1925. (Private collection).

Otto Silenus's character is a clear caricature of architect Le Corbusier,<sup>113</sup> and Waugh's illustration makes this obvious. With his round spectacles and double-breasted suit jacket, pipe and bowtie, Silenus makes a convincing impression of the figurehead of Modernist architecture. By drawing Silenus in the guise of Le Corbusier, Waugh's parody of Modernist architecture is unavoidable. Silenus states that good architecture requires the 'elimination of the human element from the consideration of form'<sup>114</sup> and it is this robotic, machinelike impression that is foregrounded in Waugh's illustration. We are meant to associate Silenus with the heavy, destructive machinery in the background, the classical columns then representing not only the demolition of King's Thursday, but also more generally the destruction of classical architectural principles of proportion. Le Corbusier would of course disagree with this estimation of his work, but the association with Waugh's parodic Professor is enduring, Silenus appears with Le Corbusier in general introductions to architecture,<sup>115</sup> articles about the disadvantages of modern living<sup>116</sup> and as an example of '[in] humane urbanism'.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 70.

<sup>114</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 120.

<sup>115</sup> Jonathan Glancey, *Architecture* (London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2006), p. 431.

<sup>116</sup> John Casey, 'Architecture Is a Moral Question While Tower Blocks Are Still Built', 13 June 2001, section Comment <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/4263007/Architecture-is-a-moral-question-while-tower-blocks-are-still-built.html>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

<sup>117</sup> Jonathan Glancey, 'Townscape and the AR: Humane Urbanism in the 20th Century', *Architectural Review* <<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/viewpoints/townscape-and-the-ar-humane-urbanism-in-the-20th-century/8648215.article>> [accessed 9 July 2018].



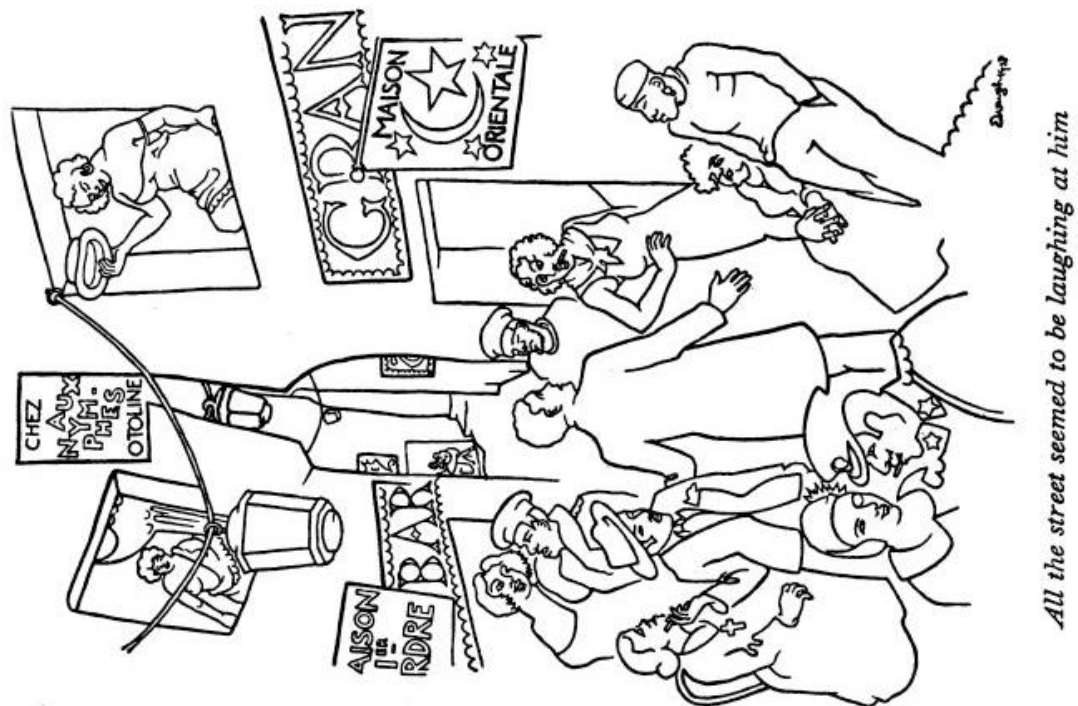


Fig. 48. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.

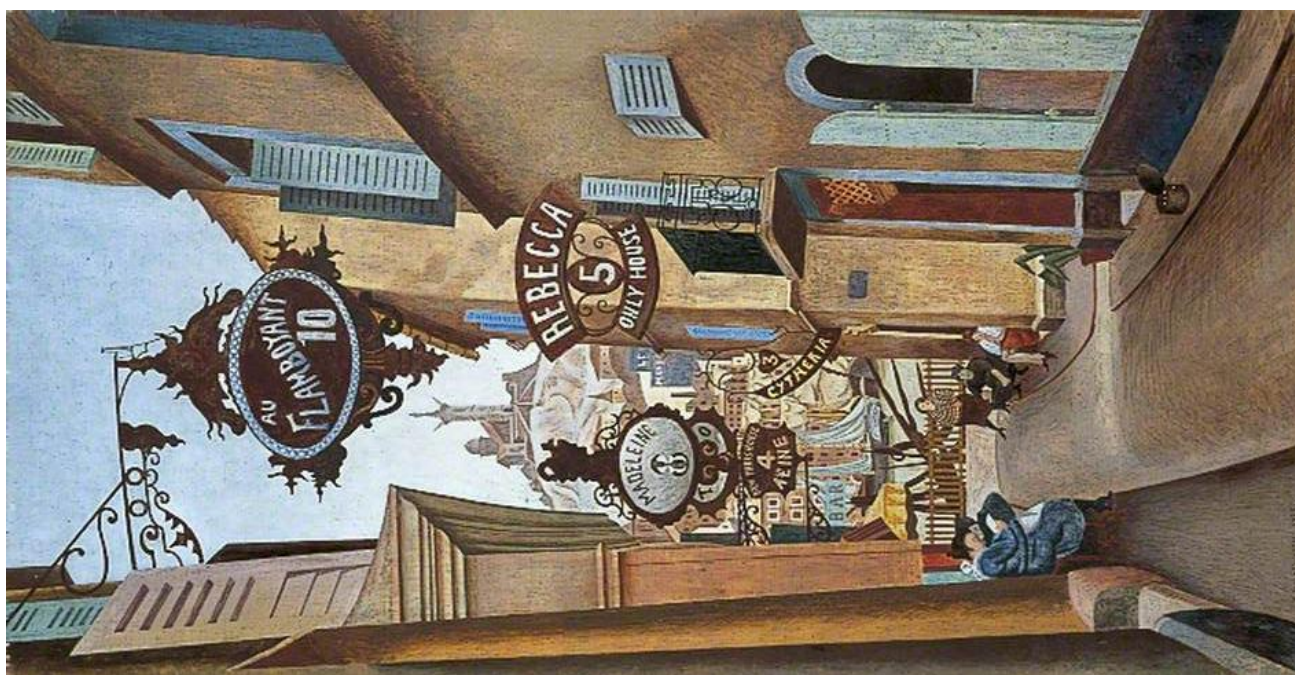


Fig. 49. Edward Wadsworth, *Rue de la Reynarde* (1926). (Leeds Art Gallery).

'All the street seemed to be laughing at him' has already been discussed in this chapter, but it is startling in its contrast to the illustration of Silenus. This is a scene of great human activity, though Pennyfeather is ill-equipped to deal with it. Pennyfeather is the only figure pictured from behind, emphasising the disconnect between the naïve young man and the Rue de Reynarde in Marseille, a 'place of temptation and danger'.<sup>118</sup> Furthering the sense of a sinful environment, Waugh has manipulated the negative space in the centre of the image into the shape of a wine bottle. The area Waugh refers to in *Decline and Fall*, between the Vieux-Port and Joliette, was notorious for its brothels; known as Le Quartier Réservé, it was, before the German occupation in 1943, a maze of narrow streets in which, 'To the initiated it was never hard to identify a prostitute in the doorways or bars [...] the red glow of a cigarette in the mouth; a particular way of laughing, half-spiteful, half-mocking'.<sup>119</sup> The area has been redeveloped and the streets Waugh describes are no longer in existence, but evidence of their appearance is available in both contemporary artworks and photographs. Edward Wadsworth<sup>120</sup> painted various Marseille street scenes in the mid-1920s including *Rue de la Reynarde* (1926) (see fig. 49) and it is obvious that just as in Waugh's illustration, the abundance of brothel signs proved particularly inspiring visually. Wadsworth's 'images focus on the streets with their wrought-iron brothel signs. However these paintings do not only document the sex trade in a detached way. Rather, they employ signs for prostitution as semiotic markers of and for the male tourist experience.'<sup>121</sup> In Waugh's illustration, the brothel signs add to the sense of Pennyfeather being assailed by 'polyglot invitations that arose on all sides'<sup>122</sup> that exist not only in spoken language, but also in the 'semiotic markers' of the brothels. Nilce M. Pereira has written of illustration as a type of translation, and argues that 'Similarly to translation of poetry, illustration is only possible through the re-creation of the textual elements and values in the pictures. They are different in terms of the sign

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<sup>118</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 152.

<sup>119</sup> Simon Kitson, *Police and Politics in Marseille, 1936-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 44.

<sup>120</sup> Edward Alexander Wadsworth (1889-1948). English painter associated with Vorticism. Worked for Roger Fry's Omega Workshops July – October 1913.

<sup>121</sup> Andrew Stephenson, "'New Ways of Modern Bohemia": Edward Burra in London, Paris, Marseilles and Harlem', *Tate Papers*, 2013 <<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/new-ways-of-modern-bohemia-edward-burra-in-london-paris-marseilles-and-harlem>> [accessed 9 July 2018].

<sup>122</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 152.

system, but constitute another construct of the (same) text in the universe of the illustrated book.<sup>123</sup> In this sense 'All the street seemed to be laughing at him' is an example of Waugh layering narratives through literal and figurative 'signs', emphasising Pennyfeather's disorientation.

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<sup>123</sup> Nilce M. Pereira, 'Book Illustration as (Intersemiotic) Translation: Pictures Translating Words', *Meta*, 53.1 (2008), 104–19 (p. 106).



*Grimes was of the immortals*

Fig. 50. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928.

The final illustration in *Decline and Fall* is 'Grimes was of the immortals' (see fig. 50). The image shows Captain Grimes escaping prison; he soars above his fellow inmates on a stolen horse, bearing a banner on which "EXCELSIOR" is written. Previously Grimes has escaped various disasters, 'Sentenced to death in Flanders, he popped up in Wales; drowned in Wales, he emerged in South America'<sup>124</sup> but it appears he meets a horrible end in Egdon Mire. Pennyfeather, in a typically naïve and hopeful fashion, refuses to believe Grimes can be dead and imagines him rising 'again somewhere at some time, shaking from his limbs the musty integuments of the tomb'.<sup>125</sup> Pennyfeather's belief in Grimes's immortality is undermined by Waugh's reference to the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem 'Excelsior' (1841) in the illustration. In Longfellow's poem a young man freezes to death because he ignores all warnings against continuing to climb a mountain whilst carrying a banner proclaiming 'Excelsior!' which roughly translated from Latin has the meaning of "onward and upward". Thus Longfellow criticises 'aspiration past the point of reason and to the point of death'<sup>126</sup> in the poem. Another hint at Grimes's death in Waugh's illustration is in the positioning of the character amidst the clouds, as though he has already ascended to heaven, though considering his proclivities we might question whether this would in fact be the case. That Grimes is pictured riding a white horse is deeply symbolic; one possible reading could be that Waugh was referencing the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse from the Book of Revelation. The white horse has been interpreted as both a symbol of conquest and also of pestilence. Indeed, in Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novel *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1918)<sup>127</sup> the white horseman is described as 'Conquest, according to some, the Plague according to others. He might be both things at the same time.'<sup>128</sup> Grimes's character is also twofold. On the one hand we see him through Waugh's eyes, an absurd and unpleasant character

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>126</sup> Jill Anderson, "'Be up and Doing": Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Poetic Labor', *Journal of American Studies*, 37.1 (2003), 1–15 (pp. 12–13).

<sup>127</sup> Though there is no evidence to suggest Waugh read Ibáñez's novel, he did see the Rex Ingram film adaptation *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and reviewed it for *Isis*. See E[velyn] W[augh], 'Seen in the Dark: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse', *The Isis*, 651 (1924), p. 24.

<sup>128</sup> Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, trans. by Charlotte Brewster Jordan (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1918), p. 176.

who represents the worst of the 'public school man'. On the other, however Pennyfeather genuinely views Grimes as 'of the immortals' because he considers him to have 'suffered unscathed the fearful dooms of all the offended gods of all the histories – fire, brimstone and yawning earthquakes, plague and pestilence'.<sup>129</sup> To a character like Pennyfeather, who at this point in the novel has undergone his own share of 'fearful doom', the image of Grimes riding high above it all is a comforting and aspirational one.

Waugh was not intending to comfort with his illustration for the front cover of *Vile Bodies*, however - quite the contrary (see fig. 51). Its style references earlier works such as his *Oxford Broom* cover (see fig. 31) and a Christmas card design from 1923 (see fig. 52). The use of colour is quite unusual in Waugh's work and serves to emphasise the sense of disaster that is a running theme in the novel. The unlucky number '13' on the car also adds to this effect. Waugh's depiction of Agatha Runcible's car crash is the apotheosis of his critique of the modern obsession with speed and the machine. Agatha's mantra of 'faster, faster'<sup>130</sup> is, Allen argues, 'not only an ironic comment upon her own life but also a parodic reference to the principal Futurist obsession.'<sup>131</sup> Agatha's 'vile body' is not immediately noticeable in the image, she is reduced to a featureless silhouette and it is the car, exploding from the page surrounded by smoke clouds and jagged shapes which immediately catches the eye. That the car remains the focal point of the image seems to reference Marinetti's obsession with the automobile, yet where a car crash should be the catalyst for Marinetti's awakening to the radical ideas he set forth in the *Manifesto*, for Agatha, her crash is terminal. As Allen notes, 'far from being reborn, she staggers half senseless out of the wreckage and begins her steady decline toward death'.<sup>132</sup> The cover is Waugh at his most macabre. Comparisons can be made to the *Oxford Broom* cover, in that both images are punctuated with jagged shapes and lines, they show the same flailing hands and impending doom, but the cover of *Vile Bodies* does not have the levity of rocking horses; the vehicle of destruction here is very real. As Stannard notes in his

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<sup>129</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 199.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>131</sup> Brooke Allen, 'Vile Bodies: A Futurist Fantasy', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40.3 (1994), 318–28 (p. 325).

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.



introduction to the *Complete Works* edition of *Vile Bodies*, it was ‘the unhappy child of the worst period of Waugh’s life, [and] took its place in his *oeuvre* as the first of his “serious” tragi-comedies’.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, ed. by Martin Stannard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. lvii.

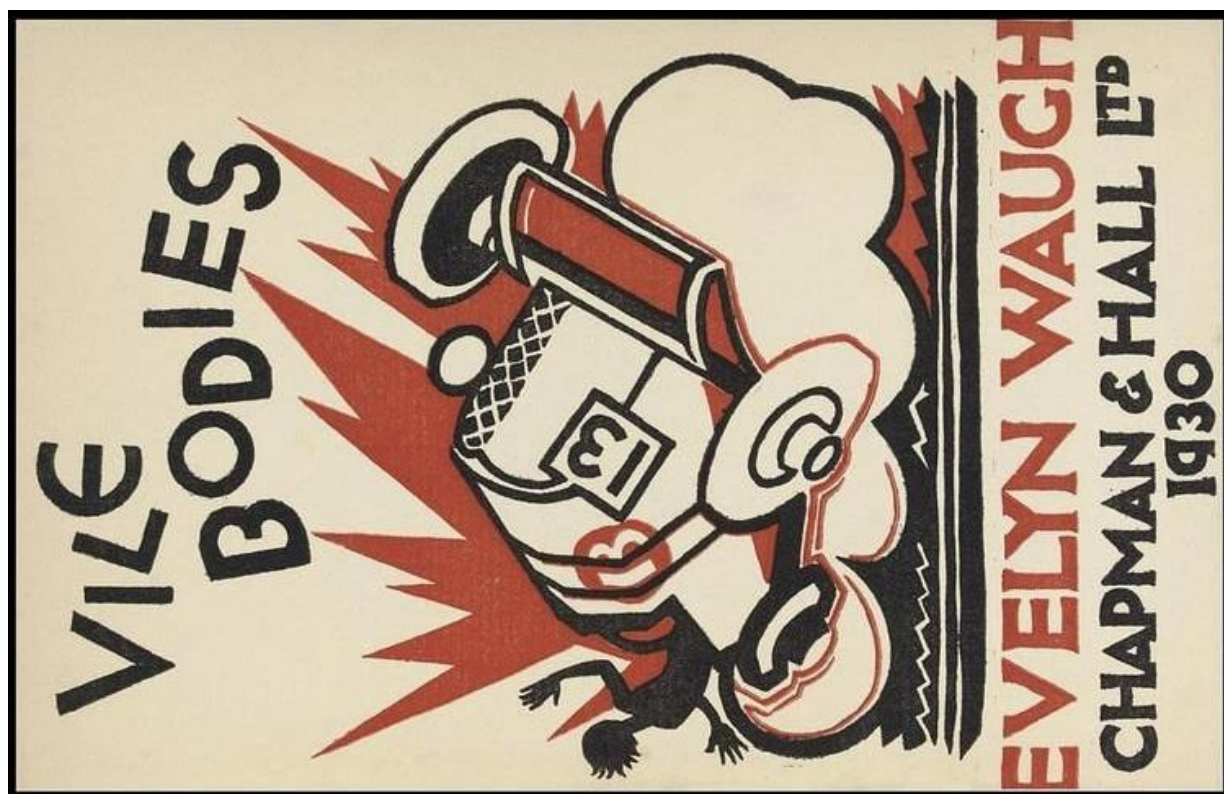


Fig. 51. Chapman and Hall first edition of *Vile Bodies*.

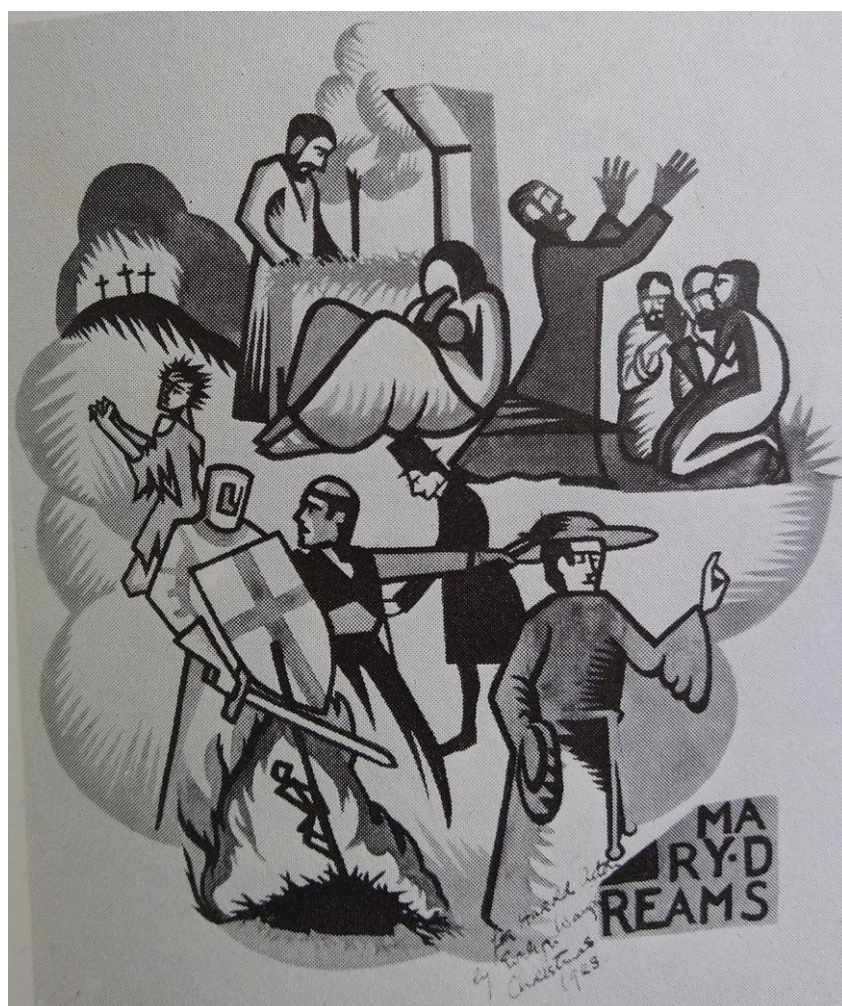


Fig. 52. Pen and ink Christmas card illustration by Evelyn Waugh, 1923.

Waugh's 1932 novel *Black Mischief* is a satire based on his experiences of travelling in East and Central Africa. In his 1962 preface to the novel Waugh claims that:

The scene of the novel was a fanciful confusion of many territories. It was natural for people to suppose that it derived from Abyssinia, at that time the sole independent native monarchy [...]. There was never the smallest resemblance between Seth and the Emperor Haile Selassie.<sup>134</sup>

This was hardly the case, as we shall see. The illustrations Waugh produced for *Black Mischief* fall roughly into two categories: the overtly satirical and the illustrative. When Waugh depicts the Azanians his style tends towards grotesque caricature, whereas the depictions of British characters are simply illustrative. Waugh probably saw no difference between his caricature of Le Corbusier in *Decline and Fall* and his image of Seth, Emperor of Azania that is used as the frontispiece of *Black Mischief*. That is not to say that it is not deeply racist, because it most certainly is, but it belongs to a culture of insensitivity that is difficult to relate to in the twenty-first century. As Jonathan Greenberg argues, 'The transgressive satiric comedy of *Black Mischief* escapes the control of its own author and thus invites charges of immorality and cruelty'.<sup>135</sup> There has however, been a worrying trend in criticism of *Black Mischief* that suggests that Waugh's 'quest to satirize the modern, to scorn the human race, to show that we are fallen and without God' by leaving 'no race, gender or class unscathed'<sup>136</sup> is somehow justifiable. This may or may not be the case in terms of the literary satire of *Black Mischief*, but it is certainly untrue of the illustrative satire in which white characters are spared the exaggerated features applied to the black characters. His illustration of Seth comes from a tradition of white Western depictions of African people that is intended to dehumanise and disenfranchise.

In 'H.I.M. Seth of Azania from the painting by a native artist' (see fig. 53) Seth's face has exaggerated lips and eyes that reference the 'blackface' makeup of white performers in minstrel shows originating from the United States. 'Blackface'

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<sup>134</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief* (1933; London: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 5.

<sup>135</sup> Jonathan Greenberg, 'Cannibals and Catholics: Reading the Reading of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*', *Modernist Cultures*, 2.2 (2006), 115–37 (p. 118).

<sup>136</sup> Constance Watson, 'Waugh of Words: The Misguided Attacks on 'Black Mischief'', 2017 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20170704181427/https://heatst.com/culture-wars/waugh-of-words-the-misguided-pc-attacks-on-black-mischief/>> [accessed 10 July 2018].

was also reproduced in Britain through the popular 'Golliwog' doll that was based on the appearance of the minstrels. Furthermore the upper part of Seth's face is almost exactly replicated in the face of the lion at his feet: the arched brows, concentric eyes and irises, suggesting that Seth is somehow animalistic. Mike Cole points out that this association was disseminated through Britain's educational system from the height of the British Empire onwards: 'the African subjects of the colonies were racialized, in school textbooks, as 'fierce savages'.<sup>137</sup> In contrast, Waugh has chosen to depict Seth in Western clothing. He wears a suit with a dandyish flower in his buttonhole, a polka-dot tie and displays his Oxford University credentials proudly on a table next to the Azanian flag. Instead of a sceptre and orb to indicate his royalty, Seth holds a firing rifle and orb. This is Waugh's attempt to ridicule Seth's enthusiasm for Western customs, the firing gun, which Michael L. Ross describes as the 'talisman of Western know-how and command'<sup>138</sup>, symbolising the lack of control he has over the signifiers of the supposedly 'civilised' world. The novel makes this point too, as it is the introduction of 'such Western amenities as railroads, Montessori schools and birth control'<sup>139</sup> that directly cause the disintegration of Azania, satirising the Western zeal for progress at any cost.

Another problematic illustration can be found in the first chapter of the novel. 'General Connolly at Ukaka from the painting by a native artist' (see fig. 54) is reminiscent of Waugh's childhood drawings of battle scenes. Connolly, pictured with sword aloft, recalls 'Cossacks wipe out Turkish artillery', (see fig 5) though the style here has matured into the clean precision of 'The Tragical Death of Mr. Will Huskisson' (see fig. 21). Like many other Waugh drawings from this period, the practice of perspective is largely ignored in favour of a 'full' composition with minimal overlapping. 'General Connolly ...' is framed by a rounded outline that helps to lead the eye around the various different pieces of action in the image. This image continues the racial stereotyping Waugh sets up at the start of *Black Mischief*. General Connolly appears at first to have an over-emphasized open-

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<sup>137</sup> 'The United Kingdom', in *Racism*, ed. by Mike Cole, A Critical Analysis (Pluto Press, 2016), pp. 27–86 (p. 31).

<sup>138</sup> Michael L. Ross, *Race Riots: Comedy and Ethnicity in Modern British Fiction* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), p. 77.

<sup>139</sup> Greenberg, 'Cannibals and Catholics', p. 119.

mouthed facial expression, but examination of the text reveals this is in fact his moustache. The faces of the Azanian soldiers however have the same exaggerated lips as in the illustration of Seth. Waugh describes the infantry as having:

Lee-Enfield rifles with fixed bayonets slung on their shoulders; fuzzy heads, jolly nigger-minstrel faces, black chests shining through buttonless tunics, pockets bulging with loot. Dividing these guardsmen from the irregular troops rode General Connolly [...] on this morning his appearance was rather that of a lost explorer than a conquering commander-in-chief. He had a week's growth of reddish beard below his cavalry moustaches.<sup>140</sup>

It is interesting too, that in both the drawing of Seth, and of this battle scene, Waugh adds the subtitle 'from the painting by a native artist'. Waugh claimed that Seth was not based on Emperor Haile Selassie, yet the frontispiece to *Remote People* shows Selassie in much the same pose as Seth, with the subtitle 'From the painting by a native artist.' In *Black Mischief* Waugh uses this phrase to distance himself from the two most offensive illustrations in the book. It also creates tension between the idea of fact and fiction in the novel. *Black Mischief* clearly has its inspiration in the political climate of Africa in the early 1930s and this illusion of Waugh taking inspiration for his work from an existing painting slyly hints at this without being explicit.

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<sup>140</sup> Waugh, *Black Mischief*, p. 35.



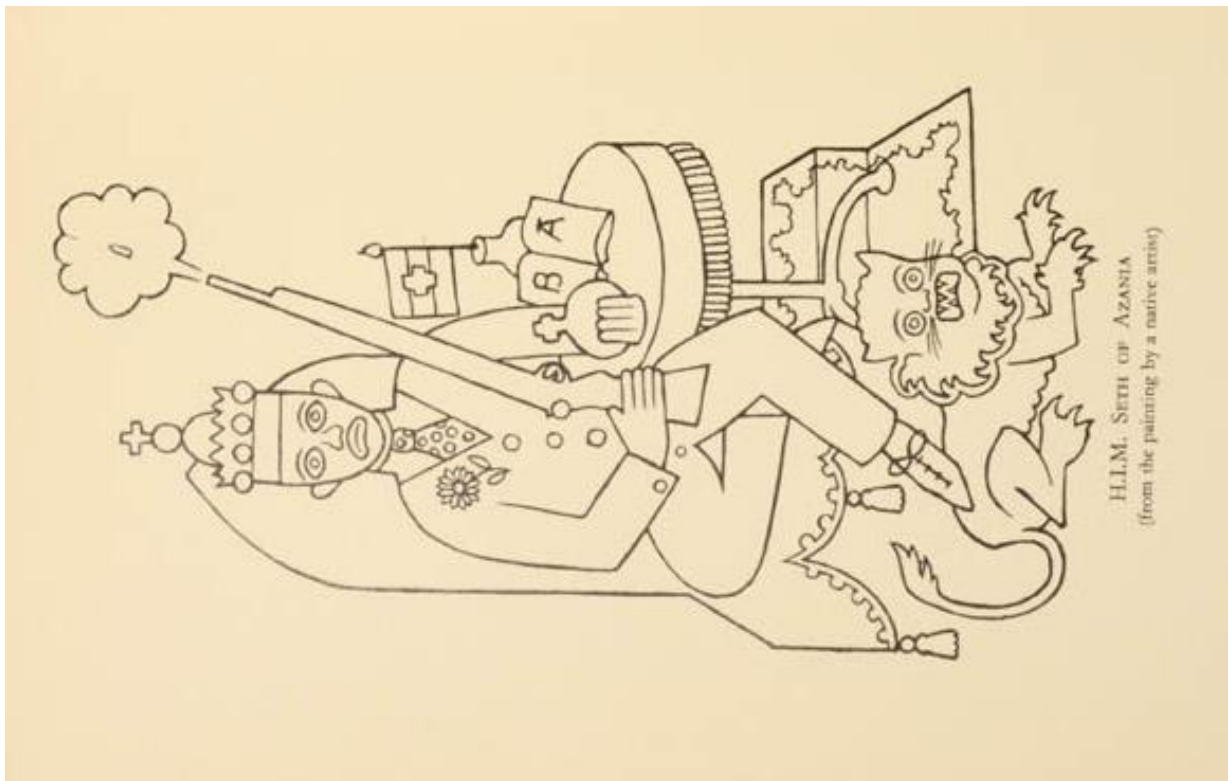


Fig. 53. Pen and ink illustration 'H.I.M Seth of Azania (from the painting by a native artist)' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.

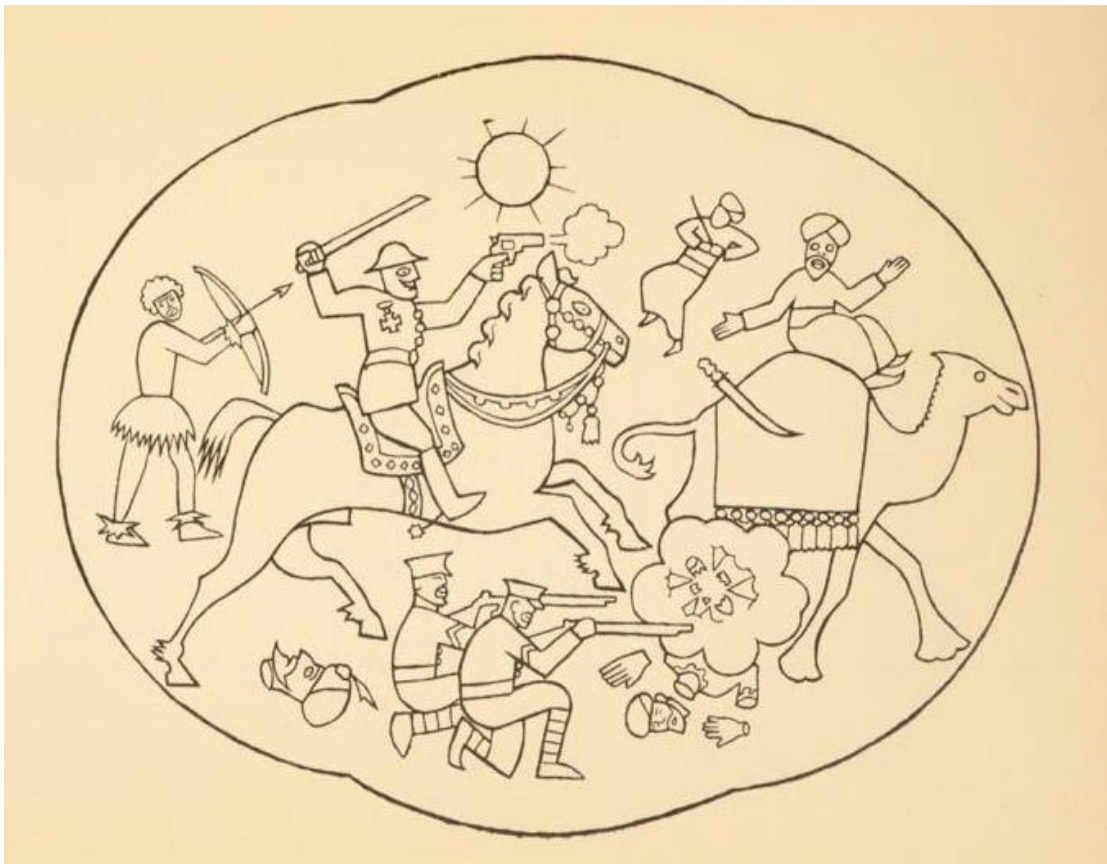


Fig. 54. Pen and ink illustration 'General Connolly at Ukaka (from the painting by a native artist)' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.



The majority of the remaining illustrations for *Black Mischief* are not caricatures. Both 'Prudence and William' (see fig. 55) and 'Basil' (fig. 56) show Waugh at his artistic best. Evolving the style he used in *Decline and Fall*, Waugh has added extra dimension to his work through the use of thinner internal lines in addition to the simple outline. This is also apparent in 'Viscount Boaz and Mme Fifi Fatim Bey at the Victory Ball at the Perroquet', 'Map of the Azanian Empire', 'Frightful hotel. But Armenian proprietor v. obliging', 'Basil rode to Gulu' and 'Destination unknown'. 'Frightful hotel' (see fig. 57) and 'Basil rode to Gulu' (see fig. 58) both include stylised cacti, an image which clearly attracted Waugh, as it also appears in a recently discovered illustration from 1929 (see fig. 59). Exhibited at the Maggs Brother's show in 2017, and reproduced in Martin Stannard's edition of *Vile Bodies*,<sup>141</sup> this untitled piece features a comic juxtaposition between the fleshy appearance of the statue in the bottom right-hand corner and the prickly cactus that mirrors its contrapposto stance. The cactus was a relatively new addition to the gardens and interiors of British homes when Waugh drew them in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, they were described with a certain degree of distrust and wonder in contemporary newspapers, 'GIANT CACTUS. Plant That Lives for Years Without Food'<sup>142</sup> reads one *Daily Mail* headline from 1923 and it appears that many exotic plants were imported in preparation for the British Empire Exhibition,<sup>143</sup> no doubt the first major display of cacti. Waugh attended the Exhibition in 1924 with Alastair Graham<sup>144</sup> so it is possible he saw them there.

When the cactus appears in *Black Mischief* it is to emphasise the cultural otherness of the African landscape. In 'Basil rode to Gulu' we see the intrepid Mr Seal in local dress on the back of a camel. He is dwarfed by the vegetation of the jungle, which Waugh has depicted with sinuous, overlapping lines which emphasise the alien environment. Yet the types of cactus Waugh includes in the composition, the desert gem, the golden barrow, and the *Pilocereus Repandus* are not native to Uganda, and would certainly not be growing in the jungle. Instead they are used as a signifier of strangeness. Similarly, 'Frightful hotel ...' has its own signifiers of strangeness: it is plastered with signs for different alcoholic drinks in

<sup>141</sup> Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, p. lxxxvi.

<sup>142</sup> Anonymous, 'Giant Cactus', *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 20 July 1923, p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous, 'Tropical Flora for London', *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 26 September 1923, p. 11.

<sup>144</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 172.

various languages that recall the Marseille street signs in *Decline and Fall*'s 'All the street seemed to be laughing at him', a family of turkeys appear to have the run of the building, and there are cobwebs in the doorframe. All this adds to the incongruity of the 'GRAND' moniker above the doorway, and as if to top it all off, Waugh has included a small potted cactus on the windowsill. If cacti are useful shorthand for otherness in Waugh's illustrations then its appearance in the 1929 untitled illustration has significance beyond its visual comedic properties. It is the symbol of an increasingly globalised world, but as we can see with the inherent prejudices of Waugh's art, where black characters are so readily caricatured, it is not always a comfortable world in which to exist.

This did not prevent Waugh from aligning his own 'otherness' with the symbol of the cactus though; he uses it as both a comic and subversive device in 'The Balance'. In a game played at Adam's expense, Basil declares that if Adam were a plant he would be a cactus:

"Why Cactus?"

"So phallic, my dear, and prickly."

"And such vulgar flowers."<sup>145</sup>

As Adam is a partially autobiographical creation, this exchange reveals something about how Waugh saw himself in the mid-1920s. Both sexually suggestive, but simultaneously uncomfortable with his sexual identity, Waugh developed a prickly exterior to protect himself. As he wrote to Diana Cooper, '[Pomposity] is nearly always an absolutely private joke – one against the world. The last line of defence.'<sup>146</sup> With this in mind, the inclusion of cacti in these three illustrations can also be read as a type of self-portrait, the alien and off-putting qualities of the cactus standing also for the author who never quite felt as though he belonged. Such aloofness, Kathleen Emmet Darman argues, 'came to reflect his distaste for the modern world. But in his best work he creates a tension between the two: between his strong sense of tradition and the pleasure he took in assaulting it.'<sup>147</sup> The cactus may "prickle" at its surroundings, but it demands space in them all the same.

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<sup>145</sup> Waugh, 'The Balance', p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> EW to Diana Cooper, 21 December 1949. ALS, will be published in *CWEW* vol. XXXVI.

<sup>147</sup> Kathleen Emmet Darman, 'The World of Evelyn Waugh', *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-), 2.2 (1978), 162–67 (p. 167).

These 'self portraits' go some way to emphasise the distance Waugh wished to make between himself and his work from *Decline and Fall* onwards. In his early artistic work Waugh was less afraid of exposing himself emotionally through the tortured medium of the Expressionist woodcut but then realised that by containing the chaos of the world in the neat expression of his single line drawings, Waugh ensures that though his characters may frequently lose their way, he, can remain (as Wilmot Davies and Black argue in 'Frankly Speaking'), the safely detached narrator in 'an upper window looking down'.<sup>148</sup>

'The Balance' is an important work precisely because it marks the moment Waugh channelled his frustrations at the artistic profession into a detached, multiple-narrative piece of writing that foreshadows his later literary experimentation in *Vile Bodies*. As we have seen, Waugh may have been intending to illustrate some of the more painfully autobiographical sections of 'The Balance', and the fact that he did not is telling of the relationship he perceived between image and reality. His drawings then, like his writing, are Waugh's way of controlling and making sense of the world, and like his collection of Victorian paintings, were only shown on his own terms.

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<sup>148</sup> Evelyn Waugh and others, 'Frankly Speaking Interview', in *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, 525–37 (p. 532).

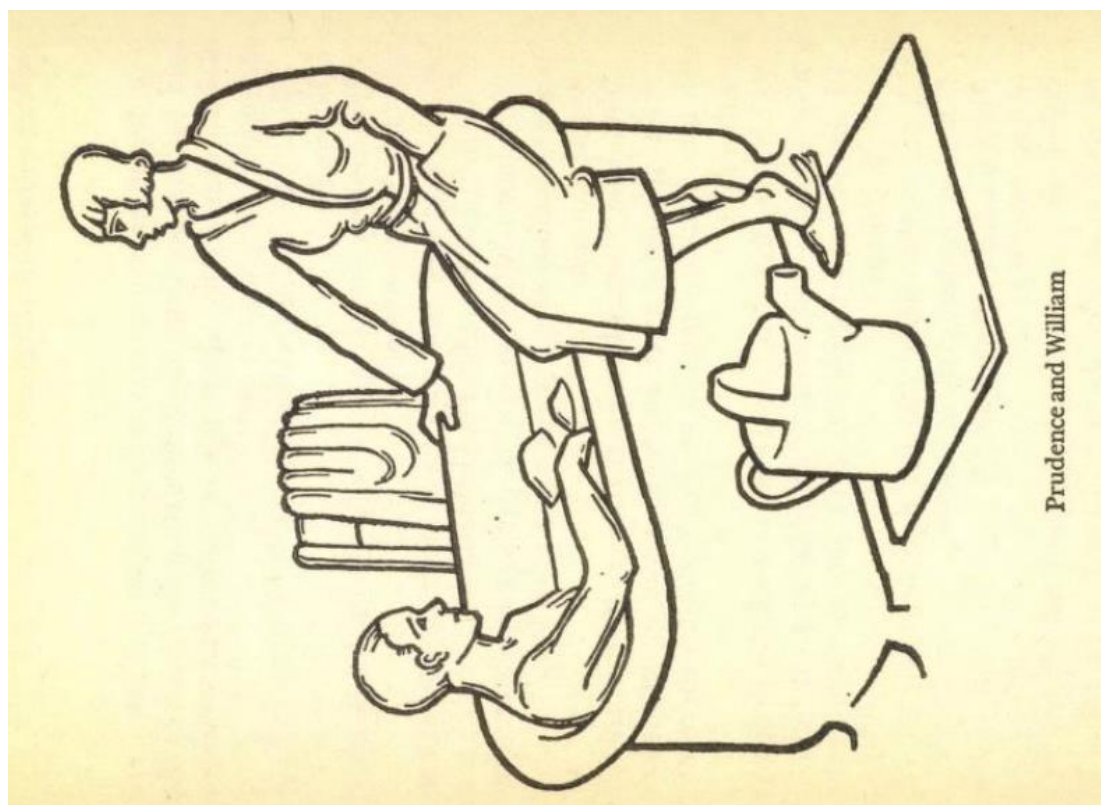


Fig. 55. Pen and ink illustration 'Prudence and William' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.

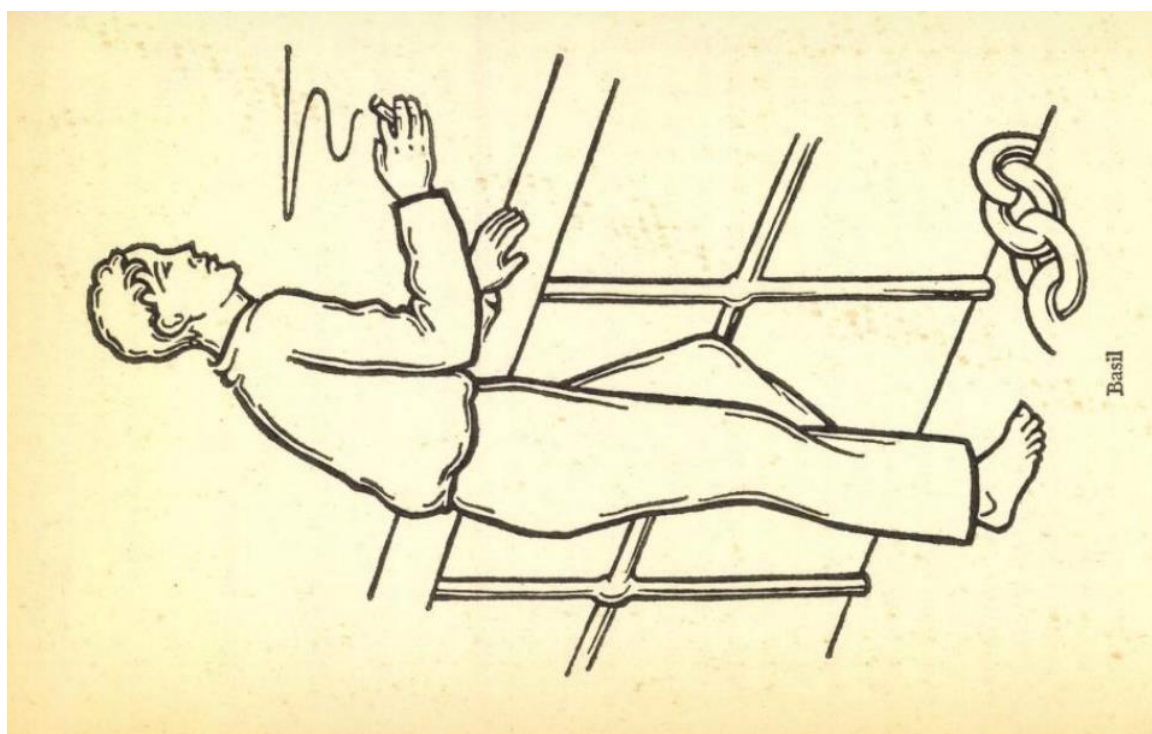


Fig. 56. Pen and ink illustration 'Basil' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.



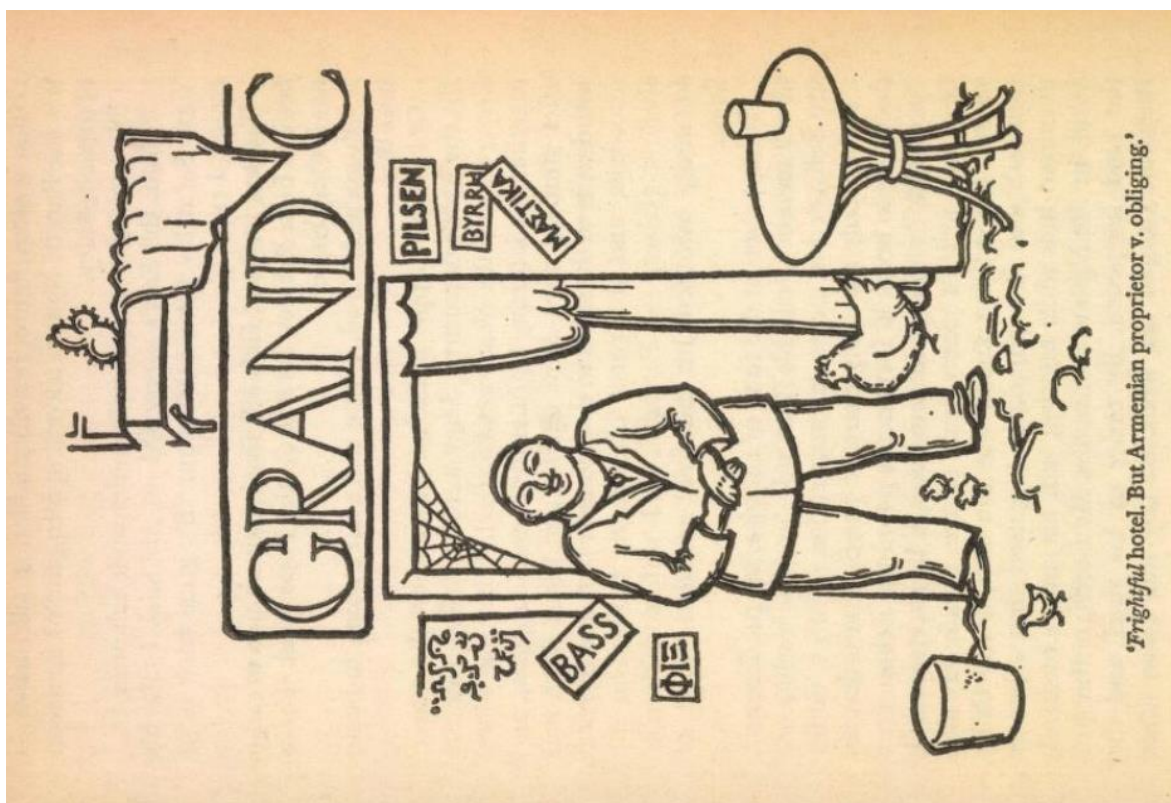


Fig. 57. Pen and ink illustration 'Frightful hotel. But Armenian proprietor v. obliging' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.

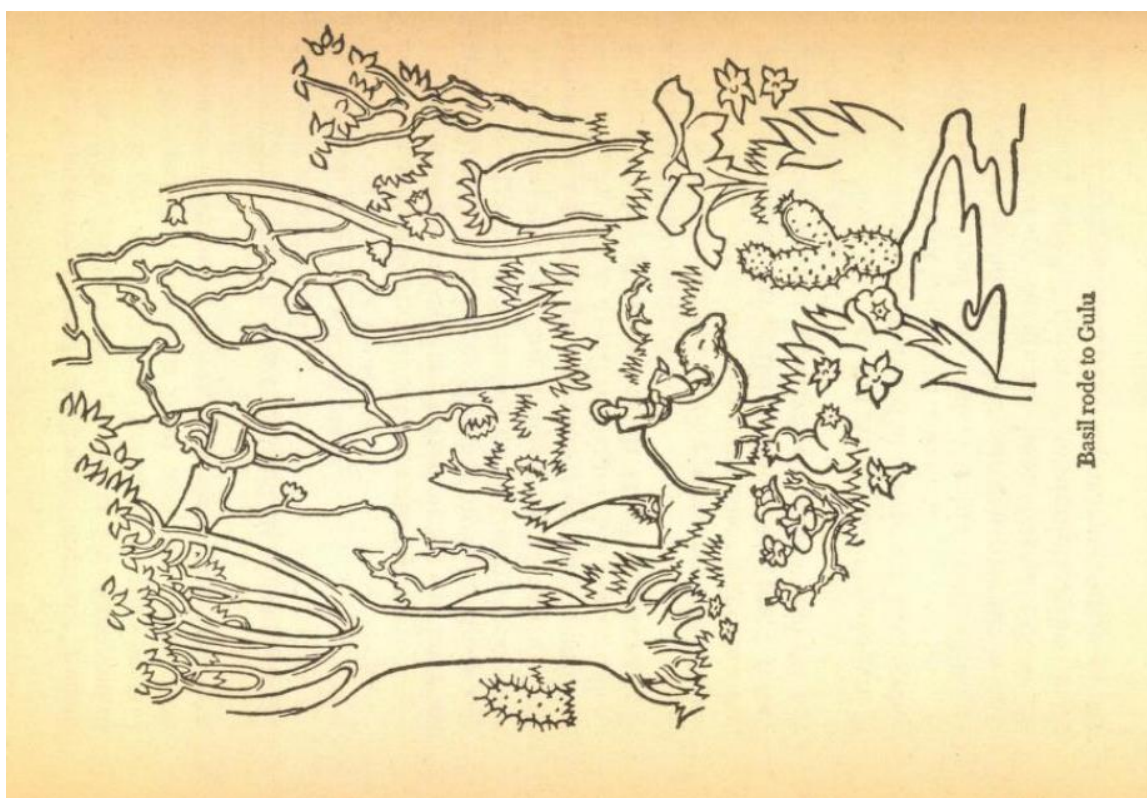


Fig. 58. Pen and ink illustration 'Basil rode to Gulu' for *Black Mischief* by Evelyn Waugh, 1932.





### Chapter 3 – Architecture I

This chapter provides an overview of Waugh's critical thinking on architecture through his novels, short stories, non-fiction articles, letters and diary entries before the Second World War. It plots the development of his ideas, from his early quasi-Modernist leanings, and dislike of the architectural inconsistencies of Underhill, his childhood home, up to his gradual acceptance in *Work Suspended* (1942) of the Victorian styles favoured by his father's generation. However, as with much of Waugh's appreciation of the visual arts, this transition is not simply a case of his taste maturing. Despite his rejection of the progressive modern architecture of the inter- and post-war years, Waugh's tastes remained idiosyncratic and eccentric, often out of step with even the dominant conservative zeitgeist. Alexandra Harris argues that Waugh's friend, John Betjeman is also 'synonymous with an idiosyncratic brand of nostalgic conservatism, but to get there he went through a series of complicated negotiations which were not idiosyncratic but characteristic of an age.'<sup>1</sup> She considers his divided aesthetic allegiances in the 1930s to exemplify the 'whole Janus-faced decade, looking out on both curlicues and voids',<sup>2</sup> and perhaps this is a useful way to approach Waugh's own attitude to architectural developments, caught, as it were, between those same curlicues and voids.

There are various discussions around architecture in existing Waugh scholarship; Harris suggests that Waugh's interest in the preservation of Victorian railings points to a desire for privacy, and this is also apparent in Waugh's repeated criticism of apartment living, particularly in *A Handful of Dust* and *Work Suspended*. Martin Stannard argues that Waugh's faith also drove his need for solitude, and so the changes to physical spaces in Catholic buildings after the Vatican II reforms in 1962 (discussed in chapter four) were understandably unsettling. Having unprecedented access to Waugh's unpublished letters and diary entries has allowed me to develop these arguments further, particularly in reference to Waugh's thoughts on the infiltration of modern architectural forms in ecclesiastical architecture. Other critics of Waugh's work, such as David Rothstein,

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 44.

have concentrated on the chapel at Brideshead Castle as a symbolic link to the ancient traditions of Catholicism and a way for Charles Ryder to understand the house, and by extension the Flyte family. George McCartney also writes on *Brideshead Revisited*, arguing that Ryder's impulse to paint aristocratic houses before their demolition is a way for both the character and Waugh to record a fast disappearing social and physical landscape. This thesis brings ideas of religion, privacy and craftsmanship together in order to create a broader understanding of Waugh's approach to architecture in the light of the aesthetic theories discussed in chapters one and two. The following chapters also offer a comprehensive analysis of Waugh's fictional and non-fictional writing on architecture in greater detail than has previously been attempted.

There is an ongoing tension in Waugh's pre-Second World War writing. In his opinion the rationalist style of Georgian architecture, with its emphasis on symmetry and logical use of space, and the functional, but not functionalist Arts and Crafts movement were incompatible with the ideals of modern architecture. However there are common threads that run throughout these movements that will be discussed in depth below, and which make this ideology problematic. Indeed, such tensions come to define Waugh's aesthetic, one trapped between the romanticism of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the rationality of Roger Fry, as established in the introduction to this thesis.

It was not that Waugh objected to the modern because it was modern, but rather because the designs of Le Corbusier, Amyas Connell and Wells Coates did not appear to him to adhere to the tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement he admired with its emphasis on handcraftsmanship, natural materials and rejection of industrialisation and machinery in the creation and construction of their furniture and buildings. It is ironic therefore that the work of Arts and Crafts architect C.F.A. Voysey should now be considered a precursor to Modernism in architecture. Indeed, it has even been argued that modern architecture 'tried to follow the morality of the Arts and Crafts movement in avoiding a split between outward appearance and inner structural truth.'<sup>3</sup> J. Mordaunt Crook may claim that the Arts and Crafts house, 'child of the Gothic Revival, unwilling ancestor of the

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<sup>3</sup> Alan Powers, *Modern: The Modern Movement in Britain* (London and New York: Merrell, 2007), p. 11.

Modern Movement [...] summed up an eternal ambivalence in English aesthetics: puritan instincts and romantic yearnings',<sup>4</sup> but it was, as William Whyte argues, 'a self-consciously spare style: stripped of all ornament, expressing its construction in its façade, and revealing its function in its form.'<sup>5</sup> In short, the followers of the Arts and Crafts movement were concerned with the truth and simplicity of their materials, and any excess ornamentation would have obscured the purity of their vision.

Equally, the Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius emphasised the importance of 'the conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen'<sup>6</sup> when it came to rescuing the arts from isolation in the Weimar era. In 'Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar' (1919) Gropius wrote:

Architects, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! For art is not a "profession." There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art.<sup>7</sup>

Waugh may mock the Bauhaus in *Decline and Fall* (1928) but Gropius's statement about the similarity of the artist and the craftsman is compatible with Waugh's own thinking on the subject, further complicating the relationship between Modern architecture and the earlier movements, such as the Arts and Crafts movement, whose principles Waugh found more palatable. *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957) makes his reasoning quite clear; the eponymous and autobiographical Pinfold regards 'his books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself to be used and judged by others.'<sup>8</sup>

Waugh recognised that by the 1930s the popular attitude toward 'quaintness' in architecture was becoming hostile. In *Labels* (1930) he is unashamed of enjoying the 'picturesque bits' of Naples, which might otherwise be the cause for disdain in England:

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<sup>4</sup> J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London: John Murray, 1989), p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> William Whyte, 'The Englishness of English Architecture: Modernism and the Making of a National International Style, 1927-1957', *Journal of British Studies*, 48.2 (2009), 441-65 (p. 446).

<sup>6</sup> Walter Gropius, 'Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar', in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, trans. by Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 435-38 (p. 435).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>8</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1998), p. 5. Hereafter *TOOGP*.

The detestation of 'quaintness' and 'picturesque bits' which is felt by every decently constituted Englishman, is, after all, a very insular prejudice. It has developed naturally in self-defence against arts and crafts, and the preservation of rural England, and the preservation of ancient monuments, and the transplantation of Tudor cottages, and the collection of pewter and old oak, and the reformed public house, and the Ye Olde Inne and the Kynde Dragone and Ye Cheshire Cheese [...] free love in a cottage,<sup>9</sup> [...] letters to *The Times* about saving timbered alms-houses from destruction ...<sup>10</sup>

He concedes that 'It is inevitable that English taste, confronted with all these frightful menaces to its integrity, should have adopted an uncompromising attitude to anything the least tainted with ye oldeness.'<sup>11</sup> Waugh also expressed his generation's horror, which he calls 'the Spirit of the Age', of the so-called Merrie England movement, 'the "ye olde" picturesque'<sup>12</sup> in an article published in *Passing Show* in 1929. John Betjeman felt a similar unease with historic architecture being reduced to 'tea shop Tudor', but, as Humphrey Carpenter argues, Betjeman and his friends did not hate Tudor Revival 'just because it was false, but because it was a symbol of the bad taste of their parents' generation, a kitsch offshoot of the Arts and Crafts movement, rather than a serious expression of either art or history.'<sup>13</sup> Tudor Revival is also unashamedly suburban in practice, the suburbs being the place where one might find a vast majority of houses whose 'sham half-timber work [...] flaunts its manorial make-believe.'<sup>14</sup> Simply, the half-timbered aesthetic of Tudor Revival 'did not express the truth about its means of construction, and therefore was not serious architecture.'<sup>15</sup> Peter Mandler argues that:

The decay, dismemberment and invasion of the old English countryside in the 1920s threw its aesthetic and intellectual advocates into considerable confusion. Some, like H. J.

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<sup>9</sup> Probably referring to Charleston House, home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, where they were regularly visited by members of the Bloomsbury Group, and conducted various love affairs. It is elaborately decorated with their art.

<sup>10</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Labels: A Mediterranean Journal* (1930; London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> Waugh, 'Too Young at Forty: Youth Calls to the Peter Pans of Middle-Age Who Block the Way', in *EAR*, pp. 45–47 (p. 47).

<sup>13</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation: Evelyn Waugh and His Friends* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 211.

<sup>14</sup> J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia* (1946; London: John Murray, 1973), p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law, 'Tudoresque Vernacular and the Self-Reliant Englishman', in *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular*, ed. by Peter Guillery (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 123–44 (p. 123).

Massingham and J. C. Squire, recoiled into what Clough Williams-Ellis called their “private paradises”, deep retreats into the backwoods or embittered nostalgia.<sup>16</sup>

Thus another reason this style would naturally be unappealing to Waugh and Betjeman, who both maintained the aesthetic superiority of Georgian architecture, can be found in what J.M. Richards<sup>17</sup> terms the ‘suburb’s ‘fancy-dress styles’ which were ‘dependent for their effects as much on romantic associations as on sophisticated architectural design [and] supplanted the autumnal classic to which the Regency was still largely bound.’<sup>18</sup> Richards does, however, maintain that ‘taste has not failed’ with the Tudor Revival, ‘because taste was never exercised. The style is a builder’s vernacular.’<sup>19</sup> For these reasons, Waugh’s generation had good cause to turn away from the inauthenticity of the ‘Merrie England’ aesthetic.

Betjeman’s *Ghastly Good Taste* (1933), contains the argument that: ‘Most people who were small children when the 1914 war started and with an interest in buildings, will have had similar aesthetic experiences’.<sup>20</sup> It claims, somewhat erroneously, that there was a universal inclination toward Georgian architecture and away from the Modern for members of Waugh and Betjeman’s generation, yet Charles Ryder, Waugh’s alter ego, in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) recalls his childhood days in a different fashion, perhaps hinting at Waugh’s own early appreciation of modernism in the Fry mould:

Since the days when, as a schoolboy, I used to bicycle round the neighbouring parishes, rubbing brasses and photographing fonts, I had nursed a love of architecture, but, though in opinion I had made that easy leap, characteristic of my generation, from the puritanism of Ruskin to the puritanism of Roger Fry, my sentiments were insular and medieval.<sup>21</sup>

Waugh and Betjeman visited Sezincote House together in 1930, during the time Betjeman was writing for the *Architectural Review*. Waugh found the house ‘[...] quite lovely. Regency Indian style like Brighton Pavilion only everything in

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 265.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting too that Richards’s book on the subject of the suburbs, *The Castles on the Ground* (1946) was republished in 1973, among other architectural books from the first part of the Twentieth Century, including John Betjeman’s own *Ghastly Good Taste* (1933), republished in 1970. This trend in architectural publishing suggests the increasing interest of the nation in the history of British architecture in the 1970s, and in preserving “good architecture” (particularly Georgian architecture) which is highly acclaimed in both these books.

<sup>18</sup> Richards, *The Castles on the Ground*, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste or a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (1933; London: Anthony Blond, 1970), p. xiv.

<sup>21</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 79. Hereafter *BR*.

Cotswold stone instead of plaster.’<sup>22</sup> In fact, Sezincote predated John Nash’s addition of the distinctive domes of Brighton Pavilion by around four years, the Prince Regent using Sezincote as a model by which to make changes to the Pavilion. In September the same year Waugh stayed at Pakenham Hall along with Betjeman but noted that he ‘became a bore rather with Irish peers and revivalist hymns and his enthusiasm for every sort of architecture.’<sup>23</sup> He goes on to mock Lord Dunsany for thinking his ‘very nice eighteenth century Gothic house is genuine mediaeval.’ Waugh may have been exaggerating Betjeman’s enthusiasm, or possibly misinterpreting what Carpenter identified as Betjeman’s being ‘the first writer to discover that bad buildings are profoundly funny. Because he wrote about them with humorous delight, it began to be assumed that he genuinely liked them.’<sup>24</sup> However, for all Waugh’s exasperation with his friend’s seemingly indiscriminating architectural taste, Betjeman’s representations of architecture in his creative and editorial works create an interesting parallel to Waugh’s own. Both writers had a similar education; attended Oxford; were interested in the decay of the country house; and both experienced feelings of exclusion from the rarefied circles they moved in. It became, in a way, vital for these young men to demonstrate an understanding of the houses they were visiting with an architectural eye than that of their hosts. Waugh’s mocking of Lord Dunsany not only established him as the ‘puck’<sup>25</sup> figure he so enjoyed playing, but also placed him on a higher intellectual plane.

Thus Waugh’s architectural taste can be seen as both a sympathetic reaction to the workmanlike functionality of the Arts and Crafts movement, and influenced by the general aesthetic ambivalence of the inter-war period. The rational classicism of Georgian architecture also had a distinct appeal, and functioned for Waugh as a sensible counterpoint to the disruption caused by the Modernist impulse in both architecture and literature.

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<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 332.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>24</sup> Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation*, p. 211.

<sup>25</sup> Lady Dorothy Lygon makes this comparison of Waugh to Shakespeare’s mischievous sprite in her recollection of his time spent at Madresfield in 1930. ‘Any detail of daily life amused him and was something to be embellished [...] it was like having Puck as a member of the household. Lady Dorothy Lygon, ‘Madresfield and Brideshead’, in *Evelyn Waugh and His World*, ed. by David Pryce-Jones (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), pp. 50–57 (p. 50).



Such a distinctly reactionary standpoint against the modern took some time to develop. This can be seen in Waugh's early writing on the architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, better known by his pseudonym, Le Corbusier. Evelyn Waugh and Le Corbusier are not names that are commonly associated with each other, and they would certainly not be considered to share the same ethos. However Waugh made his first serious appraisal of architecture in his 1929 review of Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow* (1924). It is important to clarify that Le Corbusier did not actually design any buildings in Britain, and in fact the Modern developments in architecture on the Continent, Powers notes, 'that we now recognize as the essential groundwork of Modernism were [...] almost totally ignored by British publications until the 1920s.'<sup>26</sup> Le Corbusier's works *The City of Tomorrow* (1924) and *Towards a New Architecture* (1923) were only translated into English in the late 1920s.

Although Modernist architects like Le Corbusier did not have direct involvement with British architecture, he still managed, as Irena Murray points out, to 'attract the wrath of the British public, who blamed him for the profusion of high-rise projects that took over the English landscape in the course of post-war reconstruction.'<sup>27</sup> Many of these Corbusian-inspired projects became hotspots for crime and social unrest in the succeeding decades, thus it is unsurprising that mainstream British opinion would tend this way. By the 1970s negative attitudes about high-rise units were rife. J.G. Ballard's dystopian novel *High Rise* (1975) and the *Horizon* documentary, *The Writing on the Wall* (1974), which discussed Oscar Newman's 'defensible space'<sup>28</sup> theory in relation to several high-rise developments in Britain and the United States, typified the backlash towards these monolithic buildings. *The Times* reported in 1974 of the 'built in' crime wave of tower blocks in Britain and America, reporting on the work of Newman who observed that the structures appeared to cause the 'isolation of flat dwellers so that they no longer feel part of the community. They therefore have no common interest in

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<sup>26</sup> Powers, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Irene Murray, 'Preface and Acknowledgements', in *Le Corbusier and Britain: An Anthology* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), pp. xi–xv (p. xi).

<sup>28</sup> Oscar Newman's theory of defensible space underlines the importance of defining the threshold of public and private in domestic developments, as well as ensuring surveillance of public areas by residents.

safeguarding the surroundings they share.’<sup>29</sup> In 1978 *The Times* reported that ‘Giant high-rise housing estates are the breeding ground for vandalism, and ill planned buildings in a way attract their own destruction. Lifts in a high-rise block belong to no one in particular, and so vandals have fewer inhibitions about damaging them’,<sup>30</sup> again emphasising the disassociation which can develop in such an environment. Waugh was then decades ahead of his time in satirising the Corbusian ideology that devolved into such an unpleasant reality in *Decline and Fall* (1928).

Le Corbusier saw the house as a machine for living, and set forth an argument for this style of architecture in his manifesto *Vers Une Architecture* (1923).<sup>31</sup>

If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regard to the house, and look at the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the “House-Machine,” the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that the working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful.<sup>32</sup>

Waugh responds to this in *Decline and Fall* through Professor Silenus’s<sup>33</sup> theories about the ‘problem of architecture’:

‘The problem of architecture as I see it,’ he told a journalist who had come to report on the progress of his surprising creation of ferro-concrete and aluminium, ‘is the problem of all art – the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form. The only perfect building must be the factory, because that is built to house machines, not men. I do not think it is possible for domestic architecture to be beautiful, but I am doing my best [...]. Man is never beautiful, he is never happy except when he becomes the channel for the distribution of mechanical forces.’<sup>34</sup>

What Le Corbusier hints at with his ‘House-Machine’ is exaggerated to the extreme by Waugh, who uses the same word as Le Corbusier (at least in Etchells’s translation) ‘elimination’ to suggest that a building can only be perfect without

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<sup>29</sup> Peter Evans, ‘The Built-in Crime Wave of Tower Blocks’, *The Times*, 11 February 1974, p. 14 (p. 14).

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Osman, ‘Police Forces Join Efforts to Restrain the Growth of Vandalism’, *The Times*, 12 May 1978, p. 4 (p. 4).

<sup>31</sup> The English translation of this work was first published in 1927.

<sup>32</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. by Frederick Etchells (1923; London: The Architectural Press, 1946), pp. 12–13.

<sup>33</sup> Waugh tells us that Silenus chose to be called ‘Professor Silenus’ in favour of his full name Otto Friedrich Silenus, a reference to Le Corbusier’s own compressed pseudonym, adapted from his grandfather’s surname.

<sup>34</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* (1928; London: Penguin Books, 1937), p. 120.

people inside it. Filip Mattens notes how the development of Modernist architecture happened to coincide with the increasing use of photography,<sup>35</sup> yet despite 'the modernist's fascination with the metropolis [...] it is striking to see how desolate their interior spaces are when photographed. Schools, cinemas, houses and the like are almost always shown as deserted', lacking any signs 'of human occupation.'<sup>36</sup> Thus Silenus's desire to remove the human element may be Waugh's satirical comment on the unrealistic presentation of the inhumane cleanliness of modern architecture. Waugh would develop this point later in *Work Suspended*, pointing out the inherent messiness of the human condition, and its seeming incompatibility with the cleanliness posited as an architectural ideal.

Silenus begins an extended monologue on the shortcomings of man, spurred on by the notion that these awkward creatures must have staircases in their houses.

'I suppose there ought to be a staircase,' he said gloomily. 'Why can't the creatures stay in one place? Up and down, in and out, round and round! Why can't they sit still and work? Do dynamos require staircases? Do monkeys require houses? What an immature, self destructive, antiquated mischief is man!'<sup>37</sup>

It is, of course, a ridiculous stance to take as an architect, but Waugh uses Silenus's flawed mechanical reasoning to light-heartedly satirise at Le Corbusier and his contemporaries, whose influence on British architecture when *Decline and Fall's* was published was beginning to take serious hold.

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<sup>35</sup> Filip Mattens, 'The Aesthetics of Space: Modern Architecture and Photography', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 96.1 (2011), 105–14 (p. 110).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 120–21.



Fig. 1. Pen and ink illustration by Evelyn Waugh for *Decline and Fall*, 1928. (Detail).

Waugh's illustration of the Professor, (see fig. 1) as observed by Douglas Lane Patey,<sup>38</sup> is an obvious caricature of Le Corbusier with his double-breasted jacket, bow tie and round-rimmed glasses. A similar figure can also be found twice in Osbert Lancaster's *A Cartoon History of Architecture* (1975), where, to illustrate what Lancaster terms the 'Twentieth-Century Functional' (see figs. 2 and 3) style, he shows a man wearing round-framed spectacles smoking a pipe, firstly sunbathing on the roof of a house which looks like Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and secondly in a stark interior filled with modern art and furniture. Yet, though Silenus's despair of mankind is, in fact, an inaccurate satirical portrait of the French architect's thinking,<sup>39</sup> Silenus's comment on 'the problem of all art' being 'the elimination of the human element from the consideration of form'<sup>40</sup> is also a way for Waugh to ridicule the more extreme devices of Modernist authors seeking to remove the author from the text. We are informed that Professor Silenus once designed the sets for a 'cinema-film of great length and complexity of plot – a complexity rendered the more inextricable by the producer's austere elimination of all human characters, a fact which had proved fatal to its commercial success',<sup>41</sup> further emphasising Silenus as a character working towards a misanthropic ideal: a world without people.

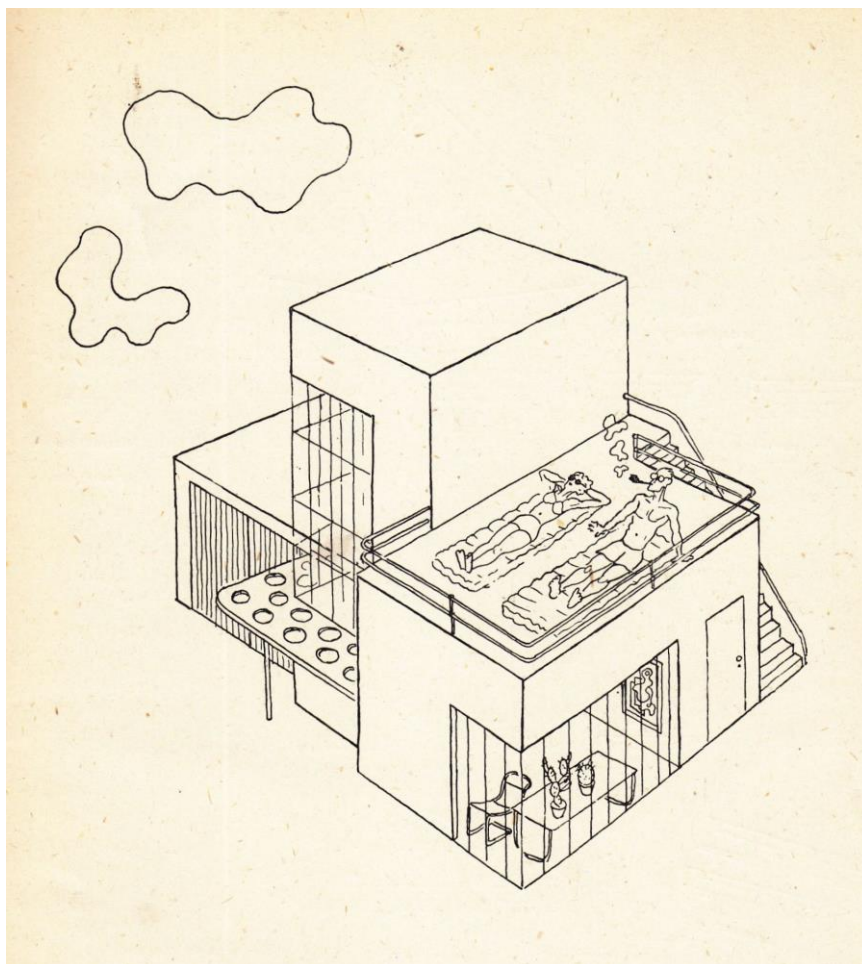
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<sup>38</sup> Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> Though Le Corbusier was inspired by the mechanism and functionality of large-scale factory structures, especially American and Canadian grain stores, he also placed great importance on the human scale of his projects in the 'Modulor' system he developed in the late 1940s which used average male proportions to improve the functionality, and indeed beauty of architectural forms.

<sup>40</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.



Figs. 2 and 3. Osbert Lancaster, 'Twentieth Century Functional' (1938).





Silenus is, in fact, presented as more of a machine than a man, and after his contemplation of the 'maladjusted mechanism' of man, begins to eat a biscuit. Some hours later he is still bringing his empty hand up to his mouth 'with a regular motion, while his empty jaws champed rhythmically; otherwise he was wholly immobile.'<sup>42</sup> Later, Paul imagines him,

lying motionless in the darkness [...] his brain turning and turning regularly all the night through, drawing in more and more power [...] till the atmosphere about it became exhausted and vitiated and only the brain remained turning in the darkness.<sup>43</sup>

In both cases emphasis is put on just one part of the Silenus's body 'moving' while the rest remains motionless. This gives the impression of him as a robot which expends the least possible energy on each task in order to maintain highest efficiency. That his hand should continue rising to and falling from his empty mouth is a clear malfunction, ironizing his tirade against the maladjusted man. Such malfunctionings are Waugh's reminder that Silenus, and presumably Le Corbusier by extension, are not immune to this state of alienated being despite their attempts to 'robotise' the human condition through their architectural vision. Edwin Lutyens's contemporary review of *Towards a New Architecture* betrays similar concerns regarding the 'robotism of architecture'. 'To be a home, the house cannot be a machine. [...] It is more likely that we shall return to the gorilla than become Robots, compelled to live in small enamelled cages' he wrote for *The Observer* in 1928. 'Physical efficiency [...] is not the sole test of a building.'<sup>44</sup>

Several decades later Jacques Tati used the 'maladjusted mechanism' of the modern house to great comedic effect in his 1958 film *Mon Oncle*. The hapless Monsieur Hulot, an eccentric relic from a previous age, is confronted at various points with the modern world, particularly his sister's house, the Villa Arpel. The house has a confusing and impractical layout, requiring the constant rearrangement of its sparse and uncomfortable furniture. As the film progresses the motorised elements of the house, the electronically controlled fountain and garage door, begin to malfunction in increasingly farcical ways.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>44</sup> Edwin Lutyens, 'The Robotism of Architecture', *The Observer* (London, 29 January 1928), p. 9.

But as much as the apparent horrors of Modern architecture are exaggerated in *Mon Oncle* so too is the charming idealism of Monsieur Hulot's neighbourhood, creating a false parallel of past and present architectural styles which also exists in pitting Professor Silenus's vision for King's Thursday against the 'unspoilt' Tudor of the original house. However, Waugh does not mourn the loss of the original King's Thursday, and his mockery of Silenus' re-imagining of the house is without sentimentality and nostalgia for the original. It is made clear that the original house is only an architectural treasure in the sense that it is completely unchanged. This, of course, makes for a highly impractical building: 'No wing had been added, no window filled in; no portico, façade, terrace, orangery, tower or battlement marred its timbered front. In the craze for coal-gas and indoor sanitation, King's Thursday had slept unscathed by plumber or engineer.'<sup>45</sup> Here Waugh is clearly mocking the notion of the 'unspoilt' Tudor house, which in this state is as uninhabitable as the chrome-clad design of Silenus. He is not interested in the functionalist architectural style, but is equally derisive of the original King's Thursday and its utter lack of modern conveniences. Preserving style over substance is therefore not always a positive thing in Waugh's estimation.

Interestingly, Silenus is disappointed with his creation: "I hate and detest every bit of it [...] Nothing I have done has caused me so much disgust".<sup>46</sup> This is perhaps because King's Thursday is not a completely realised incarnation of his fanatically 'inhuman' vision of modern architecture. Indeed, it is suggested that King's Thursday was 'again rebuilt' in the years that follow, Silenus's 'batik tie' being the 'last relic of a great genius'<sup>47</sup> in Margot's household and not the building he designed for her, suggesting that she too was unsatisfied with its design. Once the house is finished, Silenus turns his back on King's Thursday, stating that the underground drains are 'the only tolerable part of the house'.<sup>48</sup> Many years later J. Mordaunt Crook echoed Waugh's criticism when he wrote scathingly of the tendency of Modern architects to put 'Drains before beauty'<sup>49</sup> in his 1987 book *The Dilemma of Style*. Thus in providing Professor Silenus the space to admit

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<sup>45</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 115.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, p. 255.

that his design for King's Thursday was not perfect, that it could not possibly live up to his idealised 'house factory', Waugh makes the character considerably more sympathetic. Indeed, Silenus can be read as a melancholy portrait of a man whose malfunction appears to be that he can never stop moving; the only point he can find to be 'completely at rest'<sup>50</sup> is at the centre of the big wheel at Luna Park.

*Decline and Fall* is humorous and not didactic in its criticism of modern architecture, specifically Le Corbusier, even though it does show the absurd possibilities of an increasingly radical approach to building design. Arthur Potts (Pennyfeather's friend) suggests that Silenus even surpasses Corbusier in architectural innovation and radicalism. Potts describes the new King's Thursday, Mrs Beste-Chetwynde's house and Silenus's current project, as 'the only really *imaginative* building since the French Revolution. He's got right away from Corbusier, anyway.' Potts's foolishness in the rest of the novel suggests that this reading of architecture is likely to be ill-informed, but Pennyfeather makes an intriguing comment in response: "If people realized [...] Corbusier is a pure nineteenth-century, Manchester school utilitarian, and that's why they like him."<sup>51</sup> Here Waugh conflates two definitions of utilitarianism. The architectural utilitarianism exemplified by Le Corbusier's 'form follows function'<sup>52</sup> aesthetic is set against the utilitarian economic theories of the Manchester School<sup>53</sup>, a group who believed in *laissez-faire* capitalism. This theory could be said, just like Corbusian architecture, to make no allowances for any individual's comfort or eccentricity in society and Waugh uses it to make a comment on the irony of the progressive enthusiasts of Le Corbusier's work, who would decry the ugliness of *laissez-faire* capitalism without recognising a similar impulse in modern architecture. Pennyfeather suggests that the style of both Le Corbusier and Silenus's architecture is so reactionary that it is radical. Thus in Waugh's hands Silenus becomes more radical than *the* radical Modernist architect of the early twentieth-century, further emphasising the absurdity of the 'clean and square'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 208.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> Louis H. Sullivan, 'The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered', *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, March 1896, 403–9 (p. 408).

<sup>53</sup> Not to be confused in this instance with the Manchester School of Art.

<sup>54</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 119.

aluminium clad house, which, despite its symbolic function in the novel, is hardly described in detail at all.

Waugh continued his dialogue with Le Corbusier, in his 1929 review of *Urbanisme* (1925) for the *Observer*. He is fairly complimentary of *Urbanisme* or *The City of Tomorrow* as the title was translated in English, commenting that Le Corbusier states the problem of congested modern towns<sup>55</sup> and with 'incisive, Gallic logic expounds his solution, postulating only the technical equipment of modern engineering.'<sup>56</sup> He also seems to admire the architect's lack of nostalgia and sentimentality; Le Corbusier does not, after all, 'presuppose any golden age.'<sup>57</sup> However, Waugh also recognises that Le Corbusier's vision of the modern city is doomed to fail as it is 'indefensible in war, and it presupposes the continued dependence of man upon horizontal methods of transport.'<sup>58</sup> It is a fair criticism of Le Corbusier's idealism and the impossibility of a perpetually modern 'city of tomorrow', but perhaps more importantly it also helps to plot Waugh's shifting architectural credo. It is also important to keep in mind that Waugh never studied town planning, and so his comments on Le Corbusier's work in that sense will always derive from a somewhat limited understanding of the practice.

The latter part of Waugh's review also deals with Dorothy Todd and Raymond Mortimer's *The New Interior Decoration* (1929), which he sees as offering 'a valuable companion to *The City of Tomorrow* on account of its admirable illustrations.'<sup>59</sup> Waugh points out that the photographs are all taken when the rooms are 'completely new and completely tidy' leading him to wonder how Le Corbusier's houses will look 'in a hundred years' time when the patina of the concrete has weathered and the sharp angles have softened, and [...] when a family of normally disorderly habits has lived there for a few years?'<sup>60</sup> Waugh would later answer this question himself in his depiction of high-rise flats in *Work Suspended*, but at this point he is happy to speculate that 'iron furniture bent out of shape

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<sup>55</sup> In 1938 Waugh wrote of his admiration for the wide streets and logical planning of Budapest in similar terms. See Waugh, 'Impression of Splendour and Grace', in *EAR*, pp. 234–38 (p. 235).

<sup>56</sup> Waugh, 'Cities of the Future', in *EAR*, pp. 63–65 (p. 63).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

would be more offensive than worm-eaten wood, and discoloured concrete and rusted metal than mellowed brick and stone.’<sup>61</sup>

It is suggestive of Waugh’s aesthetic that he considers the decay of old buildings less offensive than that of their modern equivalents. Waugh even admits in his autobiography *A Little Learning* (1964) that he fell ‘victim to the common English confusion of the antiquated with the sublime’<sup>62</sup> at an early age, and his criticism of modern decay in *Work Suspended* may represent a continuation of this confusion. John Betjeman identifies a similar impulse in *Ghastly Good Taste*, stating of his early interest in architecture that ‘The older anything was the lovelier I thought it. I was quite uncritical, as are hundreds of thousands of my fellow citizens in the same happy state of childlike innocence about architecture.’<sup>63</sup>

Waugh’s next foray into significant architectural criticism came in the guise of his travel book *Labels*, which was serialised for the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Architectural Review* in 1930.<sup>64</sup> There seems to have been a surge of interest in Antoni Gaudí around this time; his work was photographed extensively for the *Illustrated London News*, in 1927, 1928 and 1929, perhaps fuelled by the news that the architect had been killed in a tram accident in 1926 and also in anticipation of the Barcelona International Exposition in 1929. A peculiar feature of Gaudí’s coverage in *The Illustrated London News* is the comparison of his work with the distinctly more Modernist buildings in Amsterdam,<sup>65</sup> no doubt due to the confusion of what is now known as Neo-Catalan architecture being termed ‘Modernisme’ in Catalan, when its style had more in common with Art Nouveau. The consensus of *The Illustrated London News* was actually quite similar to Waugh’s experience of Barcelona, stating that ‘For audacity, eccentricity, defiance of precept and inherited form, for sheer originality and beauty that is at once perturbing and vital, its like would be hard to find elsewhere in the world.’<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>62</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (1964; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xix, p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste*, p. xiv.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh The Early Years: 1903-1939* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1986), p. 216.

<sup>65</sup> Anonymous, ‘The New Architecture: Modern Buildings at Home and Abroad’, *The Illustrated London News* (London, 10 March 1928), pp. 376–77 (p. 377).

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous, ‘With “Rhine-Wine-Bottle” Spires: The New Cathedral at Barcelona’, *The Illustrated London News* (London, 17 December 1927), pp. 1101–3 (p. 1102).

While visiting Barcelona, Waugh, quite by accident, came across Gaudí's La Casa Batlló, and subsequently visited other examples of his work in a rushed pilgrimage by taxi, including La Sagrada Família, Casa Milà and Parc Güell.<sup>67</sup> On first sight, Waugh misinterprets Gaudí's La Casa Batlló as the offices of the Turkish Consulate and thinks that the building must be 'part of the advertising campaign of the Exhibition,'<sup>68</sup> i.e. the International Exposition held in 1929. When he realises that it is a permanent structure, its fantastical nature has an intense appeal for him:

It was the roof which chiefly attracted my attention, since it was coloured peacock-blue and built in undulations, like a rough sea petrified; the chimneys, too, were of highly coloured glazed earthenware, and they were twisted and bent in all directions like very gnarled fruit-trees [...] The eaves overhung in irregular, amorphous waves, in places attenuated into stalactites of coloured porcelain; the effect was that of a clumsily iced cake.<sup>69</sup>

Waugh's words are echoed in Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (1968). He describes the startling effect of 'com[ing] upon [the façades] unprepared in the Paseo de Gracia',<sup>70</sup> seeing the whole building 'in a slow, sluggish and somewhat menacing flow – like lava, some people have said, as if carved out by the sea, say others'.<sup>71</sup> Pevsner also argues, with particular reference to Gaudí's decorative use of broken tiles and mosaics in the Parc Güell that the architect is 'closer to Picasso there than the other practitioners of Art Nouveau'.<sup>72</sup> In another of Pevsner's influential works on architecture, *Pioneers of Modern Design* (originally published in 1936 with additions in the 1960 edition) he makes a similar comparison, stating that Gaudí's art is a link to 'the Expressionism of the *collages*, the Expressionism of Picasso's pottery, and some of the more outrageous innovations of the architecture of 1950.'<sup>73</sup> Thus perhaps it is Gaudí's

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<sup>67</sup> Waugh sent Thomas Balston at Duckworth publishing house a postcard showing the decorative details of the entrance to Parc Güell. EW to Thomas Balston, 13 March 1930; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

<sup>68</sup> Waugh, *Labels*, p. 145.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>70</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 105.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>73</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 116. Pevsner refers here to Ronchamp Chapel, designed by Le Corbusier.



occasionally abstract decorative impulse that goes some way to explain the curious ambivalence in Waugh's assessment of his work.

Waugh's ambivalence is noticeable in his description of Gaudí's work in the 1880s and 1890s as the period of his 'grossest and wildest output' when his art, 'curiously maturing, broke through all preconceived bounds of order and propriety, and coursed wantonly over the town, spattering its riches on all sides like mud.'<sup>74</sup> 'Wantonly' and 'spattering [...] like mud' is a qualification to the 'riches' that 'dazzled and blinded'<sup>75</sup> the young man describing his vision of La Casa Batlló. Perhaps Waugh's initial enthusiasm for Gaudí's work was somewhat dampened by the time he came to write *Labels*, in the wake of his first wife's desertion or perhaps he had realised that the fragmentary, mosaic style with which Gaudí decorated many of his buildings was a forerunner of the abstract art he came to detest in the work of Picasso. Whatever Waugh's reason for this slightly ambivalent reading of Gaudí's architectural accomplishments it is still abundantly clear that his experiences in Barcelona were highly instructive, allowing Waugh to realise 'what art-for-art's sake can become when it is wholly untempered by considerations of tradition or good taste.'<sup>76</sup> This also hints at the primary conflict at the heart of Waugh's aesthetic thought, that of the rational and the romantic.

As previously discussed, Waugh sets up this conflict at the beginning of *Rossetti* (1928) between Roger Fry and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Where Rossetti sees his art as a 'way to fix the shapes that rose within' him, Fry takes a less romantic approach, stating that 'real artists, even if they are destined to paint highly imaginative works [...] generally begin by making an elaborate study of an old pair of boots'.<sup>77</sup> Thus, like Rossetti's, Gaudí's artistic persona would have been attractive to the young Waugh, despite his eccentricity. Pevsner identifies Gaudí's practice as 'that of the individualist-craftsman, the outsider, the lonely, do-it-yourself inventor.'<sup>78</sup> He notes that he was 'essentially still the medieval craftsman [...] in him one ideal of William Morris had come true.'<sup>79</sup> Although Waugh had not

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<sup>74</sup> Waugh, *Labels*, p. 144.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>77</sup> See: Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti His Life and Works*, ed. by Michael G. Brennan, 43 vols (1928; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xvi, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design*, p. 112.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

converted at the time he wrote *Labels*, it is interesting that he was attracted to Gaudí, who was devoutly Catholic. La Sagrada Familia was intended as a symbolic structure, an attempt 'to bring the Catholic liturgy alive in the very body of the church itself.'<sup>80</sup> Robert Hughes notes in his documentary 'Antoni Gaudí: God's Architect'<sup>81</sup> that La Sagrada Familia was intended as a symbol to reform the morals of Barcelona, redeeming its congregation from the sins of the modern world.<sup>82</sup> Even secular projects like Casa Bottlò displayed Gaudí's piety, the undulating, scaly, lizard-like roof tiles of the building clearly inspired by the myth of Saint George and the Dragon. Hughes describes La Sagrada Familia as a 'stone book' due to the extensive mouldings on the exterior of the building which depicts scenes from the nativity and Christ's early life through which Gaudí, according to Judith C. Rohrer, 'felt he could more gently and directly reach the working-class neighbors than through the tortured imagery of the Passion'.<sup>83</sup>

Waugh goes into some detail about two different decorative methods in Gaudí's work, using various photographs to illustrate his points. The first type is the 'evanescent and amorphous', resembling imperfectly moulded clay; the second 'minute and intricate', resembling ivory or mahogany.<sup>84</sup> In *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) Waugh similarly describes an oak triptych in the chapel as having the 'peculiar property of seeming to have been moulded in Plasticine'.<sup>85</sup> George McCartney has argued that with this reading of decorative styles Waugh 'seems to have fastened onto an architectural equivalent of his polarized world', the first type echoing 'his portrayal of desire untempered by thought' and the second suggesting 'the inner workings of an intellect unable to achieve an overall formal integration of the parts at its disposal'.<sup>86</sup> This reading, again presents a parallel to the Rossetti/Fry debate with which Waugh begins *Rossetti*. Though McCartney may be right to suggest Waugh's admiration of the 'evanescent and amorphous' in

<sup>80</sup> Judith C. Rohrer, 'La Sagrada Familia', in *Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Gaudí, Miró, Dalí* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 211–23 (p. 212).

<sup>81</sup> Part of Hughes's *Visions of Space* series made for the BBC in 2003.

<sup>82</sup> Mandy Chang, 'Antoni Gaudí: God's Architect', *Visions of Space*, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Rohrer, 'La Sagrada Familia', p. 213.

<sup>84</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Labels: A Mediterranean Journal* (London: Duckworth, 1930), p. 181. Please note that this first edition of *Labels* contains several pages of material, including some of Waugh's own photographs of Gaudí's work in Barcelona, which have been cut from the later Penguin edition referenced elsewhere in this chapter.

<sup>85</sup> Waugh, *BR*, p. 40.

<sup>86</sup> George McCartney, *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 54.

Gaudí's work is related to his desire to express a vision 'in which the extremes of impulse and reason are allowed to run wild', the idea that the second of these decorative styles represents a frustrated impulse to achieve formal integration is not as convincing. What Waugh is truly impressed by when confronted by La Sagrada Familia is that these two decorative styles are so startlingly different in appearance yet both are made from cut stone. Indeed, when introducing Gaudí in *Labels* he writes, 'in one's first brush with Gaudí's genius, it is not so much propriety that is outraged as one's sense of probability.'<sup>87</sup> These buildings are architecturally fantastical and Waugh approaches them with a wide-eyed awe, simultaneously impressed and repelled by their whimsical undulating lines. He appreciates the sheer craftsmanship of Gaudí's vision, and the authenticity with which it is executed.

There is no compromise in the architecture of La Casa Batlló or La Sagrada Familia as Waugh recognises in the holiday pavilions of Barcelona whose 'aim is to catch the eye with a prominent exterior and leave the interior to chance' and which 'exhibit the same irresponsible confusion of architectural styles, here Gothic, here Tudor, here Classical [and] the same abhorrence of an unvariegated line.'<sup>88</sup> Waugh uses almost the same language to describe an unfinished Cathedral in his short story 'Bella Fleace Gave a Party' (1932), 'conceived in that irresponsible medley of architectural orders that is so dear to the hearts of transmontane priests',<sup>89</sup> making it clear that he considers architecture with an inconsistent aesthetic to be not only unattractive but also morally reprehensible. It is interesting, too, that Waugh does not even consider the identity of the architects who designed these buildings, for there must have been some, but reduces their creation to the work of 'anonymous contractors and job-builders'.<sup>90</sup> The most important point to be taken from Waugh's writing on Gaudí is to be found in his comparison of his work to the aforementioned contractors:

Gaudí bears to these [...] something of the same relation as do the masters of Italian baroque to the rococo decorators of the Pompadour's boudoir, or Ronald Firbank to the

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<sup>87</sup> Waugh, *Labels*, p. 144.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>89</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Bella Fleace Gave a Party', in *The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh* (1932; New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), pp. 110–20 (p. 110).

<sup>90</sup> Waugh, *Labels*, p. 144.

author of *Frolic Wind*.<sup>91</sup> What in them is frivolous, superficial, and *chic* is in him structural and essential; in his work is apotheosized all the writhing, bubbling, convoluting, convulsing soul of the Art Nouveau.<sup>92</sup>

This is not the only instance where Waugh uses Firbank to make a distinction between the structural and the ornamental. In his 1929 article on the author, Waugh makes the point that Oscar Wilde's wit is 'ornamental; Firbank's is structural. Wilde is rococo; Firbank is baroque.'<sup>93</sup> Thus it is clear that Waugh has the same standards for architecture as he does for literature. The structural elements of both disciplines are always held in higher regard than their ornamentation, and this is the reason that Gaudí's extravagant designs, which one might have expected to be anathema to Waugh, are deeply admired by him. The ornamentation of La Sagrada Familia, for example, has a structural integrity and honesty that is lacking in the pavilion buildings Waugh considers 'irresponsible' for exhibiting a superficial mishmash of inauthentic architectural styles that are not reflected in their interiors.

Gaudí's works are almost exclusively inspired by natural forms, his grottos in the Parc Güell inspired by the structures of trees and caves where both ornamental and structural elements are inextricably linked. Casa Batlló, though not built from scratch, has few straight lines, its interior 'wood, glass, and plaster is [of] curvilinear organic design, amoebiform, with connotations of the bottom of the sea.'<sup>94</sup> 'The space is a whole' Tate Cabré argues, 'and its elements are inseparable; it is a total art.'<sup>95</sup> Thus the honest ornamentation of Gaudí's works, on the whole reflecting the structural quality of the building in question, aligns him with the Arts and Crafts tradition, even though it might not initially seem an obvious connection.

Indeed, Gaudí's attempts to synthesise man-made buildings with the natural environment can be compared to the work of Arts and Crafts architect Ernest Gimson. Just like La Sagrada Familia and Casa Milà, though on a much smaller scale, Gimson's design for Stoneywell Cottage (1899) in Leicestershire appears to grow out of the landscape it is built into, its form directly influenced by

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Oke, a minor British novelist working in the 1920s-1930s. Waugh reviewed *Frolic Wind* as 'wretchedly affected and "stagey"'. It has all the tricks and pretensions I most despise in a novel.' Evelyn Waugh, 'The Books You Read', *The Graphic*, 27 September 1930, p. 509 (p. 509).

<sup>92</sup> Waugh, *Labels*, p. 144.

<sup>93</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Ronald Firbank', in *EAR*, pp. 56-59 (p. 57).

<sup>94</sup> Tate Cabré, *Gaudí: The Architect of Nature* (Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrània, 2003), p. 195.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

the irregularity of the locally sourced stones used to construct it. Stoneywell, Peter Davey argues, 'grows out of the rock more like a series of imposed strata than a building [...] The cottage is Arts and Crafts architecture at its most earthy – if nature made buildings, they would surely look something like Stoneywell.'<sup>96</sup> It seems, in fact that Stoneywell is the embodiment of William Morris's assertion that if houses are built 'solidly and unpretentiously, using good materials natural to their own country-side [...] it is little likely that you will have done any offence to the beauty of the country-side or the older houses in it.' Morris even hoped that it would be 'from such necessary, unpretentious buildings that the new and genuine architecture will spring, rather than from our experiments in conscious style'.<sup>97</sup> Thus it is also interesting to consider Gimson as an architect presenting an alternative to the 'fancy-dress' styles of the Gothic and Tudor revivals. His buildings were, F.L. Griggs argues,

[...] not a mimicry of any bygone "style," but something of to-day, so honest and natural, so familiar to the ground and welcome to the site, that it was, as it were, of local family and descent. It soon looked as if Nature herself had taken a hand in maturing it, and a good deal "older" (as in truth it was) than the "Gothic" and "Jacobean" houses of yesterday.<sup>98</sup>

The same can surely be said of Gaudí.

In *A Handful of Dust* it is possible to see the culmination of these early ideas on architecture, showing scorn for the inauthentic and fear of the social implications of modern housing solutions. It also introduces the theme of the declining country house, that later became so important to his work, particularly in *Brideshead Revisited*. Mandler suggests that the novel 'mocks the aristocracy for eccentricity and anachronism but also clings to these characteristics for security in a mad world'<sup>99</sup> showing that a little of the ambivalence which distinguished Waugh's early architectural writing still remains in 1934. The novel covers the inauthenticity of the Gothic Revival, the equally sham style of modernity of interior designers like Syrie Maugham, and the idea that redevelopment of grand town houses was contributing to social decline. *A Handful of Dust* crystallises Waugh's

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<sup>96</sup> Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980), pp. 149–50.

<sup>97</sup> William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, 24 vols. (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1914), XXII, pp. 429–430.

<sup>98</sup> F.L. Griggs, 'Ernest Gimson and His Work', in *Ernest Gimson: His Life & Work* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1924), pp. 22–32 (pp. 29–30).

<sup>99</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, p. 284.

early thoughts on architecture, beginning the development of a more mature stage in his aesthetic understanding of the subject.

Tony Last's house, Hetton Abbey, is introduced as it appears in the county Guide Book: 'Between the villages of Hetton and Compton Last lies the extensive park of Hetton Abbey. This, formerly one of the notable houses of the county, was entirely rebuilt in 1864 in the Gothic style and is now devoid of interest.' This does not bother Tony particularly as we are told that 'Unkinder things have been said'<sup>100</sup> about the property. Tony realises that the Gothic Revival style of Hetton is not currently in 'fashion', but hopes it will come to be appreciated again:

Twenty years ago people had liked half timber and old pewter; now it was urns and colonnades; but the time would come, perhaps in John Andrew's day, when opinion would reinstate Hetton in its proper place. Already it was referred to as 'amusing' and a very civil young man had asked permission to photograph it for an architectural review.<sup>101</sup>

Carpenter argues that the civil young man in this passage is John Betjeman, whose approval, in 1934, was not 'regarded as a real mark of distinction.'<sup>102</sup> But, though Waugh may have just been poking fun at his friend, Betjeman was similarly unimpressed with Victorian Gothic Revival architecture. The 'Gothic Revival of the early and mid-Victorian periods' he wrote in *Ghastly Good Taste*, was not particularly successful.

Imitations of the unconscious eccentricities of the mediaeval period, in cast iron or patent stone, unnecessary roughening of the surface of stone, prickly spires and chemical stained glass windows produced a travesty of Middle Ages successful on the surface only.<sup>103</sup>

Waugh would have certainly agreed with this assessment of the inauthenticity of the Gothic Revival in architecture, and Betjeman's idea of the 'unconscious eccentricities' of medieval architecture could easily be applied to Gaudí for example. It is when these eccentricities are imitated that buildings like the new Hetton Abbey, or the holiday pavilions in Barcelona come into being. By pointing out the irony of the grand house itself having been redeveloped in *A Handful of*

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<sup>100</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (1938; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1997), p. 17. Hereafter *HOD*.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>102</sup> Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation*, p. 253.

<sup>103</sup> Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste*, p. 94.



*Dust*,<sup>104</sup> Waugh sets the scene for various architectural atrocities in the novel, including the conversion and demolition of grand London town houses to make way for blocks of service flats, with any original interior details obscured behind chromium plating.

Though Wells Coates's contemporaneously constructed flats in Lawn Road (1933-34) were not developed in the same way, it is possible Waugh had this revolutionary block of small living units in mind when writing *A Handful of Dust*. Coates was 'in love with the idea of the "Maison Minimum": industrialised, rationalised, *rationed*.'<sup>105</sup> The Lawn Road flats, which are, as Alexandra Harris notes, 'comprised of thirty-two efficient units, each just large enough for a single occupant or a couple'<sup>106</sup> left seemingly no space for the individual taste of these occupants. They were a 'visionary statement [...] of the potential for independence in the twentieth century: to live here you did not need (and could not have) a family or a mass of inherited furniture. The building was a vote of confidence in the unattached man and – radically – the single woman.'<sup>107</sup>

However, for Waugh, nothing could be more abhorrent. Waugh berates Patrick Balfour in two strongly worded letters in 1933, for claiming that all rich people live in flats like the Lawn Road flats in his book *Society Racket* (1933).<sup>108</sup> Waugh even mentions Coates by name in one of these letters, who he claims 'wasn't the least like a gentleman nor used to meeting them.'<sup>109</sup> The following extract from *Society Racket* appears to be what Waugh takes issue with:

His aim [the average man of wealth] – the aim, therefore reflected by every aspirant to Society – is, firstly, to acquire the kind of home which smart people are accustomed to have. This, if it is not one of those Mayfair houses decorated according to the standardized "good taste" of a successful Society amateur, will be a luxury flat in some new block.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Waugh would also deal with the issue of redevelopment in *Brideshead Revisited*, where the house is constructed from the stones of the old castle that once stood in its place. Unlike Hetton Abbey however, Brideshead Castle is revered almost unreservedly by author and narrator alike.

<sup>105</sup> Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, p. 241.

<sup>106</sup> Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 38.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>108</sup> Waugh also wrote to Diana Cooper to express his confusion about Balfour's statement: 'Pauper Balfour wrote a book [*Society Racket*] saying all rich people live in blocks of flats which doesn't seem to me to be true.' EW to Diana Cooper, c. 27 June 1933; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

<sup>109</sup> EW to Patrick Balfour, 30 June 1933; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

<sup>110</sup> Patrick Balfour, *Society Racket: A Critical Survey of Modern Social Life* (London: John Long, 1933), p. 214.

Already it is clear that Waugh is slightly misrepresenting Balfour's claim, and it might be his later suggestion that the working classes and the lower middle classes have something in common that caused Waugh such consternation:

Despite the squalor, [of workers' tenement housing] there are many who prefer the comparative privacy of their poky slum houses. So do the lower middle classes cling to the idea of their "own front door," be it only that of a semi-detached suburban villa. An Englishman's home, they say, is his castle. But for the rich Englishman his home today is his flat. Six only among a hundred identical windows in a luxury block are the rule for the more prosperous classes.<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, Waugh's counter to Balfour's argument was that the 'English love of own front door not the least middle class as you suggest.'<sup>112</sup> This assertion then, is another of Waugh's (slightly snobbish) architectural ideologies: that a love for your own house and your own front door is not restricted to the middle classes and nor should it be denigrated as such. In Waugh's mind the 'Englishman's home is his castle' mentality is, or at least should be, a universal ideal. 'I suppose someone lives in those blocks since you say so' he concedes at the end of the letter, incredulous that anyone at all might want to live in such Modernist developments. Indeed, it may go some way to explain the particularly scathing attitude Waugh expresses about all kinds of flats and compartmental living spaces in his novels. It is surprising, however, given how Balfour continues to discuss these flats, that Waugh did not admit the similarities in their thinking, as Balfour criticises the new flats for stripping the English home of its individuality.

Thus the one outlet for individualism left, the Englishman's home, is being standardized out of existence. Flats apart, there is a sameness about the decoration and atmosphere of smart houses which even the mock-Tudor bungalow in a row of exact suburban replicas does not equal. The latter at least has "cosiness"; it is a home, reflecting the tastes of its owner. The former is nothing but a miniature Ritz.<sup>113</sup>

In *A Handful of Dust* Waugh offers a criticism that shows another side to these small, anonymous living spaces by commenting on the new practice of converting the grand town houses of the aristocracy to create flats in which people are able to carry out illicit affairs. Mrs Beaver, clearly an entrepreneur, sells these flats like 'hot cakes', and comments that she "shall have to look about for another

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>112</sup> EW to Patrick Balfour, 30 June 1933.

<sup>113</sup> Balfour, *Society Racket*, p. 215.

suitable house to split up. You'd be surprised who've been taking them – quite a number of people with houses in London already”<sup>114</sup>, suggesting that some of her clients are buying these flats in order to maintain alternative, and anonymous, lives. Her idea of what constitutes a ‘suitable home’ is presumably the large townhouses of the rich, that way she would be poised to make the most profit from splitting it up into separate units. The comment too, about looking for suitable houses to ‘split up’ could also prefigure the breakdown of the Last’s relationship. Mrs Beaver’s flats also comment on the changing landscape of England. These large town houses converted into flats, or knocked down for tower blocks to be built on their sites, invite illicit affairs and lower class patrons to inhabit previously (at least outwardly) respectable areas.

In Waugh’s alternative ending to *A Handful of Dust*, written to satisfy the American audience of the serialized version in *Harper’s Bazaar*, Tony returns to England and secretly maintains the flat his wife has previously been using for her own affairs. ‘I think it would be better if my name didn’t appear on that board downstairs’ he tells Mrs Beaver, who comments that quite a few of her tenants are ‘taking the same precaution’,<sup>115</sup> yet another example of the anonymity afforded by such domestic arrangements in the novel. Michael Brennan argues that this ‘comfortably sophisticated’ incarnation of Tony by contrast to the version we see in the novel has ‘irrevocably fallen into a hellish metropolis from which there is no escape.’<sup>116</sup> If this is the case then it is an ironic ending, especially given that *Harper’s* would not publish the serial while it included the chapter ‘The Man Who Liked Dickens’, in which Tony is unable to escape from South America. It is also important to note that not only did *Harper’s* want to call this chapter ‘A Flat in London’, but it was also proposed that *A Handful of Dust* be published under that title in America. In a letter to A.D. Peters in 1934, Waugh wrote ‘No the Americans must not change the title – it is A HANDFUL OF DUST. The alteration is quite inapplicable to the complete novel.’<sup>117</sup> Waugh was right to insist on this, but the fact that his American publishers saw the flat in London as a possible synecdoche

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<sup>114</sup> Waugh, *HOD*, p. 54.

<sup>115</sup> Evelyn Waugh, ‘Alternative Ending’, in *HOD* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1997), pp. 243–51 (p. 250).

<sup>116</sup> Michael G. Brennan, *Evelyn Waugh: Fictions, Faith and Family* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 51.

<sup>117</sup> EW to Augustus Peters, 14 May 1934; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume III.

for the whole novel is significant. It shows that the image of this new, anonymous mode of living, indelibly linked to the destructive force of modern development, could embody the central message of the novel.

Mrs Beaver's flats have a peculiar style, as she attempts to imbue them with a false sense of grandeur and tradition, whilst also offering the very latest in modern appliances. She shows Brenda a wide array of items with which to decorate her new flat, including,

needlework pictures for the walls [...] an electric bed warmer, a miniature weighing machine for the bathroom, a frigidaire, an unique grandfather clock, a backgammon set of looking-glass and synthetic ivory, a set of prettily bound French eighteenth-century poets, a massage apparatus, and a wireless set fitted in a case of Regency lacquer.<sup>118</sup>

Brenda, keen to leave behind the Gothic excesses of Hetton, refuses most of these items of decoration but we are told that 'Mrs Beaver bore Brenda no ill will for the modesty of her requirements; she was doing very well on the floor above with a Canadian lady who was having her walls covered with chromium plating at immense expense.'<sup>119</sup> This chromium plating suggests a criticism of the glossy Art Deco style of modern interior decorating, one that is all style and no substance in a flat that has been converted from what we can presume to have been a grand old house. Indeed the whole building is rather like the 'wireless set fitted in a case of Regency lacquer', a new mass-produced concept in an old outer shell and as a result entirely inauthentic. It is likely that Waugh is referring to a radio similar to one made by Phillips in the 1930s which features inlaid Chinese lacquer work. As Dan Klein notes of this incongruous object, 'Apart from the mere fact of its being a radio, it is the geometric design of the speaker cutting into the decoration that makes it a modern piece of furniture.'<sup>120</sup> This mish-mash of styles is exactly what Waugh dislikes about art deco design, consistent with his dislike of the same kind of inauthenticity in architecture.

Pauline Metcalf, among others, has argued that Mrs Beaver is based on Syrie Maugham, the well-known and extremely well connected innovator of Modern interior design in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s. Metcalf mentions that Maugham, when discovering that the brocade fabric 'she had chosen to cover the

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<sup>118</sup> Waugh, *HOD*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>120</sup> Dan Klein, *The All Colour Book of Art Deco Design* (London: Galley Press, 1987), p. 43.

walls' in a client's house 'would not quite reach the ceiling, she simply had the ceiling lowered by six inches',<sup>121</sup> and argues that such a disregard for the correct proportions of the house 'likely inspired the directive esprit of Mrs. Beaver'.<sup>122</sup> Famous for the 'all-white' drawing room she created in her King's Road home, in which Cecil Beaton took an iconic photograph of his sister Barbara standing in front of its mirrored walls, Maugham was, as Hamish Bowles states, 'a decorator of modernity as well as fantasy'.<sup>123</sup> She was an astute designer, setting and following the often fleeting trends of the decade; leading the way, with Sibyl Colefax, for female interior designers who made the profession their own. Adam Lewis notes that the male 'drapers' who preceded female interior designers 'were best known for their exacting workmanship. Everything they did had a look-alike quality' whereas successful female decorators, like Maugham, 'knew intuitively how to mix styles. They put English furniture with French furniture, combined eighteenth-century pieces with nineteenth-century pieces, and felt free to introduce new modern touches'.<sup>124</sup> She was unafraid of adapting traditional styles and antique objects to her famously monochromatic style, taking 'eighteenth-century French provincial shapes and us[ing] them for dressing and coffee tables [...] plunging often extremely valuable antiques into acid baths to bleach them of all color and gilding'.<sup>125</sup> Maugham was also known to bleach rugs in a similar fashion, adding a faux-worn 'antique' feel to new objects. Cecil Beaton described her as 'one of the most energetic women of her day. Her indefatigable strength was now given to turning the world white [...] With the strength of a typhoon she blew all colour before her. For the next decade Syrie Maugham bleached, pickled or scraped every piece of furniture in sight'.<sup>126</sup> Beaton makes another interesting observation regarding the inauthenticity of her designs: 'There was something unworldly about the effect of those pristine white hydrangeas and white china against their white background. [...] Mayfair drawing rooms looked like albino stage sets'.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Pauline M. Metcalf, *Syrie Maugham: Staging Glamorous Interiors* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2010), pp. 56–57.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>123</sup> Hamish Bowles, 'Maugham's the Word', *Vogue US*, 1 May 1993, 313–15 (p. 315).

<sup>124</sup> Adam Lewis, *The Great Lady Decorators: The Women Who Defined Interior Design, 1870-1955* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009), p. 179.

<sup>125</sup> Bowles, 'Maugham's the Word', p. 315.

<sup>126</sup> Cecil Beaton, *The Glass of Fashion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 208.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209.

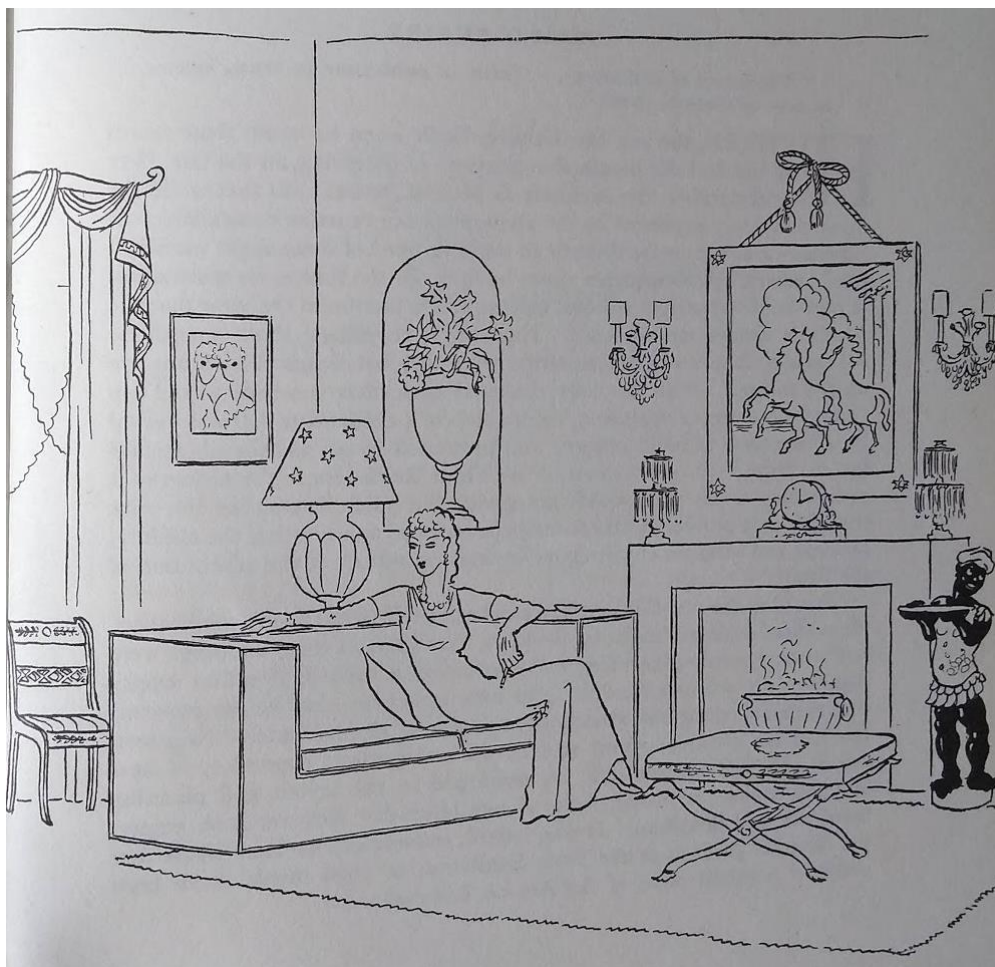


Fig. 4. Osbert Lancaster, 'Vogue Regency' (1939).



Fig. 5. Cecil Beaton, 'Portrait of Marlene Dietreich' (1935).



Osbert Lancaster<sup>128</sup> described Syrie Maugham's style as 'Vogue Regency', and gives an illustration of how this appeared in his book *A Cartoon History of Architecture* (originally published in *Homes Sweet Homes* 1939). The room pictured is sparse and modern (see fig. 4), with a few well-chosen yet incongruous decorations, including a modern rectangular sofa, elaborate chandelier-style lamps and a Regency coffee table. There is even the suggestion of Cecil Beaton's 1935 portrait of Marlene Dietreich on the far wall (see fig. 5), in which the actress poses with a Regency style bust. Lancaster identifies Vogue Regency as a style that appealed to those 'ultra-smart householders who reacted instantaneously to every change of fashion and whose houses seldom presented the same appearance two years running', in contrast to the 'vast mass of middle and upper middle-class homes in which the décor and furnishings seldom underwent any sudden drastic change'.<sup>129</sup> Though Lancaster is against the practice of recreating period styles in different eras, he does recognise that an attempt to bring contemporary style back to the classical tradition of which Regency was 'the last development'<sup>130</sup> can only be a good thing. He also comments on the 'quality of adaptability' inherent in the furniture of the Regency period,

[...] a Recamier sofa is in no way embarrassed by the close proximity of a rug by Marian Dorn. So long, therefore, as no attempt is made to follow the fatal will-o'-the-wisp of period accuracy, Vogue Regency remains as suitable a style as any for a period in describing which the word Transitional, it is now apparent, is the grossest of understatements.<sup>131</sup>

Marian Dorn,<sup>132</sup> incidentally, designed the rug that covered the floor of Syrie Maugham's 'all white' drawing room. Waugh may not approve of Syrie Maugham and other followers of the Vogue Regency style, but it is, as Lancaster suggests, an entirely appropriate reflection of the transitional 1930s. And Regency too, he

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<sup>128</sup> Lancaster drew a satirical portrait of Waugh on the steps of White's Club in St James's Street looking ill-tempered and contemptuous. The squat figure with bowler hat and umbrella was, in Waugh's own words 'good in conception but poor in execution.' Evelyn Waugh to John Betjeman, 2 April 1947 in *Letters*, p. 285; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>129</sup> Lancaster, *A Cartoon History of Architecture*, p. 162.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>132</sup> Marian Dorn, American textile designer (1896-1964) known for her batiks, printed fabrics, and soft furnishings. See Christine Boyde, 'Marian Dorn' in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. by Delia Gaze, 2 vols (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), I, pp. 466-68.

reminds us, also came about 'between the Napoleonic wars and the upheavals of 1848 [...] in which vast social and political changes took place.'<sup>133</sup>

Lancaster's satiric style has been likened to that of Waugh; Edward Lucie-Smith states that 'If there was one writer of fiction to whom one can properly compare [Lancaster], it is surely Evelyn Waugh [...] Both were fascinated by aristocratic dottiness, but also by aristocratic powers of survival.'<sup>134</sup> He also knew John Betjeman; becoming interested in Victorian architecture during his time at Oxford as a result of his friendship with the poet, and later, through his association with the *Architectural Review* between 1934 and 1939.<sup>135</sup> (Betjeman was assistant editor at the magazine between 1930 and 1935). Lancaster has a similar aesthetic understanding of architecture to both Waugh and Betjeman, and in many ways his satirical illustrations are companion pieces to their writings.

Thus the contemporary attitudes of satirists like Waugh and Lancaster toward Syrie Maugham are embodied in the treatment of Mrs Beaver. She is satirised by Waugh for her attempts to offer customers something new by way of interior design; the home furnishings she displays in her showroom which represent her own take on the idea of the 'total style' aimed at by followers of Art Deco. Bevis Hillier was one of the first critics to consider Art Deco in these terms:

The extraordinary thing is that so rigorously formulated a style should have imposed itself so universally – on hairdressers' shops, handbags, shoes, lamp-posts and letter-boxes, as well as on hotels, cinemas and liners. With justice, so far, we can describe it as the last of the total styles.<sup>136</sup>

But Waugh has always argued strongly against the idea of any prescribed interior style, and, very early on in his career wrote 'Take Your Home Into Your Own Hands' (1929), an open letter to those people who felt pressured into hiding their favourite pieces of bric-à-brac in favour of what was currently deemed fashionable, and 'bullied into an inferiority complex about their own homes'<sup>137</sup> for which he blames on the advice given by his fellow journalists in the Home Pages of the *Daily Express*. 'Have you made all these changes because you really like them' he writes

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<sup>133</sup> Lancaster, *A Cartoon History of Architecture*, p. 162.

<sup>134</sup> Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Introduction', in *The Essential Osbert Lancaster: An Anthology in Brush and Pen*, by Osbert Lancaster (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1988), pp. 1–16 (p. 3).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>136</sup> Bevis Hillier, *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s*, rev. edn. (London: The Herbert Press, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>137</sup> Waugh, 'Take Your Home Into Your Own Hands!', in *EAR*, pp. 44–45 (p. 44).

‘or because someone has been at you about “good taste”?’<sup>138</sup> Ultimately Waugh’s interior design advice is one of individualism, and his statement of “‘I don’t know much about art, but I do know what I like’”<sup>139</sup> is not so much one of philistinism, but a genuine expression of the importance of personal taste, the possibility of which is something entirely lacking in Mrs Beaver’s starkly modern, boxy flats, decorated only with the items she has curated. Thus the seemingly random assortment of items available to purchase from Mrs Beaver’s showroom are not only comically inappropriate, they symbolise her complete lack of taste, and, presumably, that of her customers too. Waugh’s first matrimonial home, the flat he shared with she-Evelyn in Canonbury Square was, ironically, decorated in the eclectic Vogue Regency style (see fig. 6) – including a Louis XV-style armchair, geometrically patterned rugs and a chandelier. Waugh wrote to both Harold Acton and Henry Yorke imploring them to visit him in his ‘dilapidated Regency’<sup>140</sup> square. ‘We have very little furniture at present but I am anxious to show you what we have & to have your advice about decorations’<sup>141</sup> he wrote to Acton in 1928, showing a certain pride in what he had achieved at Canonbury Square, tempered by an anxious desire for the approval of his more aesthetically astute friend. Considering the shortness of Waugh’s first marriage, and the heartbreak it caused him, it is perhaps understandable that he would come to associate the Vogue Regency style with the insincerity of his relationship with she-Evelyn, later providing him with a satirical target to exploit in *A Handful of Dust*.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>140</sup> EW to Henry Yorke, c. 8 September 1928; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.

<sup>141</sup> EW to Harold Acton, c. 22 September 1928 in *Letters*, p. 37; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXI.



Fig. 6. 17a Canonbury Square interior, c. 1928. Private Collection.

Tony Last is a tragi-comic figure in the novel. Though his passion for Hetton, and his romanticising of the past is satirised to some degree,<sup>142</sup> Tony does remain an example of the dying breed of grand house-owning gentlemen, and the death of his son John guarantees the end of his lineage. 'Tony Last, as his surname clearly states' Carpenter suggests, 'is one of the last of the landowning English country gentlemen, or at least one of the last to preserve their traditional values.'<sup>143</sup> After Tony is presumed dead in Brazil, his cousin Teddy, at the suggestion of Mrs Beaver, erects a plaque at Hetton. It is tempting to read: ANTHONY LAST OF HETTON<sup>144</sup> with an implied comma after 'ANTHONY', as a statement of his being the last person to be "of" Hetton in the sense that his one driving ambition was to keep the house alive. The cousin who inherits it is forced to reduce the household staff to six, closing off the dining room, library and state apartments.<sup>145</sup> There is a sad irony to the last line of the novel in which Teddy hopes to 'one day restore Hetton to the glory that it had enjoyed in the days of his cousin Tony.'<sup>146</sup> The idea that Hetton experienced glory days during Tony's time is, of course, incorrect. His room, Morgan le Fay, has a damp and flaky ceiling, its wooden beams that serve no structural purpose, 'warped and separated from the plaster.'<sup>147</sup> The house is clearly beginning an inexorable decline, crumbling around Tony as his marriage does the same.

The state of disrepair and partial closure of Hetton at the end of the novel was a familiar story for many grand country houses across Britain after the Second World War, though Waugh seems to have been ahead of the trend in immortalising them. During the twentieth century approximately 1,700 country houses were demolished in England alone, about 'one every three weeks',<sup>148</sup> while at the same time ill-designed modern developments, hampered by lack of money and thus unable to live up to the bright new future they promised, began to take over town centres. Two main preservation groups were active at this time: the Georgian

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<sup>142</sup> Tony's wife Brenda has the 'Guinevere' room at Hetton, an overt hint to her later infidelity, which also diminishes the romanticism of the Medieval era which Tony is desperately trying to recreate in the house.

<sup>143</sup> Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation*, p. 252.

<sup>144</sup> Waugh, *HOD*, p. 227.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>148</sup> Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses: From the Archive of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press, 2002), p. 23.

Group, founded in 1937 and the Victorian Society, formed in 1958. Yet despite many high profile campaigns, including Betjeman's failed attempts to save the Euston Arch, many listed and architecturally significant structures were demolished, a process that continued well into the 1970s. Betjeman provided a foreword for the strongly titled *The Rape of Britain* (1975), which catalogued many of these atrocities. 'What this book shows is the importance of the modest old buildings which act as foils to greater ones [...]. And it shows, alas, too many faceless monsters in their place which bring increment to Mammon.'<sup>149</sup> As it happened, this book was published in the year declared European Architectural Heritage Year and with it came a tremendous appetite for the preservation of old buildings, which began to be recognised and appreciated anew. Architectural historian Jonathan Glancey comments in the 2013 BBC documentary *Heritage! The Fight for Britain's Past* that 'whether it was Laura Ashley dresses or neo-classical architects starting to get work again', the pride in English design heritage had an enormous resurgence. 'What we've always been good at in this country is craft and countryside and Cotswold cottages, and back they came.'<sup>150</sup>

*A Handful of Dust* shows Waugh becoming more certain of his criticism of the inauthentic, offering further exploration of the ideas he put forward in *Decline and Fall*. He describes this inauthenticity through the work of Mrs Beaver. The chromium plating she installs on the walls of her Canadian tenant's flat acts as a metaphor for Waugh's entire argument against modern design, that it is a sham outer shell which has the effect of obscuring any valuable structural detail underneath, its gleaming surface a distraction from its entire lack of substance. It also begins Waugh's concern with the fate of the English country house, the dilapidated state of Hetton at the end of the novel can be related to the condition of Brideshead Castle at the beginning of *Brideshead Revisited*, the novel which best represents Waugh's admittedly nostalgic panegyric for the grand house.

In 1938, four years after the publication of *A Handful of Dust* Waugh wrote 'A Call to the Orders' for *Country Life* by which point a significant period of time had passed for him to observe how degraded concrete, glass and steel structures become in the damp English climate. Modern architecture for Waugh at this point

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<sup>149</sup> John Betjeman, 'Foreword', in *The Rape of Britain*, by Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank (London: Elek Books, 1975), p. 7 (p. 7).

<sup>150</sup> Sarah Ager, 'Broken Propylaeums', *Heritage! The Battle for Britain's Past* (BBC, 2013).



had become not only ugly, but also unfit for purpose. The slightly detached and comic eye he had applied to his criticism of modern architecture in *Decline and Fall* had, by 1938, developed into a vitriolic rant against 'the post-war Corbusier plague [...] leaving the face of England scarred and pitted, but still recognizable'<sup>151</sup>, which only the rationality of Georgian architecture could cure. Waugh also describes Le Corbusier's work with a disease metaphor in a diary entry from 1937:

Miss Reynolds returned an article I had written her about architecture on the grounds that her paper stood for 'contemporary' design. I could have told her all about Corbusier fifteen years ago when she would have not known the name. Now that at last we are recovering from that swine-fever, the fashionable magazines take it up.<sup>152</sup>

The article Reynolds (co-editor of *Harper's Bazaar* at the time), turned down was 'A Call to the Orders' and it is here we can see the reference to Le Corbusier: 'From Tromso to Angora', he writes, 'the horrible little architects crept about – curly-headed, horn-spectacled, volubly explaining their "machines for living"'.<sup>153</sup> The article is scathing in its criticism of modern architecture, magnifying the shortcomings of concrete and glass constructions which soon take on the 'melancholy air of a deserted exhibition'<sup>154</sup> once England's famously damp atmosphere had taken its toll. But Waugh does not present a simple, one-sided argument against modern architecture, despite his abuse of Le Corbusier. Indeed, he is cautious to uncritically extoll the principles of Georgian architecture as a 'convalescent' form of architecture in the face of ferro-concrete, stating that if architects were to attempt a reimagining of the style it might become as unappealing and overused as the "Merrie England" refashioning of Tudor architecture. 'Imitation' he argues, 'if extensive enough, really does debauch one's taste for the genuine.'<sup>155</sup>

Stannard notes that Waugh demonstrates his deep understanding of the 'rigorous structural principles'<sup>156</sup> on which one must construct both buildings and novels in 'A Call to the Orders', and importantly 'the orders appealed to are those [...] followed by eighteenth-century architects.'<sup>157</sup> Studying 'the Orders' is seen by

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<sup>151</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'A Call to the Orders', in *EAR*, pp. 215–18 (p. 216).

<sup>152</sup> Waugh, *Diaries*, p. 449.

<sup>153</sup> Waugh, 'A Call to the Orders', p. 216.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>156</sup> Stannard, *The Early Years*, p. 467.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

Waugh to be of utmost importance: 'the system was learnt by everyone who had any pretension to artistic interests – not only by the architect and his patron, but by the cabinet-maker.'<sup>158</sup> The idea of a universal standard being applied to artistic products at all levels of society aligns Waugh with the Arts and Crafts movement, in which the importance of handcraftsmanship, and the careful design of even the smallest element of any given item was crucial. There is also the suggestion that failing to follow 'the orders' creates inauthentic, chaotic and superficial art: 'By studying "the Orders" you can produce Chippendale Chinese; by studying Chippendale Chinese you will produce nothing but magazine covers.'<sup>159</sup> In this, Waugh provides a pithy conclusion to the dialogue running throughout much of his writing on architecture. Imitation in art and architecture is to be deplored, not only because it is inauthentic, but also because it can inspire further degeneration of style.

Waugh was keen to share his architectural understanding of literature with his friend Nancy Mitford. In 1948 he wrote to Mitford offering advice on editing a draft of *Love in a Cold Climate* (1949):

Now the book must be saved. So start again [...] if you like pack them off to Delhi and begin at your Chapter III. From then on all you have to do is watch the characters & make them speak & behave consistently. Then at the end of Part II Chapter VIII you can get really to work on the serious architectural achievement.<sup>160</sup>

To Waugh the 'groundwork' of a novel is as important to its eventual form as foundations are to a building. Mitford's first two chapters are unnecessary foundations, he implies, and they have already been laid in *The Pursuit of Love* (1945), the earlier, companion volume to *Cold Climate*. He also employs architectural metaphors when discussing literary style in a 1955 article for *Books on Trial*. 'Literary Style in England and America', is prefaced with a discussion of architecture, showing again that Waugh saw the two processes as inextricably linked. He describes books of architectural designs for the use of provincial builders and private patrons between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries: 'The plates display buildings of varying sizes, from gate-lodges to mansions, decorated in various "styles", Palladian, Greek, Gothic, even Chinese. The

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<sup>158</sup> Waugh, 'A Call to the Orders', p. 219.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>160</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, 24 October 1948 in *Letters*, p. 327; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

ground plans are identical, the “style” consists of surface enrichment’.<sup>161</sup> One might think it strange, considering his usual dislike of ‘ornamental’ architecture that Waugh should find the results of such applications of style are ‘not to be despised.’<sup>162</sup> But he compares these eighteenth- and mid-nineteenth-century architects to those of

[...] the present half century [in which] we have seen architects abandon all attempt at “style” and our eyes are everywhere sickened with boredom at the blank, unlovely, unlovable façades which have arisen from Constantinople to Los Angeles. But this use of style is literally superficial. Properly understood style is not a seductive decoration added to a functional structure, it is of the essence of a work of art.<sup>163</sup>

T. S. Eliot argues in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1920) that it is not the stylistic elements of art (in this case poetry) which are important but the process by which they are achieved: ‘it is not the “greatness,” the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts.’<sup>164</sup> This can partly explain Waugh’s apparently contradictory stance if we assume that the architects of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries have followed an aesthetically authentic process in their appropriation of designs from architectural guides. The difference between the eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries and the twentieth century then is that architects from the former period still followed ‘the Orders’, and those of the modern tradition do not, resulting in the superficial, unlovely façades Waugh deplores in Bel Air and at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park. Waugh’s article on Californian burial customs, ‘Half in Love with Easeful Death’, imagines a future in which the ‘flimsy multitude of architectural styles turned long ago to dust’,<sup>165</sup> confusing ‘the archaeologists of 2947’<sup>166</sup> with the Georgian interior and Tudor exterior of its mortuary. In a surprisingly cheery assessment of the situation Waugh writes of the hope that he might find himself one day,

[...] standing at the balustrade of Heaven among the unrecognizably grown-up denizens of Forest Lawn, and, leaning there beside them, amicably gaze down on southern California,

<sup>161</sup> Waugh, ‘Literary Style in England and America’, p. 477.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478.

<sup>164</sup> T. S. Eliot, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1920), pp. 42–53 (p. 49).

<sup>165</sup> Evelyn Waugh, ‘Half in Love With Easeful Death’, in *EAR*, pp. 331–37 (p. 331).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

and share with them the huge joke of what the professors of anthropology will make of it all.<sup>167</sup>

Though he does not criticize these buildings in the language of moral failing he uses in 'A Call to the Orders' or 'Literary Style in England and America' it is still clear that one of the main problems Waugh has with modern architecture is its failure to achieve aesthetic integrity, creating an inauthentic, and discordant style which at best ignores 'the orders' in favour of bland 'unloveliness' and at worst creates a pastiche of the past.

Thus Waugh's pre- Second World War ideas about architecture can be roughly summarised into two main categories. The first of these is the importance Waugh placed on the notion of buildings having structural truth, following the established 'Orders', that is, that their 'style is not a seductive decoration added to a functional structure, it is of the essence of a work of art.'<sup>168</sup> This ruled out late Gothic Revival as a 'fancy dress' style, but as we will see in the following chapter, Waugh had other, more theological objections to this architectural movement. He was also concerned about the move toward functionalism in Modernist architecture, and the removal of the human element in buildings ostensibly for their use, as satirized in the figure of Otto Silenus in *Decline and Fall*. This is linked to Waugh's need for privacy, and the disgust he has for characters like Mrs Beaver in their rapacious dividing of homes into multi-occupancy, self-contained apartments. There is something sacred about the idea of one's house being a sanctuary, and this kind of 'renovation' was particularly worrisome for Waugh, as we will see in *Work Suspended* and *Brideshead Revisited*, novels which show the destructive impulse of both modern development and the Second World War.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>168</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Literary Style in England and America', in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Donat Gallagher (London: Penguin, 1986 [1955]), pp. 477–81 (p. 478).

## Chapter 4 - Architecture II

Waugh wrote *Work Suspended* just before the beginning of the Second World War, but it was not published until 1942. As Stannard argues, it is 'a reaction to the war as a cultural watershed',<sup>1</sup> and Waugh's imagery of architectural destruction is a clear example of this. Arguably the most important character in terms of defining Waugh's aesthetic concerns in this period is John Plant Sr., who is half mocked and half admired in the aborted novel. He is an old-fashioned artist, and

[...] must have been an intransigently old-fashioned young man, for he was brought up in the hey-day of Whistlerian decorative painting and his first exhibited work was of a balloon ascent in Manchester – a large canvas crowded with human drama, in the manner of Frith.<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen in Waugh's own visual art, he was not above depicting scenes 'crowded with human drama' himself, and this is the first example of his sympathy toward Plant Sr.'s aesthetic sensibilities, indeed toward his social position as one who is 'moneyless, landless [and] educated'.<sup>3</sup>

*Work Suspended* shows Waugh returning to the criticism of high-rise developments and modern architecture that he began in *Decline and Fall* and *A Handful of Dust*. It represents the culmination of Waugh's fears about such destruction and the beginning of his reconciliation with the Victorian tastes of his father's generation, which he had, until now, so derided. There is little humour in Waugh's depiction of modern architecture with the demolition of John Plant's father's house in favour of high-rise tower blocks, showing that developers could be just as destructive as the Blitz, if not more so. These blocks threaten Plant Sr.'s house in St John's Wood over a period of five years:

The first of them drove my father into a frenzy of indignation. He wrote to *The Times* about it, addressed a meeting of ratepayers, and for six weeks sported a board advertising the house for sale.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Stannard, 'Work Suspended: Waugh's Climacteric', *Essays in Criticism*, 1978, pp. 302–20 (p. 303).

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Work Suspended and Other Stories* (1943; London: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 106–91 (p. 114). Hereafter *WSAOS*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Plant Sr. is a contrarian at heart, and removes the house from the market after six weeks, to prevent a property developer from using the land to expand the tower blocks any further. It is a period that is marked not only by intrusion of modern architecture, but also of modern art, as Plant Sr's failure to sell his representational genre paintings shows:

This was the period of his lowest professional fortunes, when his subject-pictures remained unsold, the market for dubious old masters was dropping, and public bodies were beginning to look for something 'modern' in their memorial portraits.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the transformation of St John's Wood comes to symbolise the wider Modernistic impulse that destroys both privacy and traditional, narrative art forms. In response, Plant Sr. 'used to stand on the opposite pavement watching the new building rise, a conspicuous figure muttering objurgations'.<sup>6</sup> He is painted as a faintly ridiculous character, but the fact that he stalls the seemingly inexorable march of Modernism and its attack on his aesthetic principles for as long as possible, suggests that Waugh is in fact sympathetic to these sensibilities.

The flats begin to take on a character of their own in *Work Suspended*, a personification of the social ills Waugh believed such architecture would bring about. Plant Sr. delights in 'the rapid deterioration' of the flats:

'Very good news of Hill Crest Court,' he announced one day. 'Typhoid and rats.' And on another occasion. 'Jellaby [his servant] reports the presence of prostitutes at St Eustace's. They'll have a suicide there soon, you'll see.'

There was a suicide, and for two rapturous days my father watched the coming and going of police and journalists.<sup>7</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that Waugh took inspiration from real life when plotting the downfall of these fictional buildings. In November 1937 there was a significant outbreak of Typhoid fever in Croydon due to a contaminated water supply<sup>8</sup> (though nothing to do with high-rise apartment blocks), and there were incidents in which people let out furnished apartments to prostitutes.<sup>9</sup> The 1930s in Britain saw a significant increase in the construction of multiple-occupancy residential buildings as slums were cleared in inner-urban areas. Architecturally their design 'swung uneasily between rigid neo-Georgian [...] and attempts to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 118–19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> 'Typhoid At Croydon', *The Times*, 10 November 1937, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> 'Stopped Marriage Case', *The Times*, 20 October 1933, p. 6.



introduce some of the superficial trappings of continental modernism'.<sup>10</sup> Concrete was the dominant medium for the latter style, and it is the inevitable degradation of this building material that Waugh focuses on in *Work Suspended*. John Plant Sr. poses as a potential tenant to investigate the flats encroaching on his domain and reports back to his son that:

"The place is a deserted slum [...] A miserable, down-at-heel kind of secretary took me round flat after flat – all empty. There were great cracks in the concrete stuffed up with putty. The hot pipes were cold. The doors jammed. He started asking three hundred pounds a year for the best of them and dropped to one hundred and seventy-five pounds before I saw the kitchen. Then he made it one hundred and fifty pounds. In the end he proposed what he called a 'special form of tenancy for people of good social position' – offered to let me live there for a pound a week on condition I turned out if he found someone who was willing to pay the real rent. "Strictly between ourselves," he said, "I can promise you will not be disturbed."<sup>11</sup>

This too has its basis in reality. In 1930 the *Daily Mail* reported that 'the supply in London of expensive flats has been more rapid than the demand. Agents and owners are faced with the necessity of filling these buildings somehow.'<sup>12</sup> Waugh was attempting to show that there was something decidedly 'un-English' about the kind of communal living described in *Work Suspended*, linking back to his comments to Patrick Balfour about the notion that the English have a deeply rooted love of their own front door.<sup>13</sup>

Le Corbusier, a proponent of vertical, quasi-communal living, saw his buildings as healthier and more pleasant than the conventional metropolitan or suburban dwelling as they placed their inhabitants far above the noise and pollution of the city. These blocks, Corbusier argued, offered light, air and efficiency where Waugh saw in the tower block only darkness, inefficiency and alienation. Such designs, he felt, were inherently flawed. As stated in the previous chapter, placing so many people together in close proximity has often caused social problems, and Waugh's depiction of the high-rise Corbusian-inspired apartments is a particularly grim example of this:

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Lever, *Home Sweet Home: Housing Designed by the London County Council and Greater London Council Architects 1888-1975* (London: Academy Editions, 1976), p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> WSAOS, pp. 199–120.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, 'Luxury Flat Rents Cut', *Daily Mail*, 13 October 1930, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Evelyn Waugh to Patrick Balfour, 30 June 1933; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

The mottled concrete of the flats, with its soil-pipes and fire-escapes and its rash of iron-framed casement windows, shut out half the sky. The tenants of these flats were forbidden, in their leases, to do their laundry,<sup>14</sup> but the owners had long since despaired of a genteel appearance, and you could tell which of the rooms was occupied by the stockings hanging out to dry along the windowsills.<sup>15</sup>

Waugh seems to echo T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* here, in which a typist has 'Out of the window perilously spread / Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays'.<sup>16</sup> Eliot uses this image to illustrate the everyday indignities of urban life that combine to create an intolerably desolate landscape, and it functions in a similar fashion in *Work Suspended*. The defiantly untidy 'human' elements of the flats in the novel and the urban decay they signify are an example therefore of the short-sightedness of Le Corbusier and other Modernist architects in their attempts to socially engineer a better society. The 'naïve vision' of Le Corbusier's high-rise developments was, Martin Pawley argues, 'a vision from above; it was in itself, in all its thinking, in all its drawing, something which was seen from a distant standpoint',<sup>17</sup> an observation which could also be applied to Waugh's narrative style. Thus Le Corbusier's distanced viewpoint may be advantageous for designing, but it is not so useful when considering the actual lives of the buildings' inhabitants. He did not look closely at the potential problems of moving so many people into such relatively confined spaces. Pawley also argues that 'If you are going to look at the city on such a scale, and if you are going to advise people to do things on that scale, if you are going to publish, perpetrate and advocate images on that scale, you have a responsibility to work out what happens inside.'<sup>18</sup>

This is a particular concern of Waugh's, as we have already seen in *Decline and Fall*. The novel's Modernist architect, Professor Silenus is satirised for his inability to design domestic architecture with its occupants in mind. Silenus expresses his distaste with the human condition as follows:

'What an immature, self destructive, antiquated mischief is man! How obscure and gross his prancing and chattering on his little stage of evolution! How loathsome and beyond

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<sup>14</sup> Residents of the Barbican Estate in the City of London are still prohibited from hanging laundry on the external balconies. The Trellick Tower (also London) was designed with laundries built into the lift tower to avoid the same problem.

<sup>15</sup> *WSAOS*, p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', in *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (1922; London: Faber and Faber, 1999), pp. 21–39 (p. 31).

<sup>17</sup> Martin Pawley, 'A Philistine Attack', *Architectural Design*, April 1972, pp. 239–49 (p. 240).

<sup>18</sup> Pawley, p. 240.

words boring all the thoughts and self-approval of his biological by-product! this half-formed, ill-conditioned body! this erratic, maladjusted mechanism of his soul: on one side the harmonious instincts and balanced responses of the animal, on the other the inflexible purpose of the engine, and between them man, equally alien from the *being* of Nature and the *doing* of the machine, the vile *becoming*!<sup>19</sup>

Thus in *Work Suspended* Waugh continues an argument he had been developing since 1928, and his review of Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow* in 1929. In that review Waugh comments that all the rooms illustrated in the book are 'completely new and completely tidy' and asks 'How will M. le Corbusier's houses look in a hundred years' time when the patina of the concrete has weathered and the sharp angles have softened, and how do the interiors look when a family of normally disorderly habits has lived there for a few years?'<sup>20</sup> Just a decade later he has his answer; the 'mottled concrete of the flats' that replace Plant Sr.'s house is unspeakably ugly, and the only thing worse than the poorly maintained buildings are their occupants. Modernist architecture, then, is dependent on clean lines and unsullied tidiness. This level of perfection demands rigid conformity at the expense of the individual, and as such the inevitable messiness of human life is even more pronounced in contrast. In *Work Suspended*, against the canvas of decaying concrete, so unsuited to the British climate, the stockings hanging to dry are just another symbol of degradation.

This landscape of misery allows Waugh to present John Plant's search for a new house in the country as a solid 'permanent'<sup>21</sup> alternative to the modern flats that seem liable to collapse at any moment. The search is well received by John's friends:

There was [a] reason for their interest. Nearly all of them – and, for that matter, myself as well – professed a specialized enthusiasm for domestic architecture. It was one of the peculiarities of my generation, and there is no accounting for it. In youth we had pruned our aesthetic emotions hard back so that in many cases they had reverted to briar stock; we none of us wrote or read poetry, or, if we did, it was of a kind which left unsatisfied those wistful, half-romantic, half-aesthetic, peculiarly British longings [...]. When the poetic mood was on us, we turned to buildings, and gave them the place which our fathers accorded to Nature – to almost any buildings, but particularly those in the classical

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* (1928; London: Penguin Books, 1937), pp. 120–21.

<sup>20</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Cities of the Future', in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Donat Gallagher (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 63–65 (pp. 64–65). Hereafter *EAR*.

<sup>21</sup> *WSAOS*, p. 143.

tradition, and, more particularly, its decay. It was a kind of nostalgia for the style of living which we emphatically rejected in practical affairs.<sup>22</sup>

This passage clearly identifies John Plant as a self-portrait, and so much so that Waugh inaccurately imposes his own aesthetic tastes on all his friends. (Powell, Betjeman, Connolly and Harold Acton all 'wrote or read poetry'.) Nevertheless, the passion for domestic architecture was shared by them all, recalling Waugh's and Betjeman's assertions in *A Little Learning* and *Ghastly Good Taste*. Plant also offers a possible reason for this attachment, hinting that the pared-back aesthetic of Modernist art stunted an intrinsic romantic impulse which, through a process of displacement, was directed toward buildings instead. The consequences of this displacement shaped Waugh's pre-Second World War architectural taste, from one 'at first predicated mostly on vague antitheses to the Little Englishness of his parents and social inferiors'<sup>23</sup> which developed into a desire to return to the comforting classicism of those buildings which followed 'the Orders'.<sup>24</sup>

These orders, set out in Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola's *Regola delle cinque ordini d'architettura* [*The Five Orders of Architecture*] (1562) have been subsequently defined by Joseph Gwilt as:

[...] a certain assemblage of parts subject to uniform established proportions, regulated by the office that each part has to perform. [...] The species of orders are five in number, Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite, each of whose mass and ornaments are suited to its character and the expression it is intended to possess. These are the five orders of architecture, in the proper understanding and application whereof is laid the foundations of architecture as an art.<sup>25</sup>

Read in isolation, *Work Suspended* represents anxieties about the destruction of these established architectural orders. It seems to position Waugh as a staunch traditionalist with Mr Plant Sr. serving as his alter ego. Mr Plant's attempts to protect the Victorian suburb at all costs, suggest as much, but as we have seen from Waugh's earlier criticism of Victorian Gothic architecture, such a simple parallel is reductionist. What is most interesting about the novel is that it

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<sup>22</sup> Waugh, 'Work Suspended and Other Stories', pp. 143–44.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 283.

<sup>24</sup> See: Waugh, 'A Call to the Orders', in *EAR*, pp. 215–18.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Gwilt, *An Encyclopaedia of Architecture: Historical, Theoretical, & Practical*, Revised (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1894), p. 680.

marks Waugh's gradual acceptance of the Victorian ideology of Mr Plant, and by extension, that of his father, Arthur Waugh.

Evelyn had an awkward relationship with Arthur, and was unkind about Underhill, his father's house, stating in *A Little Learning* that 'I never had any particular love of it [...] and I always, from the moment I became critical of him, regarded my father's devotion to the actual structure as slightly absurd.'<sup>26</sup> Underhill's clunky, mismatched, quasi-Tudor revival style was the antithesis of the classical architectural aesthetic Waugh admired, but there is a sense here that part of his frustration with the house lay with the Victorian ideals of his father and a reaction against what he saw as his quaint, even kitsch tastes. Yet *Work Suspended* complicates this relationship, and shows Waugh gradually becoming more accepting of, if not appreciative of, his father's architectural ideology. This is due to the fact that this ideology offered more in the way of permanence and privacy than the horrendously modern and communal tower blocks that threaten not only St John's Wood, but also the very notion of what can be considered a 'traditional' homestead. By the time the Second World War was well underway, this desire for privacy became even more pertinent.

John Plant Sr.'s house is thus a monument to the idea of privacy and individuality that Waugh did not think possible in a block of flats, or, by extension, in the modern world generally. When Plant Jr. returns to the house after his father's death he finds that 'The furniture, now shrouded, had the inimitable air of having been in the same place for a generation; it was a harmonious, unobstructive jumble of inherited rosewood and mahogany'<sup>27</sup> and it is this sense of legacy that is lacking in the new blocks. Stannard suggests that the house, 'represents with its Morris wallpapers and fabrics, the last flourish of a valuable line of English artistic development in which the virtues of honest craftsmanship were paramount.'<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, its demolition after Plant Sr.'s death, exposes it as a theatre set on which his Victorian artistic sensibilities were enacted:

The roof was off, the front was down, and on one side the basement lay open; on the other the walls still stood their full height, and the rooms, three-sided like stage settings, exposed

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<sup>26</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1964), p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Waugh, *WSAOS*, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Stannard, 'Work Suspended: Waugh's Climacteric', p. 314.

their Morris papers, flapping loose in wind where the fireplaces and windowframes had been torn out. The studio had disappeared, leaving a square of rubble to mark its site.<sup>29</sup>

This image of desolation brings attention back to the Morris patterned wallpaper; now useless and soiled, it flutters beside the gaps left by the missing practical components that constitute a house: the fireplaces and windows, creating an absurd set piece of Victorianism attacked by Modernism. The fact that the studio has 'disappeared' is another blow to the aesthetic world of Plant Sr.; reduced to rubble, the studio has lost any identifying qualities of its architecture, or of the artworks that were once created there.

Contemporary articles in the *Architectural Review* described similar scenes of destruction; the only difference being that these were caused by air raids rather than the wrecking ball. Alan Powers comments that:

Bombing could, like cubism, achieve the effect of opening up a building to reveal its interior and exterior simultaneously. The attraction of such ruins, transforming the familiar into surrealist poetry, prompted the *Review* to plead for their preservation so as to provide contrasts with the rebuilt post-war townscape, as if they were intricate fragments of the past, torn from their original context and collaged onto the neutral present.<sup>30</sup>

In describing the (albeit fictional) Plant house in *Work Suspended*, Waugh preserves these 'intricate fragment[s] of the past' in literary form, though his rationale is to use this image to criticise the rapacious onslaught of modern architecture on the individual homestead, rather than as a historical artefact. Nine years earlier Waugh had already used the discourse of demolition and reconstruction as a metaphor for the writing process. In 'People Who Want to Sue Me' (1930), an article for the *Daily Mail*, he had argued that:

[...] novel writing is a highly skilled and laborious trade. One does not just sit behind a screen jotting down other people's conversation. One has for one's raw material every single thing one has ever seen or heard or felt, and one has to go over that vast, smouldering rubbish-heap of experience, half stifled by the fumes and dust, scraping and delving 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.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Waugh, 'Work Suspended and Other Stories', pp. 142–43.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Powers, "'The Reconditioned Eye": Architects and Artists in English Modernism', *AA Files*, 1993, pp. 54–62 (p. 57).

<sup>31</sup> Waugh, 'People Who Want to Sue Me', in *EAR*, pp. 72–73 (p. 73).

This is Waugh's artist as craftsman argument writ large. Here he sees himself as a manual labourer, physically sorting through the raw materials of construction in order to create some kind of order out of chaos. The reference to the 'rubbish-heap of experience' is another example of Waugh invoking Eliot's *Waste Land*.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water.<sup>32</sup>

Like Eliot, the rubbish heap is seen as a potential source of artistic inspiration, if one only knows where to look for it. But it is the 'tarnished and dented fragments' that prove the most significant. Eliot's narrator states 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins',<sup>33</sup> and it is true for both Waugh and Eliot that these fragments are ironically comforting as they contain the kernel of meaning. Fragments disperse and coalesce in *The Waste Land*, and take on new meanings. As Robert L. Schwarz argues, Eliot 'had not yet put together the pieces of his life [...] He could only shore them against his condition. Obliquely the fragments were reflected in the images that together comprised the poem.'<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Waugh seems more successful in gathering the fragments he refers to in 'People Who Want to Sue Me' in order 'to make a coherent and significant arrangement'. In this sense Waugh as a writer has the same impulse as his father against 'the unmetrical, incoherent banalities of these literary "Cubists"'.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the reason Waugh is able to achieve coherence is due to the fact that he sees fragments of inspiration as physical building materials. He returns to this image again in *A Handful of Dust*, the title of which is Waugh's most obvious allusion to Eliot. Jenny, one of Mrs Beaver's tenants, visits Hetton Abbey and is ironically horrified at the renovations taking place:

There were planks and ladders and heaps of plaster about.  
"Oh Teddy, what a shame. I do hate seeing things modernised."

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<sup>32</sup> Eliot, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Eliot, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Robert L. Schwarz, *Broken Images: A Study of The Waste Land* (Lewisburg: Buckness University Press, 1988), p. 239.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Waugh, 'The New Poetry', in *T. S. Eliot The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Michael Grant, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), I, pp. 67–69 (p. 69).



"It isn't a room we used very much."

"No, but still ..." She stirred the mouldings of fleur de lys that littered the floor, fragments of tarnished gilding and dusty stencil-work. "You know, Brenda's been a wonderful friend to me. I wouldn't say anything against her ... but ever since I came here I've been wondering whether she really understands this beautiful place and all it means to you."<sup>36</sup>

Here fragments of the past, of his childhood and marriage, are scattered, littering the rubbish heap of modernisation, even before the Second World War's destructive force on the domestic front. The problem for Waugh was that the rapacious dismantling of property by developers had an impact on the British landscape that endured far longer than the impact of the war itself.

Thus *Work Suspended* is an important transitional work that embodies many of Waugh's architectural and aesthetic anxieties in a period that saw the uprooting of much he held dear. It may be unfinished, but as a record of Waugh's objections to modern architectural developments it is unparalleled. The tower block comes to symbolise everything from social problems to aesthetic ugliness. It is unfit for purpose, lacks privacy or individuality and in its construction lies the destruction of traditional homesteads.

Although before the Second World War, Waugh was staunchly against most 'Victorianisms' in architecture and decoration, his aesthetic ideology altered during the conflict. 'The Philistine Age of English Decoration', written for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1938, was a diatribe against nondescript Victorian architecture, and worse, its jumble of influences.

The nations of the world were coming to the City of London to borrow, and its citizens adorned their homes with motives arranged as capriciously as the unredeemed pledges in a pawnbroker's window – here a Venetian window, there a Gothic; over the door a terracotta plaque fairly reminiscent of the French Renaissance [...]. It is the only period of English architecture that cannot be said to have any style of any kind at all.<sup>37</sup>

Yet by 1942, Waugh seems to have softened to the idea of there being a distinct Victorian domestic and architectural style, particularly in its provision of privacy for its occupants. He wrote a letter of complaint to *The Times* against the salvaging of Victorian iron railings for the war effort, and, as Harris notes in 'The

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<sup>36</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (1934; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1997), p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> Waugh, 'The Philistine Age of English Decoration', in *EAR*, pp. 218–22 (p. 219).

Antimacassar Restored', expressed 'values of privacy [...] sounding a controversial note when the communal spirit of wartime was at its height.'<sup>38</sup> Waugh argued that:

The phrase "Victorian monstrosity" is common currency. Before it is too late, may we not consider that the rustic garden furniture, the Gothic gateposts, and the Jubilee drinking fountains [...] all in cast iron, gave keen pleasure at the time and therefore are almost certain to do so again?<sup>39</sup>

But it becomes clear that what he truly values about railings is not their aesthetic value, but their symbolism of robust 'independence and privacy'.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, as Eleanor Herring argues, detractors of Britain's penchant for surrounding buildings with railings saw them as 'representative of a stratified social system, which was increasingly seen as incompatible with post-war social reforms.'<sup>41</sup> It was precisely this stratified social system that Waugh held dear.

Revisionist thinking about decorative architectural details was fairly common at this time. J.M. Richards considered the recent past in this way in *Castles on the Ground* (1946). Although critical of the Art Deco chrome details like those on the Odeon Cinemas of the interwar years, Richards wonders,

If the sophisticated world is now almost ready to admire the *art nouveau* dairy again, will it not in due course admire the chromium bedecked Odeon too? [...] And in due course [...] the sham half-timbered villas with their creosoted garages, their crazy paving and the bottle glass in the panes of their front doors.<sup>42</sup>

Waugh would never go as far as to justify Art Deco architecture or the cosy suburban similitude of the houses of Metroland, but the small changes he makes to his aesthetic ideology during the war are vital to an understanding of what exactly architecture comes to stand for in his novels. His taste is occasionally inconsistent, but always developing. It is often difficult to establish in his contradictory articles what it is exactly that he finds aesthetically lacking in much of the work he criticises. However, when Waugh's taste is framed by his desire for individuality and for independence and privacy, it becomes somewhat clearer. Modern

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<sup>38</sup> Alexandra Harris, 'The Antimacassar Restored', in *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Francesca Orestano and Francesca Frigerio (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 255–72 (pp. 270–71).

<sup>39</sup> Waugh, 'Victorian Taste', in *EAR*, pp. 268–69 (p. 269).

<sup>40</sup> Waugh, 'Victorian Taste', p. 269.

<sup>41</sup> Eleanor Herring, *Street Furniture Design: Contesting Modernism in Post-War Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia* (London: John Murray, 1973), pp. 47–48.

architecture with its emphasis on communal living and proscribed exterior and interior style is a threat to Waugh's ideals, and the war only served to confirm his fears.

*Put Out More Flags* (1942), another wartime novel expressing fears of domestic destruction, marks a slight return to Waugh's pre-war comic mockery of sentimental architecture and interior design. The novel is mostly set on the home front, but the insidious destructiveness of the conflict permeates everything metaphorically. In the dedicatory letter to Randolph Churchill, Waugh states that:

These characters are no longer contemporary in sympathy; they were forgotten even before the war; but they lived on delightfully in holes and corners and, like everyone else, they have been disturbed in their habits by the rough intrusion of current history.<sup>43</sup>

This rough intrusion is how Waugh expresses similar fears about loss of privacy and the autonomy of the homeowner seen in *Work Suspended*. The threat facing the Harkness family home is only indirectly related to the war, and comes in the form of three very badly behaved evacuee children who are part of Basil Seal's plan as billeting officer to extort money from well-off country house owners. Seal chooses the Harknesses' house, a fifteenth-century mill in North Grappling, a town apparently spared modernity,<sup>44</sup> after reading an advertisement for it in the newspaper:

*Paying guests accepted in lovely modernized fifteenth-century mill. Ideal surroundings for elderly or artistic people wishing to avoid war worries. All home produce. Secluded old-world gardens. 6 gns weekly. Highest references given and expected. Harkness, Old Mill House, North Grappling.*<sup>45</sup>

Immediately the image of a naïve couple attempting to run an Arts-and-Crafts style retreat from the realities of wartime Britain is posited as something vaguely ridiculous and selfish by Waugh, despite any sympathy he might have for their situation.

The heavy irony of the Old Mill having been developed into a 'dwelling house by a disciple of William Morris'<sup>46</sup> in the 1880s seems entirely lost on the Harknesses. The mill, once a functional machine, now has its river diverted and its

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<sup>43</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Put Out More Flags* (1942; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000), p. 7. Hereafter *POMF*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

millpond drained to create the 'secluded old-world' gardens described in the advertisement, and the 'rooms that had held the grindstones and machinery, and the long lofts where the grain had been stored, had been tactfully floored and plastered and portioned.'<sup>47</sup> Agnes Harkness tells Seal that she would 'like to think of this beautiful old house still being of use in the world. After all it was built for *use*',<sup>48</sup> but as the Mill is now an expensive guesthouse for artistic, affectedly Bohemian types her statement is clearly ridiculous. Once Seal has left the troublesome Connolly children behind, there is an enormous snowfall, after which the Old Mill becomes 'cut off physically, as for so long it had been cut in spirit, from all contact with the modern world'<sup>49</sup> for eight days. During this time the children enact the final part of Seal's elaborate scam; causing enough havoc to ensure Mr Harkness will pay Seal the thirty pounds it costs to have them relocated.

It is therefore ironic that the Harknesses advertise their home as a refuge from war but fail to account for the destructive impulse of Seal, who essentially warmongers on a domestic scale throughout the novel. He deliberately misleads the Harknesses into thinking he is bringing them some full-paying house guests when in fact, as billeting officer he will only offer them a tiny fraction of their bill, then takes great pleasure in revealing this information in the most dramatic, and violent way possible:

The moment for which Basil had been waiting was come. This was the time for the grenade he had been nursing ever since he opened the little, wrought-iron gate and put his hand to the wrought-iron bell-pull. "We pay eight shillings and sixpence a week," he said. That was the safety pin; the level flew up, the spring struck home; within the serrated metal shell the primer spat and, invisibly, flame crept up the finger's length of fuse. Count seven slowly, then throw. [...] It was magnificent. It was war. Basil was something of a specialist in shocks. He could not recall a better.<sup>50</sup>

This is Seal's war effort<sup>51</sup> and Waugh makes it seem every bit as violent as the front line, using a metaphorical hand grenade to establish that the threat of wartime destruction and disruption to country houses could also come from the state, in this case from three lower class and misbehaving evacuees.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

There is an examination of modern architecture too in *Put Out More Flags*, primarily in the description of Angela Lyne's Grosvenor Square flat. She is the jarring figure of tragedy in an otherwise comedic novel and her external appearance is narrated in terms of its similarity to an unoccupied house:

A stranger might have watched her for mile after mile, as a spy or a lover or a newspaper reporter will loiter in the street before a closed house, and see no chink of light, hear no whisper of movement behind the shuttered façade, and in direct proportion to his discernment, he would have gone on his way down the corridor baffled and disturbed.<sup>52</sup>

Her flat is 'as smart and non-committal as herself'<sup>53</sup> and there is something very mechanical about the way she 'likes gadgets' and 'hated human contact on any but her own terms'<sup>54</sup> that mirrors the modern interior:

Since the war there was no liftman on duty after midnight. She shut herself in, pressed the button for the mansard floor and rose to the empty, uncommunicative flat. There were no ashes to stir in the grate; illuminated glass coals glowed eternally in an elegant steel basket; the temperature of the rooms never varied, winter or summer, day or night.<sup>55</sup>

It is a desolate image of a home stripped of the quirks of the domestic environment that is punctuated by radio broadcasts about the war, and over time this has a dire effect on Angela's psyche. Turning to alcohol for comfort, she takes to wearing dark glasses:

[...] she wore them indoors, as well as out; she wore them in the subdued, concealed lighting of her drawing-room, as she sat hour after hour with the radio standing by the decanter and glass at her elbow; she wore them when she looked at herself in the mirror.<sup>56</sup>

The glasses are a symbolic veil Angela attempts to put between herself and the 'hazards of war',<sup>57</sup> but it is inescapable; even the basement of the building is converted into an air-raid shelter, another intrusion of the war into the domestic environment. This is no coincidence; Angela's stately home has been repurposed for the war effort into a hospital for air-raid victims,<sup>58</sup> and this is how Waugh shows that even a seemingly unemotional character like Angela can be haunted by the war and its intrusion into the domestic sphere. L.E. Sissman argues that 'Angela personifies all the vain (in both senses) smartness of the years between the wars;

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

the waste of her life symbolizes the waste of the old values of upper-class England.<sup>59</sup> The fashionable, modern interior of her London flat does not protect her from outside forces but rather reflects back the emptiness of her existence. It is an altogether different criticism of apartment living than the one Waugh presents in *A Handful of Dust*. There the emphasis is on the violence enacted upon old buildings in the name of fashionable design, and the anonymity afforded by renting a room in such a building to allow for illicit affairs. In *Put Out More Flags* Angela's flat is literally dehumanising, but there is nothing amusing about this process as there is in say, Professor Silenus' 'elimination of the human element'.<sup>60</sup>

Damon Marcel DeCoste argues that *Put Out More Flags* is an example of Waugh's returning to the sphere of his early farces where the world is 'governed by meaningless motion and inhuman repetition',<sup>61</sup> with the notable difference that the war in this novel brings about 'a weariness with the absurd'<sup>62</sup> which marks a departure from his earlier works. What is missing in *Put Out More Flags* is religion and DeCoste sees *Brideshead Revisited* as a resolution to this problem, a 'search for a subject that transcends mere farce, and the exploration [...] of characters and events that escape the merely laughable by way of their participation in a spiritual, and not just historical, narrative.'<sup>63</sup> Stannard also notes the effect of the 'secular waking nightmare'<sup>64</sup> of *Put Out More Flags*, and links it to Waugh's anxiety over culture taking on a distinctly proletarian air in which there were few opportunities 'for the secular exercise of free will.'<sup>65</sup> Even something as apparently mundane as Angela's never varying room temperatures comes to symbolise the homogenisation of society, and ultimately, despair.

*Brideshead Revisited* then, had a grander intention. In its architectural symbols lies a sense of spiritual permanence not seen before in Waugh's work, and this is rooted in his Catholic faith. *Brideshead* continues the theme of destruction, though with a melancholic and nostalgic tone which is absent from the novels

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<sup>59</sup> L. E. Sissman, 'Evelyn Waugh: The Height of His Powers', *The Atlantic*, March 1972, pp. 24–26 (p. 25).

<sup>60</sup> Waugh, *Decline and Fall*, p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> Damon Marcel DeCoste, 'Waugh's War and the Loop of History: From Put Out More Flags to Brideshead Revisited and Back Again', *Style*, 34.3 (2000), pp. 458–86 (p. 459).

<sup>62</sup> DeCoste, p. 459.

<sup>63</sup> DeCoste, p. 459.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh. No Abiding City: 1939-1966* (London: Flamingo, 1993), p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

discussed thus far. It follows the fate of Brideshead Castle and the Flyte family, from prosperity in the 1920s to adversity during the Second World War, a familiar story for many aristocratic families in Britain during the period. Yet Waugh notes in the preface to the 1959 edition of the novel that:

It was impossible to foresee, in the spring of 1944, the present cult of the English country house. It seemed then that the ancestral seats which were our chief national artistic achievement were doomed to decay and spoliation [...] Brideshead today would be open to trippers, its treasures rearranged by expert hands and the fabric better maintained than it was by Lord Marchmain.<sup>66</sup>

He is perhaps right, but then again, given the damage caused to the house through its use as an army barracks it is possible that Brideshead Castle would not have survived the waves of demolition due to disrepair and death taxes which swept the country after the war. Waugh's desire to preserve the country house through his writing was, of course, ahead of the later preservationist zeitgeist. McCartney argues that in the same way that Charles Ryder is painting 'ancestral homes just before they are torn down', Waugh is on a similar 'elegiac mission to record the remains of a dying civilisation lest it disappear without a trace. He seems to have thought his fiction would perform a similar function.'<sup>67</sup>

One of Charles's first commissions as an artist is to paint Marchmain House, the family's London base, before it is demolished. It becomes a significant building for Charles, despite his limited connection to it, and the paintings he produces end up being among his favourites. Charles states that this is due to the speed with which he was forced to work on them, but it is likely that his memorialising impulse also informed his preference. The experience of painting Marchmain House is in fact very similar to that of his painting the garden room murals at Brideshead Castle in that he finds 'no difficulties [...] the right colour was where I wanted it on the palette, each brush stroke as soon as it was complete, seemed to have been there always.'<sup>68</sup> It is likely therefore that Waugh intends us to see the mythic effect that any building associated with the Flytes appears to have on

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<sup>66</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 8. Hereafter *BR*.

<sup>67</sup> George McCartney, *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 74.

<sup>68</sup> *BR*, p. 210.



Charles's artistic abilities, where in both cases 'The brush seemed somehow to do what was wanted of it.'<sup>69</sup>

The greatest sadness generated by the demolition of Marchmain House is that its developers, who are going to build a block of flats on the site, will be keeping its original name. Such disregard for the sanctity of the house is embodied in Rex Mottram. His intention to take a penthouse in these flats is insensitive, and Rex cannot understand why the idea upsets Julia so greatly; he can only think that 'she would like to keep up with her old home.'<sup>70</sup> Rex is continually criticised in the novel for misunderstanding the importance of tradition, and does not understand why the Marchmain family were so intent on living beyond their means. He is brashly modern and practical, and yet he has the most absurd idea of what constitutes 'grandness', insisting on the ancient, yet horrible brandy<sup>71</sup> at his dinner with Charles, and presenting Julia with a diamond-encrusted tortoise.<sup>72</sup> Thus Rex is the epitome of the new-monied individual for whom Waugh had such scorn, and is the symbol of the type of person who would profit from what Waugh saw as the dissolution of aristocratic society.

One of the reasons, therefore, that Charles is so compelled to document the demolition of Marchmain House and all the other ancestral homes he is commissioned to paint is that he is attempting to maintain his link to the ancient traditions that Mottram so carelessly ignores. David Rothstein argues that Charles 'finds a means to understand and redeem his personal history of dislocation [...] through his newly formed link to an ancient tradition and memory barely surviving among their historical remnants, the sites of memory at Brideshead – the old stones, the chapel, the lamp.'<sup>73</sup> Charles will reconcile this with his conversion to Catholicism, but throughout the earlier chapters of the novel, he flounders in this world due to his misreading of Brideshead Castle as simply a site of historic and aesthetic interest. Rothstein also points out that 'getting inside' the house 'requires more than an understanding of Brideshead as an historical monument dedicated to aristocratic and aesthetic values. [It] requires that one understand Brideshead

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>72</sup> A reference to Joris-Karl Huysmans *A Rebours* (1884). *BR*, p. 159.

<sup>73</sup> David Rothstein, "Brideshead Revisited" and the Modern Historicization of Memory', *Studies in the Novel*, 25.3 (1993), pp. 318–31 (p. 321).

above all as a shrine dedicated to an ancient religious tradition'.<sup>74</sup> Before his conversion Charles attempts various ways of 'getting inside' Brideshead, including the clumsy metaphor used when he consummates his relationship with Julia. She is disturbingly compared to property, and the passage gives the impression that Charles is making love to Brideshead Castle by proxy: 'It was as though a deed of conveyance of her narrow loins had been drawn and sealed. I was making my first entry as the freeholder of a property I would enjoy and develop at leisure.'<sup>75</sup> Not only is this passage completely void of sexual passion, it is also misogynistic in its representation of Julia as desirable real estate to be understood and gained access to in the same way Charles wants to enter the world of Brideshead Castle, and the aristocratic set it belongs to. Ultimately he is denied permanent residence in both the house and the family and this is due in part to the fact that he was not, at the time, a Catholic.

Indeed, it appears that Charles is aware of Brideshead Castle as a gendered building. Lady Marchmain's room represents 'the intimate feminine, modern, world' in comparison to the 'coved and coffered roof, the columns and entablature of the central hall, in the august, masculine atmosphere of a better age.'<sup>76</sup> But Charles closes the door on Lady Marchmain, on her offer to side with her against Sebastian, and thus what he sees as the deceptive feminine world. Her room, in fact, is entirely out of place in the house, the ceilings are lowered, obscuring distinctive decoration underneath, symbolic of the duplicitous and scheming nature of her character.

The idea of female coded buildings is also apparent in *Put Out More Flags*. At the beginning of the novel Barbara Sothill's house, Malfrey, is presented as under threat from the coming war:

There was something female and voluptuous in the beauty of Malfrey; other lovely houses maintained a virginal modesty or a manly defiance, but Malfrey had no secret from the heavens; it had been built more than two hundred years ago in days of victory and ostentation and lay, spread out, sumptuously at ease, splendid, defenceless and provocative; a Cleopatra among houses; across the sea, Barbara felt, a small and envious

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<sup>74</sup> Rothstein, p. 322.

<sup>75</sup> *BR*, p. 248.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

mind, a meanly ascetic mind, a creature of the conifers, was plotting the destruction of her home.<sup>77</sup>

Malfrey is referred to as though it is a promiscuous woman, at risk from an unseen, foreign enemy and this image assists in setting up the text as a war novel on a domestic scale. In fact Waugh suggests, as with the evacuees at the Old Mill, that the potential damage to the house comes from agencies at home. Barbara plays host to five families evacuated from Birmingham at Malfrey, and the next day all four of her housemaids hand in their notice: 'Oh it's not the work, madam. It's the Birmingham women. The way they leave their rooms.'<sup>78</sup> The situation is bemoaned by Lady Seal and Sir Joseph Mainwaring who comments, 'What a shocking business! Dear, dreaming Malfrey. Think of a Birmingham board school in that exquisite Grinling Gibbons<sup>79</sup> saloon.'<sup>80</sup> Again Malfrey is personified as without agency, a vulnerable place-person whose baroque interiors are invaded by hordes of marauding state-schooled children. It is possible that Waugh modelled Malfrey on Belton House in Lincolnshire, the home of Lord Brownlow, as he mentions Gibbons carvings in a letter to Christine Longford (Countess of Longford) in 1932: 'I went away last weekend to see a house of staggering beauty called Belton. Built by Christopher Wren. Grinling Gibbons throughout. Marble Wren fireplaces. Tapestry 18<sup>th</sup> cent. with pseudo-Indian scenes. Inconceivably lovely.'<sup>81</sup>

This was exactly the sort of stately home, and indeed way of life, that Waugh saw as suffering collateral damage during the Second World War. Like Brideshead Castle, Malfrey is also requisitioned by the army - though it is arguably the base for Basil Seal's own personal 'war work' for much longer. Freddy's unit is stationed 'all over the park at Malfrey, dispersed irregularly under the great elms [...] and the yeomanry officers set up their mess in the Grinling Gibbons saloon.'<sup>82</sup> It is a distinctly male colonisation of the house and one that is likely to bring its own kind of disorder and destruction. The contrast of the ever-evocative officer's 'mess' with the genteel seventeenth-century interior is alarming. Unlike *Brideshead*, *Put Out More Flags* does not explicitly describe the inevitable deterioration of the

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<sup>77</sup> *POMF*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>79</sup> Grinling Gibbons (1648-1712). Dutch-British sculptor specializing in wood carving.

<sup>80</sup> *POMF*, p. 22.

<sup>81</sup> Evelyn Waugh to Christine Longford, 27 September 1932; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXII.

<sup>82</sup> *POMF*, p. 141.

occupied house, but the 'peculiar raffishness' of troops in train carriages is described elsewhere, and the chaotic environment created by soldiers, representative of the modern degraded state, is everywhere apparent:

[...] there is a process of transformation and decay sets in; coats are removed, horrible packages of food appear, dense clouds of smoke obscure the windows, in a few minutes the floor is deep in cigarette ends, lumps of bread and meat, waste paper; in repose the bodies assume attitudes of extreme abandon; some look like corpses that have been left too long unburied; others like the survivors of some saturnalian debauch.<sup>83</sup>

There are also traces of Waugh's aesthetic conflicts in the tension between rational and romantic understandings of art in *Brideshead*. He does this by contrasting the aesthetic views of Sebastian with those of his older brother Brideshead. Unlike Sebastian, Brideshead needs constant validation from others, usually Charles, as to whether examples of art or architecture are objectively 'good'. He asks if the chapel is 'good art',<sup>84</sup> and whether Marchmain House is 'good architecturally',<sup>85</sup> whereas Sebastian is much more immediately emotional and authentic in his aesthetic responses. He does not need, nor would ever presume to establish, the objective worth of anything; of Brideshead Castle he says, simply, 'You see [...] it's like this'.<sup>86</sup> His passion for the chapel as 'a monument of *art nouveau*'<sup>87</sup> is completely without basis in any aesthetic teaching or methodical appraisal. The chapel, inspired by the 1902 addition to Madresfield Court which Waugh visited in 1931<sup>88</sup> is exquisite, but as J. Mordaunt Crook argues, 'in the context of architectural progression, might it not be described as a performance of exquisite irrelevance?'<sup>89</sup> The influence of Sebastian's romantic aesthetic understanding of his surroundings on Charles's own approach to art and architecture is undeniable, and the symbolism of Charles's discarding his Roger Fry Omega screen after spending some time with Sebastian is even more poignant when we consider again the opposition Waugh makes between the romantic and the rational, between Rossetti and Fry in *Rossetti*.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 214–15.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>88</sup> Paula Byrne, *Mad World: Evelyn Waugh and the Secrets of Brideshead* (London: Harper Press, 2010), p. 152.

<sup>89</sup> J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London: John Murray, 1989), p. 228.

However, the most important architectural message of *Brideshead Revisited* is surely Charles's reconciliation with the immortality of Catholicism. At the end of the novel, when the house has been reduced to a shabby state by the army, Charles realises that his career of immortalising transient things through painting them is futile, as these buildings present only an illusion of permanence on the secular aesthetic level. The one exception seems to be the Chapel, or at least what the Chapel represents. Catholicism's antiquity and permanence seem to have protected it; it has miraculously escaped any alteration and shows 'no ill-effects of its long neglect, the *art-nouveau* paint was as fresh and bright as ever; the *art-nouveau* lamp burned once more before the altar.'<sup>90</sup> The chapel shows the power of religion to resist change, and takes on a relic-like mystical quality for Charles. None of this applies, however, to Brideshead Castle itself. The original builders of the house:

[...] did not know the uses to which their work would descend; they made a new house with the stones of the old castle; year by year, generation after generation, they enriched and extended it; year by year the great harvest of timber in the park grew to ripeness; until, in sudden frost, came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing; *Quomodo sedet sola civitas*. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.<sup>91</sup>

At first this reading of the degraded Castle is one of despair, but it soon transforms into the pivotal realisation that:

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 [...] a small red flame – a beaten copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-cooper doors of a tabernacle [...] It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew amongst the cold stones.<sup>92</sup>

Thus Charles comes to understand that the effort in building Brideshead Castle, just for it to fall into disrepair, was not wasted. The ever-burning light of the lamp on the altar effectively reconciles Charles's feelings of dislocation and provides a tangible link to the ancient traditions of the house. At this moment Brideshead Castle has, in a sense, finally become 'unlocked' for him.

*Brideshead Revisited* is not the only instance of Waugh's discussing architecture in the light of religion and tradition. In fact, the lack of traditional

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<sup>90</sup> *BR*, p. 330.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330–31.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

religious art in Notre-Dame de Toute Grâce du Plateau d'Assy, a church designed in association with Friar Marie-Alain Couturier, may have been a contributing factor to Waugh's repeated condemnation of the project. Couturier, a Dominican Friar and Catholic priest, was featured in the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1950 edition of *LIFE Magazine*, where the decorations of the Assy Church were discussed as an attempt to meld the modern art of Léger with the traditions of the Catholic Church. The abstract, vaguely Cubist stained glass windows and tapestries illustrated in the *LIFE* article caused Waugh to make the following comment in a letter to Nancy Mitford: 'I opened "Life" magazine & what should I see but a full page portrait of Friar Couturier followed by pictures of a disgusting church he has built. Oh for an atom bomb.'<sup>93</sup> The reference to an atom bomb in this context provides an insight into another of Waugh's objections to overtly modern architecture: that the destructive force of war often paved the way for its construction, making modernity both unavoidable and irreversible. By insinuating that he would enact this same force against the kinds of buildings he despised, Waugh attempts to gain mastery of the very process that unsettles the established architectural orders of a place. It is clear that Waugh and Mitford were in a long dialogue about the Assy church, as over a year later he was still insisting that if she were to 'praise the atheist temples at Vence & Assy it will be the end of a beautiful friendship.'<sup>94</sup> On the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1952 Waugh began to make plans to visit Vence, Assy and Marseille, and asked Nancy Mitford 'Could Momo [Maud Marriot] be induced to drive me on a tour [...] to see the new Corbusier-Couturier architecture? I think I ought to see it.'<sup>95</sup> The writer of the *Life* article points out that:

The church at Assy may be the first indication of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century renaissance in the art of the Catholic Church. Already, as a result of the untiring efforts of Father Couturier, similar projects are beginning to take shape. The celebrated modern architect, Le Corbusier, is negotiating to design a church grotto near Marseilles. Henri Matisse, one of the founders of the modern movement and a well-known anticlerical, is now engaged in decorating a new Dominican chapel at Vence in the south of France ...<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, 3 August 1950, in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 383; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>94</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, c. 5 November 1951, in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 409; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>95</sup> *The Letters of Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Charlotte Mosley (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2010), p. 269.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, 'The Assy Church', *LIFE Magazine*, 19 June 1950, pp. 72–76 (p. 76).

Corbusier's church grotto was never built, but interestingly Corbusier and Couturier would work together on two occasions – the Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp (1951-53) and Sainte Marie de La Tourette – a Dominican priory built between 1956-1960. The Dominican chapel at Vence, however, was completed, and Waugh had objections to this, too.

Matisse designed The Chapel of the Rosary (1947-1951) at Vence, which he funded out of gratitude to a former helper, Monique Bourgeois, who had since become a nun and was then working near the site of the new chapel. It is sparsely decorated with Matisse's signature botanical patterns in the stained glass windows, and his simplistic line drawings adorn white tiles on the walls. The Stations of the Cross appear at one end of the chapel, executed in a 'minimal and fragmented'<sup>97</sup> fashion in one single composition (see fig. 1). Another radical decision in this pre-Vatican II era was the altar which 'has been turned round and diagonally faces the "choir" and the "congregation"'. Special dispensation was obtained for this innovation.<sup>98</sup> Thus it was likely a combination of disagreement with the aesthetic *and* functional qualities of Vence that induced Waugh to describe it as a 'public lavatory cocktail bar chapel'<sup>99</sup> in a letter to Harold Acton in April 1952. Another issue was with Matisse's lack of religion. Although he was raised Catholic, Matisse had a detached relationship with the Church and usually in his art 'evaded direct reference to Christianity', which Kenneth E. Silver argues was either 'a programmatic refusal of religion or merely a lack of strong religious feeling'.<sup>100</sup> Either way, Waugh saw Matisse as an agnostic artist, far from suited to designing a Catholic church. In a letter to Somerset Maugham, Waugh mentions that he had to cancel his visit to the Assy church and that 'Vence had to satisfy our curiosity about agnostic ecclesiastical decoration.'<sup>101</sup> If Waugh had indeed visited Assy it is likely he would have been horrified by its 'blaze of abstract designs by 15 of France's leading modern artists, including Bonnard, Rouault, Léger, Lurçat –

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<sup>97</sup> Ayla Lepine, 'Station to Station: Matisse's Chapel in Vence', *Architectural Review* <<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/reviews/station-to-station-matisse-chapel-in-vence/8654766.article>> [accessed 8 August 2018].

<sup>98</sup> D. P. Barritt, 'Modern Church Design: Matisse's Dominican Chapel at Vence', *The Irish Monthly*, 80.949 (1952), pp. 276–78 (p. 277).

<sup>99</sup> EW to Acton, 14 April 1952, in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 423; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>100</sup> Kenneth E. Silver, 'Matisse at Vence: An Epilogue to "Van Gogh and Gauguin" The Search for Sacred Art', *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 24.2 (2006), pp. 81–90 (p. 85).

<sup>101</sup> EW to Maugham, 8 April 1952; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume VIII.



with two stained-glass windows by Couturier himself.<sup>102</sup> *LIFE* points out that these decorations had attracted criticism ‘not so much because they are abstract as because most of the artists who did them are disbelievers. Some are even known to be communists.’<sup>103</sup>

Ten years after his visit to Assy, Waugh wrote an article ‘The Same Again, Please’ (1962) for the *Spectator* on the topic of the Second Vatican Council. In it he discusses the Vence chapel, stating that ‘on the occasions I have been there I have never seen anyone in prayer, as one always finds in dingy churches decorated with plaster and tinsel.’<sup>104</sup> He suggests that Matisse’s decorations actually prevent efficient worship: ‘the Stations of the Cross, scrawled over a single wall, are so arranged that it is scarcely possible to make the traditional devotions before them.’<sup>105</sup> This, Waugh argues, is what happens when an agnostic artist is allowed to prioritise his aesthetic vision above the functionality of the church building.

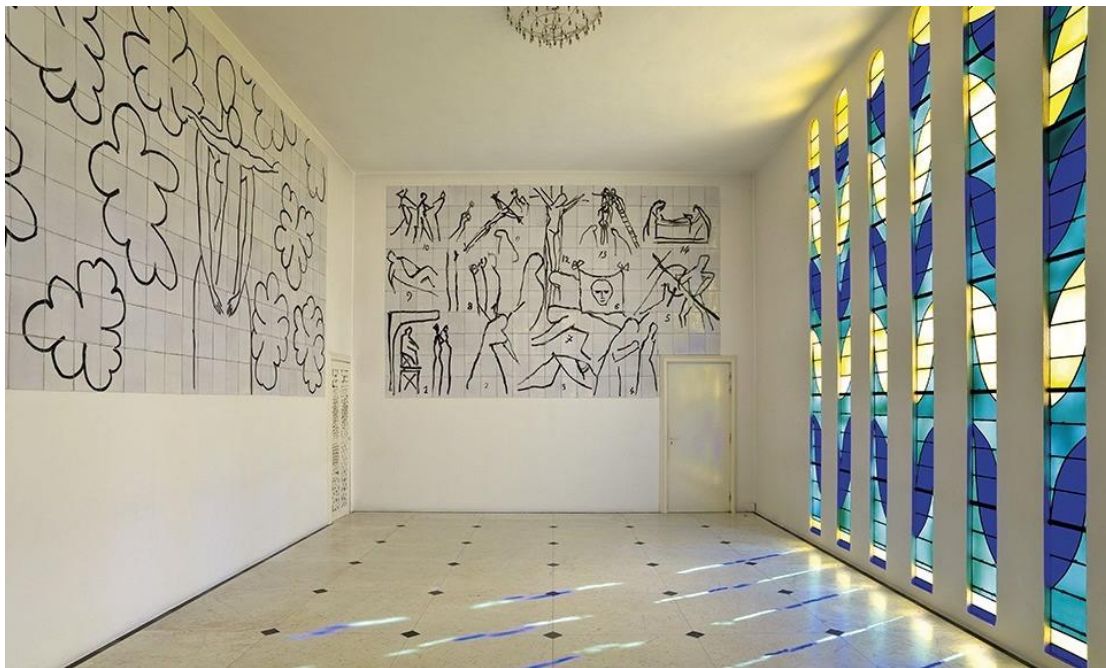


Fig. 1. Henri Matisse, Chapel at Vence (1947-51). Published in Ayla Lepine, ‘Station to Station: Matisse’s Chapel in Vence’, *Architectural Review*.

<sup>102</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Assy Church’, p. 72.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>104</sup> Waugh, ‘The Same Again Please’, in *EAR*, pp. 602–9 (p. 606).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 606.

In a contemporary article about the Vence chapel, D. P. Barritt asked the following questions:

It will be interesting to learn the verdict of time on this form of artistic expression. Will we gradually become educated to appreciate the message behind these now crude-seeming forms? Will they reveal some hidden truth? Or will they be written off as the demented strivings of a war-wracked world which has lost its direction?<sup>106</sup>

These are pertinent points, and though Matisse's work at Vence is now considered his 'masterpiece',<sup>107</sup> it is interesting that Barritt mentions the environment from which the chapel emerged – 'a war-wracked world which has lost its direction'. This is precisely the anxiety Waugh has about the art and architecture that emerged in the post-war period.

Waugh was not alone in his reaction. It was also reflected in the prevailing Catholic opinion, which had become hostile towards the ideas expressed by Couturier in the journal *L'Art Sacré*. Couturier's patronage of avant-garde, often atheist artists and architects, by the time of the Assy Church's construction, had drawn considerable disapproval. Indeed, by 1952 the Holy Office had issued an 'Instruction on Sacred Art' that rejected 'the proposition that sacred art should be governed by a sense of what it calls "the needs and conditions of modern times",'<sup>108</sup> a clear message against the abstract, disjointed, and occasionally gaudy contemporary portrayals of religious subjects at the chapels of Vence and Assy. As Michael E. DeSanctis argues, 'To many Catholics, the simultaneous appearance after Vatican II of novel modes of worship and new, overtly *modern* means of visual expression represented the undoing of much that was considered timeless, immutable, and true.'<sup>109</sup> This was certainly Waugh's concern. The horror of the destructive Modernistic impulse crossing the threshold of the Church challenged 'too many of the assumptions that underlie the faith'<sup>110</sup> and was therefore unacceptable.

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<sup>106</sup> Barritt, p. 277.

<sup>107</sup> Flavia Frigeri, 'How Matisse Made His Masterpiece: The Vence Chapel' <<https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/how-matisse-made-his-masterpiece-vence-chapel>> [accessed 10 August 2018].

<sup>108</sup> Aidan Nichols, 'The Dominicans and the Journal *L'Art Sacré*', *New Blackfriars*, 88.1013 (2007), pp. 25–45 (p. 40).

<sup>109</sup> Michael E. DeSanctis, *Building from Belief: Advance, Retreat, and Compromise in the Remaking of Catholic Church Architecture* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 99.

<sup>110</sup> DeSanctis, p. 66.

Couturier's impulse to become a patron of the arts, however, was not a radical one. In the context of the Catholic Church it was a deeply traditional, even vital element of its foundation. He was interested in modern art becoming 'like the art of the middle ages [...] a permanent partner of the Church',<sup>111</sup> and was, Aidan Nichols argues, continuing the work of Jacques Maritain, who 'expressly refused to look for a style or a manner of working or a set of techniques specific to Christian art'<sup>112</sup> in his influential book *Art et scolastique* (1920). Nevertheless, it was Couturier's willingness to hire non-Catholic, and even atheist artists to work on his ecclesiastic architectural projects that caused the greatest controversy. The fact that secular, even blasphemous influences could be at play in the work of the artists featured at Assy was unacceptable to many Catholics and was likely to have appalled Waugh, not only because he so detested the Modernist works of artists like Matisse and Léger ('I pray', he wrote to Monroe Wheeler, head of exhibitions and publications at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and friend of Picasso, Renoir and Chagall, 'I may live to see a time when no trace of Klee or Picasso or Léger remains on this side of the ocean'),<sup>113</sup> but because it was an affront to the traditions of the Catholic Church.

Thus Waugh's objections are both aesthetic and religious. As a convert, the idea that an anti-traditional message was being voiced from within the church, even a minority voice like Couturier's, was troubling. In 1962, eight years after Couturier's death, Waugh wrote again to Nancy Mitford:

The [Second Vatican] Council is of the highest importance. As in 1869-70 the French & Germans are full of mischief but, as then, the truth of god will prevail. The spirit of that wicked Père Couturier still lives on in France & must be destroyed.<sup>114</sup>

That Waugh aligns the 'spirit' of Couturier, i.e. his sympathy for the modern art of atheist artists, with two seismic shifts in the Catholic Church, shows how he considered Couturier's abandonment of tradition as paving the way for further deviations in the Church. Vatican II, which abandoned the Latin Mass, had a great effect on Waugh, developing into a near-disillusionment with the institution of the Church from which he never recovered. In one of his final letters he wrote:

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<sup>111</sup> Anonymous, 'The Assy Church', p. 76.

<sup>112</sup> Nichols, p. 31.

<sup>113</sup> EW to Monroe Wheeler, 5 July 1954; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVII.

<sup>114</sup> EW to Nancy Mitford, 27 October 1962 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 673; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XL.

Easter used to mean so much to me. Before Pope John and his Council – they destroyed the beauty of the liturgy. I have not yet soaked myself in petrol and gone up in flames, but I now cling to the Faith doggedly without joy. Church going is a pure duty parade. I shall not live to see it restored.<sup>115</sup>

For Waugh, as a convert, and one who sought the refuge of an ancient traditional religion, to be faced with that supposed refuge changing and becoming something resembling the frightful modernity he turned away from in the 1930s was deeply unsettling.

Indeed, Vatican II challenged one of Waugh's principal aesthetic ideologies, the idea of the priest as craftsman. 'When I first came into the Church I was drawn, not by splendid ceremonies', Waugh wrote in his diary in 1964, 'but by the spectacle of the priest as a craftsman. [...] He and his apprentice stumped up to the altar with their tools and set to work without a glance to those behind them, still less with any intention to make a personal impression on them.'<sup>116</sup> Vatican II turned the priest around to face his congregation, and as Stannard argues, this interfered with Waugh's desire 'to be left alone with his God' during Mass, as 'his Faith and his art were essentially solitary activities.'<sup>117</sup> The implication here is that the church building itself functioned for Waugh in the same way as the library where he did most of his writing. They were both spiritually private spaces in which Waugh used language to make sense of the world, 'He had to see language, and the "language of the Church's ritual, as precise instruments.'<sup>118</sup> The very nature of the Vatican II reforms altered the way physical space was experienced within the Catholic Church and was another kind of renovation, one that was not necessarily accompanied by Matisse paintings, but that evoked the same revulsion for Waugh.

Waugh's Catholic faith also had an impact on his relationship with his friend and fellow architectural enthusiast and critic, John Betjeman. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s Waugh wrote many letters to both Betjeman and his wife Penelope (herself a Catholic convert) attempting to save his Anglican soul from

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<sup>115</sup> EW to Diana Mosley, 30 March 1966 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 722; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XLI.

<sup>116</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (1976; London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 832.

<sup>117</sup> Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh No Abiding City: 1939-1966*, p. 463.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463.

'eternal damnation'.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, in 1947 Waugh uses an architectural metaphor to accuse Betjeman of misunderstanding Catholicism: 'You genuinely don't know what Catholicism means. It is as I described it before in comparing you to an Australian unable to recognize the marks of genuine architecture.'<sup>120</sup> Here Waugh suggests that Catholicism represents the 'genuine' form of Christianity and his architectural metaphor is clearly intended to wound, considering Betjeman's reputation as a superior architectural critic. When it came to reviewing Betjeman's architectural work, Waugh did not hold back in his criticism. In 1952 Waugh reviewed Betjeman's essays on architecture, *First and Last Loves* for the Jesuit *Month* magazine. The book covers topics as wide-ranging as the architecture of cinemas, coastal towns and nonconformist churches, many of which are illustrated by the artist John Piper. 'This collection does not show Mr Betjeman at the top of his form'<sup>121</sup> writes Waugh in his review, and he continues to mock Betjeman for his insularity, and modern culture for the process of 'Betjemanizing' in provincial English towns' veneration of obscure architects who are then either 'rejuvenated or else driven mad to find [themselves] the object of pilgrimage.'<sup>122</sup> Elsewhere the collection was generally reviewed positively, but reflected Waugh's sense that this was not Betjeman's best work. The architect Clough Williams-Ellis could not share Betjeman's enthusiasm for most of the towns described but admitted that he did share

[...] many of his dearest hates, including jazz, modernism, standardised chain-store shop fronts, and those monstrous malformed concrete gibbets that now seem to menace even the comeliest little country town high streets with their crude barbarity and baleful lighting.<sup>123</sup>

Christopher Sykes also found *First and Last Loves* lacking, in that it did not explain what exactly is wrong about architecture in the 1950s. Sykes suggests that:

Our age is disunited, perplexed, and pessimistic [...]. So were many others, and it did not stop them building beautifully [...] In our bother we tend to look back, with disastrous olde worlde results, unknown to the backwards-looking classicists. We tend to look forward

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<sup>119</sup> EW to John Betjeman, 2 April 1947, in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 285; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>120</sup> EW to John Betjeman, 14 January 1947 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 282; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>121</sup> Waugh, 'Mr Betjeman Despairs', in *EAR*, pp. 428–30 (p. 428).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>123</sup> Clough Williams-Ellis, 'Review of First and Last Loves', *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 September 1952, p. 4 (p. 4).

and find ourselves with machines for living,<sup>124</sup> among which it is hard to identify a cowbyre from a cinema, or a cinema from a gaol.<sup>125</sup>

*First and Last Loves* begins with an impassioned essay on the destruction of beauty in English architecture and culture. There is a move toward standardisation, Betjeman argues, that robs both towns and their populations of individuality:

The well-known chromium and black gloss, Burton the Tailor of Taste, Hepworth, Halford, Stone, Woolworth & Co., Samuel, Bata, The Fifty Shilling Tailor, the Co-op, have transformed what was once a country town with the characteristics of its county into a home from home for the suburbanite, the concrete standards adding the final touch.<sup>126</sup>

The proliferation of chain stores with their glossy modern frontages obscure any playful architectural touches of the past, the 'old windows and uneven roofs'<sup>127</sup> that may still be glimpsed, if one looks hard enough. But Betjeman's suburbanite does not look, nor has he the inclination to look, as even his intellectual life has been standardised into mediocrity:

His books are chosen for him by the librarians, his arguing is done for him by Brains Trusts, his dreams are realised for him in the cinema, his records are played for him by the B.B.C.<sup>128</sup>

His ideas do not seem to differ greatly from Waugh's here, yet Waugh is surprisingly acerbic and unkind in its appraisal of Betjeman's ideals: '[He] denounces suburban mediocrity, while he himself has been the leader and sole instigator of the fashionable flight from Greatness, away from the traditional hierarchy of classic genius.'<sup>129</sup> Waugh also comments on the hypocrisy of Betjeman's involvement with the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) in 1938, a group that hailed Le Corbusier as 'the liberator of architecture'<sup>130</sup> and thus, in Waugh's eyes, paved the way for the kind of architectural and social homogenisation that Betjeman criticises in *First and Last Loves*. It is an accusation

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<sup>124</sup> The phrase 'Une maison est une machine-à-habiter' [A house is a machine for living in] was coined by Le Corbusier in his book *Vers une architecture* (1923) published in Britain as *Towards a New Architecture* (1927).

<sup>125</sup> Christopher Sykes, 'Stones and Sermons', *The Observer*, 14 September 1952, p. 7 (p. 7).

<sup>126</sup> John Betjeman, *First and Last Loves* (London: John Murray, 1952), p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> Waugh, 'Mr Betjeman Despairs', p. 430.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430.

of hypocrisy that is not without irony, considering Waugh's own early dalliances with architectural and artistic Modernism.

Yet most importantly, Waugh's criticisms are presented as a disagreement with Betjeman's Anglicianism: 'He rants against state control but he is a member of the Church of England. In the face of that prodigious state usurpation laments about the colour of nationalized railway engines lose their poignancy.'<sup>131</sup> Reading between the lines we are aware of Waugh's frustration over the appropriation of Catholic churches after the English Reformation. This is a kind of chaos in Waugh's opinion, that reflects the inherently chaotic nature of the Church of England as he makes clear in an article in the *Daily Express* shortly after his conversion to Catholicism:

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.<sup>132</sup>

A letter to Tom Driberg in 1957 further defines Waugh's feelings about the Church of England as an unworthy usurper of Catholicism:

It must be plain, I think, that the Church of England has been in schism since the accession of Elizabeth, that her ministers, whether validly ordained or no, are acting without authority, and that for most of the last 400 years the vast majority of Anglicans have personally been heretics of one kind or another. [...] The C of E has gone wildly about changing its habits & beliefs in each generation.<sup>133</sup>

Thus Waugh argues that Betjeman cannot possibly stand against the Modernist standardisation of the British cityscape when the Church of England to which he belongs was responsible for the chaotic overtaking of Catholic buildings and customs.

Waugh's increasingly fraught relationship with Betjeman was, it seems, primarily due to their incompatible religious ideologies, and it is interesting to see a similar kind of hostility develop between Waugh and the Church of England advocate John Piper, an artist and close friend of Betjeman. Waugh met Piper briefly in 1942. 'There is an extremely charming artist called Piper staying here

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 430.

<sup>132</sup> Waugh, 'Converted to Rome: Why It Has Happened to Me', in *EAR*, pp. 103–5 (p. 103).

<sup>133</sup> EW to Thomas Driberg, 4 July 1957; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVIII.



making a series of drawings of the house',<sup>134</sup> Waugh wrote to Laura from Renishaw Hall, home of the Sitwell family. In 1945 Waugh wrote to Piper asking if he would like to produce a few watercolours for a special edition of *Brideshead Revisited* he was planning to give Laura as a present. It is significant that the scenes Waugh outlines as 'essential subjects' to be depicted are all architectural details; the exterior of Brideshead Castle, the fountain, Marchmain House and its interior including the Chinese room in which Lady Marchmain dies, the 'painted parlour', Lord Marchmain's house in Venice, Celia's 'ghastly studio' and the chapel. Even more significant is how Waugh instructs Piper to paint 'the general view of the exterior from a distance [...] I imagine the spectator at half a mile's distance on a slope about level with the house.'<sup>135</sup> This shows Waugh's enduring obsession with the elevated, removed viewpoint, and is particularly interesting in reference to *Brideshead*, given that it is such an autobiographical novel. Though this illustrated edition of *Brideshead* never came to fruition<sup>136</sup> these viewpoints are suggestive of Waugh wanting to distance himself from the narrative. In a way it is the opposite impulse to his own illustrations for 'The Balance' that were painfully introspective.

Waugh's apparently eager patronage of John Piper is undermined somewhat by letters to the Betjemans in 1945 and 1950. In 1945 Waugh told Betjeman that 'I don't much admire Piper's work but know no one else'<sup>137</sup> but by 1950 this dislike had escalated, when he wrote to Penelope Betjeman that 'I have come to detest the works of Piper. Don't tell John.'<sup>138</sup> Also in 1950, Waugh wrote to Cyril Connolly that he was thinking 'of writing a guide book to Gloucester City not like Betjeman and Piper.'<sup>139</sup> This is a reference to Betjeman and Piper's collaboration on a series of 'Shell Guides' to various counties in Britain. As Ruth Guilding argues, Betjeman and Piper's 'accord was near perfect'<sup>140</sup> and 'Their love

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<sup>134</sup> EW to Laura Waugh, 20 June 1942 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 187; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>135</sup> EW to John Piper, 5 June 1945; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>136</sup> Examination of Piper's sketchbooks at the Tate Britain archive did not reveal any preparatory sketches that could be associated with Waugh's instructions. Mark Amory claims 'John Piper drew the illustrations for *Brideshead Revisited*, but was dissatisfied and never submitted them to Waugh.' See Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 239.

<sup>137</sup> EW to John Betjeman, 27 May 1945 in *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 238; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXIV.

<sup>138</sup> EW to Penelope Betjeman, 19 July 1950; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>139</sup> EW to Cyril Connolly, 22 March 1950; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXVI.

<sup>140</sup> Ruth Guilding, 'How to like Everything', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 4 August 2006, pp. 16–17 (p. 16).

of the Church of England, percolating into a highly knowledgeable and appreciative love of its buildings, is redolent in poetry, art and writing. Their obsession weaves through the Shell and Murray Guides.<sup>141</sup>

Waugh was perhaps slightly jealous of this close aesthetic comradeship and was certainly annoyed by Betjeman having a close Anglican friend who in a sense “got in the way” of his attempting to save his soul. He could be very unkind to Betjeman, but it was coming from a place of genuine concern. Letters between Waugh and Penelope Betjeman often mention Piper, and show how they were both trying to convert John to Catholicism. For example, in 1948 Penelope writes of her plan to have Edward Long try and convince John to convert:

[...] I am very excited because an antiquarian called Edward Long, aged about 50 is helping John with his church book. He really does know more about English churches with all dates right down to Comper and beyond than even J. Betjeman or Piper, he knows about Anglican ritual, high and low and loves jokes about Anglican clergy. The point is that he was a St Barnabasa man at Oxford (anglo-Cath) but became a catholic while still an undergraduate but in spite of his devotion to the faith he has preserved ALL his interests in ecclesia Anglicana and can talk to John in his own language more fluently than anyone else, even J. Piper. John remarked yesterday how remarkable it was that he had been perverted to Rome so young and had yet maintained an undying interest in the C. of E. Mr Long will be working with John for the next few years, so we can only hope and PRAY that this influence may in God’s good time have the desired effect! That is the ONLY way of approaching John I am certain, through sharing his interests and not through any direct attack because as you know he cannot argue and theological proofs make him very angry.<sup>142</sup>

Ultimately, in both aesthetic and religious matters John Betjeman and John Piper were inseparable in their devotion to Anglo-Catholicism and its churches. Interestingly though, Richard Greene argues, Waugh uses Piper as a model for Charles Ryder, an otherwise largely autobiographical character. Writing about Waugh’s visit to Renishaw where he met Piper for the first time Greene states:

This was probably a good weekend for the English novel. Spending time with John Piper undoubtedly gave Waugh ideas for the character of Charles Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited*, whose *métier* was the painting of great houses as they awaited demolition. Indeed, Piper was the only architectural painter that Waugh knew, and he later drew the illustrations for the novel but did not submit them to Waugh because he was not satisfied with them.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>142</sup> Penelope Betjeman to EW, June 1948; ALS, Will be published in *CWEW* volume XXXV.

<sup>143</sup> Richard Greene, *Edith Sitwell: Avant-Garde Poet, English Genius* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 291.

Waugh's next fictional engagement with architecture can be found in his novella *Love Among the Ruins* (1953) which is significant for two reasons: firstly because it was the last time he used architecture as a significant satirical fictional device; and secondly because it was the first, and last, time he would illustrate his writing since *Black Mischief* in 1932. Humphrey Carpenter argues that Waugh imposes 'a classical formality of narrative upon a world that is chaotic to the point of incoherence', and that *Love Among the Ruins* shows how this technique can also be applied visually, 'illustrating his Orwellian parable about the horrors of a future society with formal line drawings [...] adapted from a book of engravings of the works of the eighteenth-century neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canova.'<sup>144</sup> The problem with Carpenter's argument that Waugh was applying 'classical formality' with these illustrations is that they are in fact deeply satirical and subversive, an example in fact, of Waugh's own taste for chaos. Waugh used a collage technique to create these images from Henry Moses's engravings,<sup>145</sup> and examination of the original works in the HRC shows clearly how this was done. If we compare, for example, 'The death of Socrates' (see fig. 2) with Waugh's 'Experimental Surgery' (see figs. 3-4) it is apparent that he has removed Socrates and replaced him with the Countess D'Haro from another Moses illustration.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, he has used white paint to remove details and overlaid paper to tighten the composition. 'Experimental Surgery' takes the tragic scene of Socrates's death and transmutes it into an illustration of Clara, the bearded ballet dancer. Her story is tragi-comic, her beard a result of sterilisation in the name of her art:

"I never wanted it done. I never want anything done. It was the Head of the Ballet. He insists on all the girls being sterilized. Apparently you can never dance really well again after you've had a baby. And I did want to dance really well. Now this is what's happened."<sup>147</sup>

Thus Waugh's subversion of Moses's engravings of Canova's neo-classical sculpture is laid bare. *Love Among the Ruins* presents a dystopian Socialist future in

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<sup>144</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *The Brideshead Generation: Evelyn Waugh and His Friends* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 273.

<sup>145</sup> Antonio Canova and others, *The Works of Antonio Canova in Sculpture and Modelling, Engraved in Outline by Henry Moses*, 3 vols (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), II, p. 181.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>147</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Love Among The Ruins: A Romance of the Near Future', in *The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), pp. 469–501 (p. 484). Hereafter *LATR*.

which the State approves sterilization, abortion and euthanasia, and its illustrations of distorted classical beauty are Waugh's way of exposing the ugliness of such a system. Far from attempting to contain chaos in these finely executed works, Waugh revels in it:

It is a great delight to do the pictures for my silly story. I haven't the guts nowadays to do an original drawing but by the time I have finished with paste and scissors and Chinese White and Indian ink they are really all my own work. It is like Cinema producers who have a story to start on and then gradually eliminate it.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh and Diana Cooper*, ed. by Artemis Cooper (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1992), p. 160.

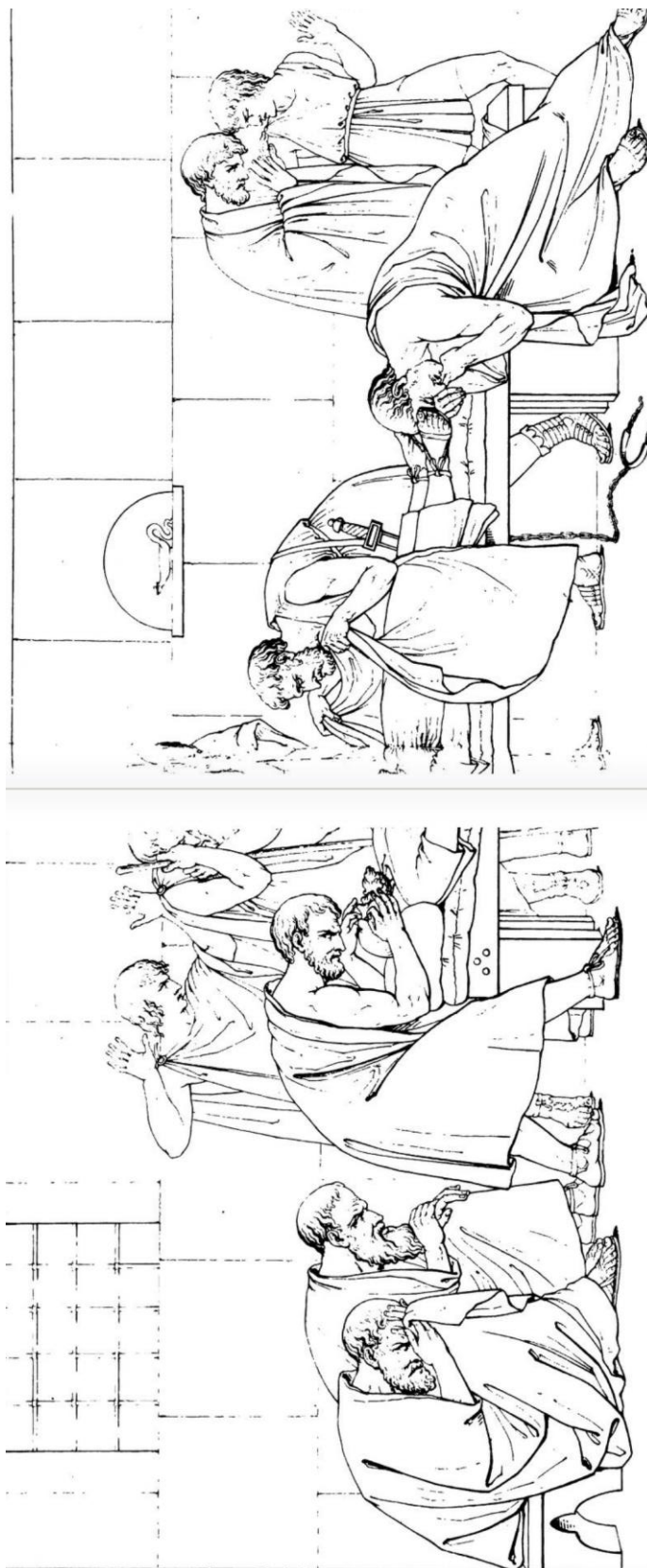
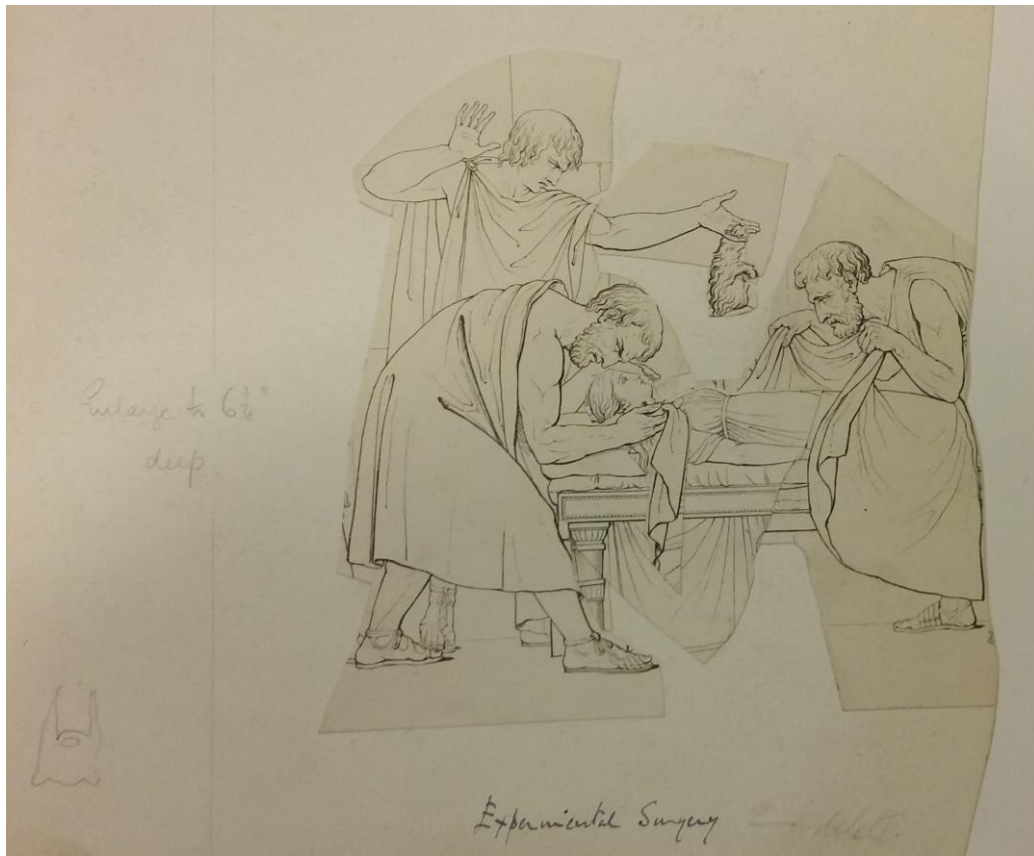


Fig 2. Henry Moses, 'The Death of Socrates' (1809) from Henry Moses's engraving of Antonio Canova's sculpture of the same title.



Figs. 3-4. Evelyn Waugh, 'Experimental Surgery' (January 1953). (Evelyn Waugh Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

In editing these neo-classical illustrations, then, Waugh removes their original significance and endows them with subversive qualities.

In his descriptions of the architecture in the Satellite City ‘one of a hundred such grand conceptions’<sup>149</sup> Waugh shows the culmination of the degraded modern landscape hinted at in *Work Suspended*. The main building, The Dome of Security, is ironically named:

The eponymous dome had looked well enough in the architect’s model [...] But to the surprise of all, when the building arose and was seen from the ground, the dome blandly vanished. It was hidden forever among the roofs and butting shoulders of the ancillary wings and was never seen again from the outside except by airmen and steeplejacks.<sup>150</sup>

The fact that the Dome of Security disappears from view is, surely, a metaphor for Waugh’s idea that buildings, particularly those of the modern era, are unable to represent stability, or indeed security. The Dome has quickly deteriorated, and is the epitome of failed town planning; it is ugly, unclean and overburdened by public need:

On the day of its dedication [...] the great lump of building materials had shone fine as a factory in all its brilliance of glass and new concrete. Since then, during one of the rather frequent weekends of international panic, it has been camouflaged and its windows blackened. Cleaners were few and usually on strike. So the Dome of Security remained blotched and dingy, the sole permanent building of Satellite City.<sup>151</sup>

As Douglas Lane Patey argues, ‘Just as Britain’s post-war governments launched the construction of massive New Towns, the landscape of *Love Among the Ruins* is covered with ‘satellite cities’, each centred on a glass-and-concrete “Dome of Security” (a swipe at the Festival of Britain’s Dome of Discovery), its modernist style suggestive also of civic architecture’.<sup>152</sup>

*Love Among the Ruins* is not the only example of Waugh’s satirising the 1951 Festival of Britain in fiction. The epilogue to the *Sword of Honour* (1965) trilogy begins with a disapproving description of the modern experimental architecture erected for the purposes of the Festival:

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<sup>149</sup> Waugh, *LATR*, p. 478.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 478–79.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>152</sup> Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 314.



In 1951, to celebrate the opening of a happier decade, the government decreed a Festival. Monstrous constructions appeared on the South Bank of the Thames, the foundation stone was solemnly laid for a National Theatre, but there was little exuberance among the straitened people and dollar-bearing tourists curtailed their visits and sped to the countries of the Continent where, however precarious their condition, they ordered things better.<sup>153</sup>

Waugh is being deliberately facetious here as the Festival was extremely well attended and enjoyed – though it came at a time when Britain was still reeling from the effects of the Second World War. The ‘term “Festival style” came to be applied to buildings utilising concrete, aluminium and plate glass’,<sup>154</sup> and indeed most of these purpose-built structures were demolished at the end of 1951, with the exception of the Royal Festival Hall, giving critics like Waugh plenty of ammunition to decry the whole Festival as representative of the empty promise of flimsy modern architecture. Indeed, playwright and novelist Michael Frayn refers to Waugh specifically in his essay on the Festival. After quoting the above section from *Sword of Honour*, Frayn writes: ‘Poor Evelyn Waugh. It was certainly not the Festival of his Britain.’<sup>155</sup> Quite the contrary, it was the Festival of the ‘radical middle class [...] the Herbivores [...] And in making the Festival they earned the contempt of the Carnivores – the readers of the *Daily Express*; the Evelyn Waughs’.<sup>156</sup> Thus it was not solely the Festival's celebration of modern architecture with which Waugh disagreed; it was also a question of politics. The architecture of the Festival buildings reflected Waugh's opinions of the Labour government who erected them: ineffective, unsubstantial and doomed to fail – just like the Satellite Cities in *Love Among the Ruins*. Roy Strong argues that:

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Festival of Britain offered neither a mirror nor a window but rather an enchanted glass in which somehow the organizers, shorn of the magic of Empire, attempted to reconstitute a future based on a new secular mythology<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Sword of Honour* (1965; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001), p. 660.

<sup>154</sup> Becky E. Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 51.

<sup>155</sup> Michael Frayn, 'Festival', in *Age of Austerity*, ed. by Michael Sissons and Philip French (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), pp. 319–38 (p. 319).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 319–20.

<sup>157</sup> Roy Strong, 'Utopia Limited', in *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951*, ed. by Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), pp. 6–9 (p. 8).

For Waugh, after the destructive force of the Blitz, the melting-down of railings (a symbol of privacy) for the war effort, and the general trend towards more communal ways of living in a financially devastated post-war Britain, the three-hundred-and-fifty-foot floating cigar-shaped structure of the Festival's Skylon was the last cultural straw. It stuck up into the sky like a church spire, but offered none of the symbolic permanence of religion. To Waugh this 'new secular mythology' meant a decline into chaos, away from the apparent immutability of the Catholic Church. It is easy to see why the Second Vatican Council unsettled him so.

## Conclusion

Evelyn Waugh expressed his aesthetic sensibilities through his collection of art, his visual art practice and his writing on architecture. These concerns can be roughly divided into five main categories: productive aesthetic contradictions, the need for privacy, modernity as chaos, Catholicism as a refuge, and, above all, the notion of craftsmanship. As these intermingle and develop through Waugh's career it becomes clear that his ultimate goal was, as Selina Hastings puts it, to inhabit the role of an 'honest craftsman labouring to do his best with the superb tool (the English language) at his disposal.'<sup>1</sup>

The essential aesthetic contradiction Waugh sets out at the beginning of his first published work, *Rossetti* with his epigraph quotations from Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Roger Fry suggesting the difference between Rossetti's and Fry's opposing visions of artistic inspiration. In Rossetti's theory, the artist is inspired by his own romantic spirit, fixing shapes that 'rose within [him]';<sup>2</sup> but for Fry artistic greatness is the product of a rational, process-driven practice and is concerned with the work's structure. This contradiction runs through Waugh's work, both written and visual, on art and architecture. In Waugh's visual art these contradictions are illustrated by two distinct methods of representation: his series of emotionally introspective woodcuts, and the neatly drawn, controlled lines of his book illustrations. Given that Waugh stopped making woodcuts after the mid-1920s, and continued working in the spare style of his single-line contour drawings for at least another decade – longer if you count the edits made to the

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<sup>1</sup> Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh A Biography* (London: Minerva, 1995), p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911), p. 557.

illustrations for *Love Among the Ruins* in 1953 – it can be argued that the ‘rational’ process-driven artistic practice is his enduring mode of artistic expression.

There are various reasons for this, one being the emphasis Waugh places on consistent artistic output – he could not be at the whim of a mercurial artistic muse when he relied on his writing to pay the bills. Another reason was his sense that truly great art came about from spiritual orderliness rather than from bursts of inspiration, and that artists failed by ‘concentrating on the task rather than on their own souls.’<sup>3</sup> This is where Waugh and Fry diverge. Though both men placed the highest importance on the notion of a diligent working practice, Fry did not see artistic creation as an act of piety. Indeed, he thought that religion was misguided in its attempt to ‘discover *the* one universally valid construction’ without ‘any notion of objective validity’,<sup>4</sup> and that it was a complementary, rather than a definitive, practice that could be compared to art and science in their attempts to interpret the world. Fry also disagreed with the notion that art should have a moral purpose, stating that art has ‘no such moral responsibility – it presents a life freed from the binding necessities of our actual existence.’<sup>5</sup> The book from which this quote is taken, Fry’s *Vision and Design*, is among Charles Ryder’s ‘meagre and commonplace’<sup>6</sup> collection, and indeed *Brideshead Revisited* offers another example of how Waugh distances himself from Fry’s theories with Charles’s symbolic disposal of his Omega Workshops screen. This is a reflection on aesthetic

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<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 826. 22 April 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Fry quoted in Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry A Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), p. 271.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945; London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 29. Hereafter *BR*.

conversion, something that Waugh in *A Little Learning* claims not to have experienced:

There are cases of aesthetic conversion when eyes accustomed to traditional styles are accorded a revelation, and find beauty and significance in what has previously seemed ugly and chaotic. I have never had that experience.<sup>7</sup>

Yet considering Waugh's early interest in Modern art and architecture, it is apparent that he did experience a conversion of sorts, in his reappraisal of traditional styles.

Waugh's writing on architecture reveals another example of the tension between romantic and rational aesthetic theories, and these are expressed in terms of ornamentation (the romantic element) and structure (the rational, or functional element). Waugh was critical of architectural styles like the late Gothic Revival that displayed ornamentation that was inauthentic – it was not born of the same aesthetic impulse as true Medieval Gothic and was therefore grotesque. Tony Last's Gothic Revival house, Hetton Abbey, is derided not only for its external ugliness in *A Handful of Dust*, but also for its lack of structural stability as it slowly crumbles. Hetton has an uncertain future at the end of the novel with most of its rooms now closed off, and though Richard Last hopes to return the house to its former glory,<sup>8</sup> an ill omen is heard: 'High overhead among its gargoyles and crockets the clock chimed for the hour and solemnly struck fourteen. It was half past eight. The clock had been irregular lately.'<sup>9</sup> Thus Hetton is located in its own temporal space, a space as fanciful and unreal as its sham-Gothic exterior.

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<sup>7</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, p. 97. Hereafter *ALL*.

<sup>8</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1997), p. 228. Hereafter *HOD*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Architectural metaphors were also useful to Waugh as a way to express his fears over losing his privacy in a society that appeared to be moving toward more communal ways of living, particularly in cities, with the dismantling of the aristocratic country house and its associated way of life being a parallel threat. At Piers Court and Combe Florey Waugh put up a sign proclaiming 'No Admittance on Business', a subversive version of the more usual 'No Admittance Except on Business'. Superficially this appeared to be one of Waugh's jokes, but like much of his humour it was based in genuine uneasiness. Mark Gerson comments that when he went to photograph the Waugh family at Combe Florey in 1959, Waugh warned him not to 'reveal his address [...] as "otherwise, burglars, Americans, journalists and sightseers pop in"'.<sup>10</sup> It was clear that he was still reeling from the 'invasion' of Piers Court by Nancy Spain and Lord Noel-Buxton in 1955. In his fiction Waugh was also acutely aware of the disintegration of privacy, and this was no better expressed than in *Work Suspended* where John Plant Sr.'s house is a symbolic monument to seclusion. Unlike the modern blocks of flats that begin to surround Plant's home, his sanctuary is a defiantly individualistic expression of personal taste.

Waugh's choices when displaying his collection of Victorian paintings also reveal his ever-increasing need for privacy. Although he was happy to exhibit his pictures to members of the public at the Piers Court fête, no such exhibition was ever held at Combe Florey. Waugh also moved the jewel of his collection, Rossetti's *Spirit of the Rainbow*, from its prominent position in his dining room at Piers Court, to a guest bedroom at Combe Florey. It was as though Waugh created further sanctuaries *within* his houses where he could keep even invited guests at a healthy

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Gerson, 'Smile Please, Evelyn. Oh, Never Mind', *The Times*, 11 October 2003, p. 26 (p. 26).

distance. This had always been the case with Waugh's working space, his libraries, but his change of heart regarding the placement of the most provocative of his Rossetti pictures was a notable shift toward aesthetic seclusion.

Waugh's collection of Victorian paintings also reflected his new appreciation of the period after the Second World War. Part of this interest was no doubt influenced by the values depicted in these paintings of an individualistic society that prized the separation of public and private spheres, and maintained divisions between distinct social classes. This can be seen in Waugh's collection with Atkinson's *The Upset Flower Cart* where the prevailing view that 'there is a great gulf fixed between rich and poor'<sup>11</sup> is not challenged, but reinforced by its depiction of charity. But as we have seen, Waugh's collection also offered an opportunity for subversion. In his commission of Richard Eurich's *Travel in 1950*, a companion piece to Thomas Musgrave Joy's *Travel* series, Waugh was able to express another of his fears: that the inexorable 'progress' of society and technology promised by the Victorians was an illusion, and that chaos was the only guaranteed state in a secular society.

Waugh's collection also played a part in the creation of his exaggerated role as pastiche country gentleman, and as Malcolm Muggeridge suggests, this 'masquerade has been essential to his work.'<sup>12</sup> This is most apparent in the way *Brideshead Revisited* memorialises the aristocratic, country-house way of life, both in its reverent descriptions of architecture ('[...] below us, half a mile distant, prone in the sunlight, grey and gold amid a screen of boscage, shone the dome and

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<sup>11</sup> Graham Reynolds, *Painters of the Victorian Scene* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1953), p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, 'My Fair Gentleman: On Evelyn Waugh', *The New Republic*, 25 January 1959 <<https://newrepublic.com/article/86079/my-fair-gentleman-evelyn-waugh>> [accessed 8 September 2018].



columns of an old house'<sup>13</sup>), and in Charles Ryder's paintings. Ryder's almost religious devotion to recording the appearance of country houses awaiting destruction is a reference to the work of John Piper, and even though Waugh and Piper did not agree on religious matters, it is clear that they shared the preservationist impulse. Thus *Brideshead* was Waugh's attempt at trying to preserve forever a version of reality that was quickly slipping away due to modern development, the destructive effects of the Blitz, and the general trend of aristocratic families being forced to sell their estates due to the increase in death duties from fifty per cent to sixty-five per cent in 1940. Adrian Tinniswood points out that 'more than 1000 country houses were demolished in the decade after 1945 as a direct result of wartime mistreatment',<sup>14</sup> and this was often not due to enemy action, as 'by the time the Second World War was over and the Ministry of Defence began to hand back requisitioned mansions, leaking pipes and sagging roofs and dry rot had achieved the kind of destruction only dreamed of by Hitler's bombers.'<sup>15</sup>

This is Brideshead Castle's fate, but its deterioration pales into insignificance in comparison to the complete destruction of the Flyte's London home – Marchmain House. Replaced by a high-rise block, Marchmain House is a victim of a relentless tide of modernity that had been threatening Waugh's desire for permanence and preservation since the First World War. This destructive impulse is apparent even in Waugh's childhood drawings of battles and zeppelins. Indeed the First World War destabilised the world in multiple ways – not only did it involve domestic destruction, it also had an effect on the visual and written art of

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<sup>13</sup> Waugh, *BR*, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House Between the Wars* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), p. 373.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

the period as Modernist writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce responded to it. Out of the chaos of the First World War came the fractured and abstracted narrative style which at first attracted Waugh but to which he took such a dislike after his first wife's desertion in 1929.

Rather than succumb to this chaos and destruction, Waugh looked for refuge in two areas, the subjects of this thesis: art and architecture. Art was vulnerable to the same Modernist influence as literature, but as Waugh explains in his 'Frankly Speaking' interview, was completely overwhelmed by it:

It's very interesting that the attack was made on the arts when I was quite young and it succeeded in the visual arts and failed in literature. The attack was made by just the same people, a little cosmopolitan group in Paris collected around Gertrude Stein who was the first collector of Picasso and the first writer of absolute gibberish, and they tried to introduce gibberish into literature, but literature was too strong and drove it out but the arts absolutely capsized under this attack.<sup>16</sup>

Thus both art and architecture, in Waugh's view, proved too vulnerable to the chaotic forces of the modern world to offer the kinds of permanence he sought, and he came to realise that his only refuge was in his Catholic faith.

In the final section of *Brideshead*, Charles revisits the chapel he was first shown by Sebastian before his conversion to Catholicism. His first impression of the chapel was defined by its aesthetic qualities:

The whole interior had been gutted, elaborately refurnished and redecorated in the arts-and-crafts style of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Angels in printed cotton smocks, rambler-roses, flower-spangled meadows, frisking lambs, texts in Celtic script, saints in armour, covered the walls in an intricate pattern of clear, bright colours. There was a triptych of pale oak, carved so as to give it the peculiar property of seeming to have

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<sup>16</sup>Evelyn Waugh, Stephen Black, Jack Davies and Charles Wilmot, 'Frankly Speaking Interview', in *A Little Learning*, ed. by John Howard Wilson and Barbara Cooke, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), XIX, 525–37 (p. 531).

been moulded in plasticine. The sanctuary lamp and all the metal furniture were of bronze, hand-beaten to the patina of a pock-marked skin; the altar steps had a carpet of grassgreen, strewn with white and gold daisies.<sup>17</sup>

It is an *art nouveau* pastoral, rather than a religious, image of the place, and is markedly different from how Charles views it after he is more open with the reader about his conversion:

The chapel showed no ill-effects of its long neglect; the art-nouveau paint was as fresh and bright as ever; the art-nouveau lamp burned once more before the altar. I said a prayer, an ancient, newly-learned form of words, and left, turning towards the camp

[...] Something quite remote from anything the builders intended, has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame—a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem. It could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones.<sup>18</sup>

The 'ancient' word of prayer and the small, inextinguishable flame of the lamp, the flame of faith, before the tabernacle become the crucial Catholic details Charles is able to fix permanently, even when the rest of Brideshead Castle has fallen into disrepair.

Thus *Brideshead* tries to preserve forever a vision of reality that for Waugh was decaying. Post-war, however, when he starts to find his place in the world (as a country gentleman, Catholic and married into aristocracy), the world seemed intent on pulling the rug from under his feet. Indeed, this could have been why he leant towards the solidity of Georgian and classical forms in domestic architecture

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<sup>17</sup> Waugh, *BR*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

and felt ambivalent about the Gothic, despite its historical relation to Catholic worship in ecclesiastical architecture. Georgian and classical architecture represented to him order and consistency, where Gothic, however apt for service in the middle ages, had been corrupted, especially by the inauthenticity of the late Gothic Revival, and the co-option of surviving Gothic cathedrals into Anglican places of worship.

Waugh sought security in the ancient traditions of Catholicism, but even religion was vulnerable to the work of modern artists and architects. Friar Marie-Alain Couturier was the main protagonist in the patronage of contemporary arts by the Catholic Church, and was therefore, for Waugh at least, a corrupting influence who was alarmingly working from inside the Church. Couturier was patron of Fernand Léger, Henri Matisse and Le Corbusier, all either agnostic or atheist, and this resulted in what Waugh saw as the aesthetic degeneration of ecclesiastical interiors. Matisse's Stations of the Cross at Vence for example were arranged on one wall, making their contemplation in a conventional Easter service almost impossible. Modern art was thus allowed to affect the functionality of the Church, altering the way physical contemplative space was understood.

Anything Couturier may have done to destabilise the Church in his patronage of modern artists was, however, vastly overshadowed for Waugh by the alterations made to the Catholic liturgy by the 1962 Second Vatican Council. The most significant of these, he felt, was that the Mass would now no longer be sung in Latin, but in the vernacular, meaning that it could now no longer be universally understood. Indeed, such a fracture in the universal understanding of the liturgy resembles the kind of linguistic fracturing of Modernistic experimentation that Waugh rejected in the 1930s. But there was also another Vatican II alteration to

which Waugh objected: the priest, who had historically faced away from the congregation, was now required to face it. As we have seen, Waugh had enjoyed the way the priest and 'his apprentice stumped up to the altar with their tools and set to work without a glance to those behind them, still less with any intention to make a personal impression on them.'<sup>19</sup> This allowed for a moment of privacy between Waugh and God, and rendered the priest, like the artist, anonymous.<sup>20</sup> The vision of the Mass as a physical task to be worked on by a craftsman and his apprentice, rather than as an emotional performance, is a vital link between Waugh's religious beliefs and his aesthetic theories.

Waugh's idea of the priest as craftsman, brings us back to another thread that runs through his writings on art, architecture, and aesthetics: that good craftsmanship is fundamental to creating functional, but not functionalist, art objects. In *Work Suspended* John Plant Jr. describes the purpose of his writing as:

To produce something, saleable in large quantities to the public, which had absolutely nothing of myself in it; to sell something for which the kind of people I liked and respected would have a use; that was what I sought, and detective stories fulfilled the purpose.<sup>21</sup>

Plant Jr.'s intention is that his work should have a use. His writing might not be strictly 'literary', but his detective stories serve a functional purpose in providing pleasure through a mystery to be solved jointly between reader and writer. *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* contains a similar statement, suggesting that there is no difference between a book and any other crafted object:

He regarded his books as objects which he had made, things quite external to himself to be used and judged by others. He thought them well made, better than many reputed works of

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<sup>19</sup> Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p. 832.

<sup>20</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, ed. by Martin Stannard, 43 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), II, pp. lxxx–lxxi.

<sup>21</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Work Suspended and Other Stories' (London: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 106–91 (p. 107).

genius, but he was not vain of his accomplishment, still less of his reputation. He had no wish to obliterate anything he had written, but he would dearly have liked to revise it, envying painters, who are allowed to return to the same theme time and time again, clarifying and enriching until they have done all they can with it.<sup>22</sup>

This desire to revise one's work suggests that Waugh did not see the products of human endeavour, even if they were well crafted, as objects containing permanent meaning. He wanted, above all, to become the kind of craftsman whose written works can be seen as art objects, reflecting his obsession with structure and detail, and which are, above all, authentically made. Waugh's Catholic faith was the only thing that offered any semblance of permanent meaning and refuge. After Vatican II, however, it is possible to see even Waugh's faith as without a home, as both liturgy and the very buildings in which he worshiped were made alien. This, sadly, affected his artistic output and mental health. *The Sunday Telegraph* reported the following just two months before Waugh's death:

Evelyn Waugh, I am pleased to hear, is now well on the way to recovery after a most distressing year of nervous melancholia. It is the second time he has been thus afflicted. The first is sensitively recorded in [...] "The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold." He lightly puts it down to his grief at recent changes in the Roman Catholic liturgy which have stripped the Mass of its traditional Latinity. It was in fact the result of undertaking an immense task which he found physically beyond him – the writing of a new history of the Crusades. Not even a literary craftsman of Mr. Waugh's distinction felt able to follow in the steps of Sir Steven Runciman's majestic work. He has now abandoned the venture and embarked on the second volume of his autobiography. It is to be called "A Little Hope."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Rose, 'Mr. Waugh Survives Another Ordeal', *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 February 1966, p. 6.

*A Little Hope* was never finished, but Waugh left behind three drafts<sup>24</sup> of the opening paragraphs to the first chapter. In these last writings Waugh was still revising and perfecting his work, just as his fictional Pinfold wished.

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<sup>24</sup> Waugh, *ALL*, XIX, p. lii.



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