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RENASCENCE

Essays on Values in Literature

Marian Devotion and Religious Paradox
in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

"Death is at the elbow": *The Loved One*
and *Love Among the Ruins*

The Remembrance of Things Past: Going Home in
Greene's *England Made Me*

"Kissing the Bricks" and Fly-Fishing for God:
Teaching Literature as Spiritual Discipline

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RENASCENCE

ESSAYS ON VALUES IN LITERATURE

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Peden, Margaret Sayers. "Building a Translation, The Re-Construction of Business: Poem 145 of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz." *Symposium*. Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer 1984): 143-158.

Tavard, George H. *Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Theology of Beauty: The First Mexican Theology*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1991.

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"DEATH IS AT THE ELBOW": *THE LOVED ONE* AND *LOVE AMONG THE RUINS*

In 1946, Evelyn Waugh wrote a letter to W. N. Roughead, partner at the firm of his literary agent A. D. Peters, enclosing a short exegesis of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poem "Wishes. To his (supposed) Mistresse" by Richard Crashaw. In the letter Waugh asks whether Roughead could "try this . . . on 'This Week'" (Letter to W. N. Roughead). Waugh called the exegesis a "homily" and entitled it "Words to live by." It was never published, nor was the letter collected in Mark Amory's 1980 edition of Waugh's *Letters*. This is unfortunate, for the homily gestures towards Waugh's lively interest in death, not merely as an opportunity for cruelty (despite Waugh's evident delight in satirical lashing), but as a fact of human life.

Waugh's interest in death informed his novels throughout his career. His satirical novels end generally with a high body count involving not only minor players but often the protagonist as well. Serious works such as *Brideshead Revisited* and the *Sword of Honour* trilogy contain memorable and thematically significant death scenes — indeed, in *Brideshead Revisited* Lord Marchmain's deathbed repentance is the crucible for Ryder's eventual conversion. Even a work of fictional hagiography such as *Helena* contains gruesome, drawn-out scenes of pain, such as the death of Fausta in her bath. More than one critic has noted Waugh's concern with death, and Joseph Hynes has argued that "Waugh's novels are *always* concerned with death wish and despair" (66, italics in original). But, as Calvin Lane has commented, Waugh's deaths are most often outrageously funny: "only Waugh could fill his novels with one grisly death after another, yet force us to accept these deaths with only a passing shudder and even, perhaps against our will, to find them incongruously entertaining" (44).

In his verse, Crashaw examines "how sacred love transforms human perception and identity, how it perfects or transcends human reason" (Cousins 127). In "A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sanite Teresa," Crashaw begins with the arresting proposition that "Love, thou art Absolute sole lord / of LIFE & DEATH" (266). The love evoked here is not, however, earthly love, but divine love: "love for . . . and by Christ" (Cousins 161). Although "Wishes. To his (supposed) Mistresse," which first appeared in 1646, seems to celebrate the qualities of the ideal earthly woman, Thomas Healy argues that the poem in fact represents a playful opposition to worldly marriage. Like "Sanite Teresa," the "supposed mistresse" becomes the evocation of chaste love (Healy 137). Crashaw, a

Roman Catholic convert whose poetry dramatized the tension between the sacred and the profane, keeps hold of the idea of human death, the gateway to divine, transcendent and eternal love. The lines quoted by Waugh have, as he argued, "a universal meaning which transcends age & sex":

> Life, that dares send
> A challenge to his end,
> And when it comes say *Welcome, friend.* ("Wishes" 162)

Waugh's interpretation of the lines hinges on the moral that "a complete life can only be lived when the fact of Death is kept steadily in mind." It is the "fact of Death" that concerns Waugh, and not just its satiric possibilities, here and in his next two satirical novels: *The Loved One* and *Love Among the Ruins*. Waugh's homily is insistent on this point:

> Our ancestors were superior to us in never losing this consciousness that life is terminable; that our own tenure of the world is not by freehold but a precarious tenancy revocable by the landlord from one hour to the next; that we are by nature lodgers and on probation; that our own ultimate destiny is elsewhere. Only when this is held as the first postulate of all our propositions can they be seen in true perspective. In the greatest & smallest human affairs remember that Death is at the elbow. ("Words to Live By")

Much of Crashaw's poem is dedicated to the enumeration of the physical attributes of the speaker's "supposed mistresse," but behind each blazon is the moral ideal that perfects it: "Blushes, that bin / The burnish of no sin," "Eyes, that bestow / Full quivers on love's bow, / Yet pay less arrows than they owe." The clarity with which Crashaw explores the idea of love is enabled by the purity of the mistresse, who is in fact a "divine Idea," not yet taken form in "shrine of Chrystall flesh."

Crashaw's poem suggests Waugh's other major concern in these post-war satires, that of the physical body. In *The Loved One* and *Love Among the Ruins*, the primacy of the physical body and the neglect of the soul in the twentieth century are major concerns which feed into Waugh's concern with death. That both of these novels depict earthly love is significant, for in the romances of Dennis and Aimée and Miles and Clara, Waugh depicts love that falls far short of Crashaw's transcendent ideal, perhaps because none of these "rare lovers" keeps the fact of death in mind. Instead the body (or the beard) is the fuel that fires earthly love which at the end of both novels has either literally or figuratively burnt out. For Waugh, "Death is at the elbow"; it is a fact of our physical bodies that we decay, but in the worlds described in *The Loved One* and

Love Among the Ruins this fact is ignored. Waugh displays in these novels a concern with the temporal versus the eternal and the physical versus the spiritual, mounting a satirical attack against the folly of a society that ignores the soul in favor of the body. Most insistently, Waugh lashes the modern world's attempt to supplant the reality of the afterlife with the comfort of an earthly, humanist paradise.

Early in 1947, Waugh visited Los Angeles on a junket to negotiate the film adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited* by MGM (Stannard 185). While there, he visited Forest Lawn cemetery and was enthralled by its gruesome absurdities. "Half In Love With Easeful Death," published in the *Tablet* and in *Life* in 1947, was the non-fiction result of this visit. In this article Waugh posited the speculations of anthropologists from the year 2947 on the cults of twentieth-century Los Angeles: "the idol Oscar — sexless image of infertility — of the great Star Goddesses who were once noisily worshipped there in a Holy Wood" (*Essays* 331). Central to Waugh's mock-thesis was Forest Lawn, for, he argues, while "it will be a commonplace among the scholars of 2947 that the great cultural decline of the twentieth century was first evident in the graveyard," Forest Lawn represents "something to confound all the accepted generalizations, a necropolis of the age of the pharaohs, created in the middle of the impious twentieth century." Waugh describes Forest Lawn, founded on the principle that "Here sorrow sees no ghastly monuments, but only life and hope" (*Essays* 332). Waugh sees Forest Lawn as a microcosm of the culture of Los Angeles, describing the city and the cemetery with irony as a kind of leisure resort, a vast green sward dotted with statuary for the "forgetful and forgotten" to "warm their old bodies and believe themselves alive" until "the moment of transition" to death (*Essays* 335). Forest Lawn, in this moment of transition, offers the consolations not of religion or philosophy, but of "immediate eternal happiness . . . at an inclusive charge" and of bodily youth: "death is a form of infancy, a Wordsworthian return to innocence" (*Essays* 336).

> The body does not decay; it lives on, more chic in death than ever before, in its indestructible class A steel and concrete shelf; the soul goes straight from Slumber Room A to Paradise, where it enjoys an endless infancy . . . (*Essays* 337)

Forest Lawn's cult of youth and physical innocence is "very far . . . from the traditional conception of an adult soul naked at the judgment seat and a body turning to corruption." Waugh's contempt for Forest Lawn's facile equation of bodily beauty with innocence and sanctity is laid bare in this article, and, later, transformed into the satire of *The Loved One*'s Whispering Glades. The preservation of the human body in the traditions of

Whispering Glades ends not in eternal youth but in hideous dehumanization, and Aimée's perfect American body is a site not of innocence and salvation but of ignorance and corruption.

The representation of the human body has not been a subject of great interest in Waugh studies. This is not surprising, for Waugh often only briefly sketches his characters' appearance. The human body is, however, an important locus of satirical writing because its very physicality provides a contrast with the ethereal soul. There is, for a satirist in the Western Christian tradition, a rich vein of morality concerning the desires of the body versus those of the soul. Moreover, as many satirists have discovered to their advantage, the human body is more often than not essentially humorous. Wyndham Lewis explored the absurdity of the body as a "thing behaving like a person" in *The Wild Body*, a collection of short stories in which the human body, disconnected from the human mind, is often the sole subject and object of the satirist's gaze (246).

While Waugh's writing often seems to glance only cursorily at the human body, there are symbolic indices which in particular novels echo his thematic concerns. For instance, in *Decline and Fall* the female body is represented as animalistic. Margot, with her "lizard-skin feet . . . chinchilla body" is seen as the typical woman to be found "in any Ritz Hotel from New York to Buda-Pesth" (*Decline* 84). Descriptors such as these, oblique and transitory, reflect Waugh's concern with a societal decline imaged as the degeneration from the human to the animalistic. In contrast, as his political and societal concerns transfer from barbarism to the diminution of the individual in mass society, the representation of the female form becomes more automatonic. Mrs. Stitch in bed is described as "an Aztec mask" (*Scoop* 4). Angela Lyne's face is "carved in jade . . . smooth and cool and conventionally removed from the human" and later likened to a death-mask. In *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* and the late short story "Basil Seal Rides Again," satire of the body is turned towards the man. Gilbert looks old and ill, "empurpled," with crimson blotches on his hands; Basil is "florid" (*Stories* 494).

While descriptions in these works make clear the foolishness of Gilbert and the aged Basil, with their red faces and their fat bodies, the imagery does not question their humanity. *The Loved One* presents the female human body first, as uniform: "one with all her sisters of the air-liners and the reception-desks . . . the standard product" (*Loved One* 44-45). As the novel progresses, and with it Waugh's thematic concern with the spiritual vacuum caused by Whispering Glades's repudiation of the human reality of death, the depiction of the female body is transformed from a uniform mass into a mass-produced object:

> were these uniformly elegant limbs, from the stocking-top down, marketed in one cellophane envelope at the neighbourhood store? . . . Did they come from the same department as the light irrefragible plastic head? Did the entire article come off the assembly lines ready for immediate home-service? (*Loved One* 74)

This modern body, Waugh implies, is as removed from the ideal of the human individual life as are Kaiser's stoneless peaches from the genuine article. Whispering Glades's removal of the "fact of Death" from their anesthetized production-line funerals, whether through the banning of crosses and wreaths, or the transformation of the decaying corpse into a "shrimp-pink incorruptible," is responsible also for the removal of life. Bodies, peaches, and tasteless nutburgers (*Loved One* 120) become one in the mass-market lifelessness of Western industrial secularism.

Several scholars have noted the contextual relation of *The Loved One* to Aldous Huxley's *After Many A Summer*.[1] Both novels are set in Los Angeles; Huxley's, like Waugh's, features a fictional likeness of Forest Lawn cemetery. While Waugh and Huxley had vastly dissimilar satirical targets, both novels identify in American society the dehumanizing force of Hollywood's desire for eternal youth. In Huxley's novel, the "Beverly Pantheon," owned by publishing magnate Mr. Stoyte, is a temple to eternal youth, the victory "no longer of the spirit but of the body, the well-fed body, for ever youthful, immortally athletic, indefatigably sexy" (17). Stoyte's obsession with youth is carried to the extreme in Huxley's novel, with a search for an escape from death resulting not in eternal youth and beauty, but, like Ayesha in Rider Haggard's *She*, in a bodily devolution from human into ape.[2] While Huxley saw the desire for eternal life in the body as a symptom of degeneration from human to animal, Waugh characterizes the secular repudiation of the fact of death as a facet of dehumanization, the transformation of the person into the product. And, as Waugh declared to Peters in a 1947 letter, he had "got to the heart of it" where Huxley had only scratched at "superficialities" (*Letters* 247). The heart of the matter for Waugh was not humanity's return to savagery but rather its turn to the unnatural, the automatic, the mechanical.

THE image of the body as an assembly-line product is developed further in *Love Among the Ruins*. As DeCoste has suggested, this novel describes the consequences of secularism's faith in human perfectibility by human means (33-52). Clara is subjected to a series of operations designed to make her into the ideal dancer. First is Klugmann's operation, a sterilization procedure forced upon New Britain's ballerinas so that their careers will not be ruined by childbirth. This first botched procedure leaves

Clara with the "silken, corn-gold beard" (*Love Among the Ruins* 23), a signifier of originality in the banal modern age. Like Aimée in *The Loved One*, Clara is "unique" (*Loved One* 45), and her humanity, it seems, is irrepressible. Klugmann's operation has not worked: Clara discovers that she is pregnant. It seems as though the "rare" lovers are able, in this society of the common man, to create something entirely uncommon.

Waugh's satire, however, is not directed purely at the socialist policies of the Welfare State. As DeCoste has suggested, the society depicted in *Love Among the Ruins* must be viewed "within a frame of forfeit Christianity" (38). Waugh is not satirizing mere politics, but is rather attacking the humanist society that seeks to supplant God with the doctrine of earthly, secular perfectibility. Clara undergoes a second operation combining abortion, sterilization, and the removal of her "dear beard" (*Love Among the Ruins* 38). Clara's operation, which replaces her skin with "synthetic rubber" (38), transforms her living face into "something quite inhuman, a tight, slippery mask, salmon pink" (40). Miles's physical revulsion (he is sick then and there) is channelled into fresh modes of destruction. To exorcize the enchantments of Clara's beard — symbol of the organic individual human — Miles burns down Mountjoy, terminating the lives of the inmates at the same time that he terminates his "imagination" (43). Significantly, Clara's second operation and the further dehumanization of her body does not appear in the manuscript of the novel, indicating that Waugh's concern with dehumanization as a result of power without grace was not fully formed until late in the novel's genesis.

The manuscript of *Love Among the Ruins* offers an insight into the alteration of Waugh's concerns during the novel's production. Cyril Connolly argued that its success was in part due to Waugh's ability to "swallow his stomach" and to "make invisible to the naked eye" the venomous anger that prompted the satire (352). Connolly's remark becomes prescient upon viewing the manuscript, for there are numerous indications that Waugh was very angry indeed. The focused detachment typical of Waugh's satirical method wanes in the manuscript, overshadowed by the vitriol with which the secular socialist state is attacked. For instance, in the first draft of the manuscript, Miles's conversation with Mr. Sweat on the eve of his release from Mountjoy is a barely-disguised attack on the tenets of secular socialism:

> Now what with prison commissioners and Preventive Custody and Corrective Treatment they can keep you in or push you out just as it suits them. I tell you its [*sic*] made a lot of the boys uncomfortable your going out all of a sudden like this. We all came in together in the first batch. We've all taken the same treatment — citizenship, therapeutic painting, atheism & everything. And

> now its [*sic*] out <u>you</u> go. Who'll be next time, that's what we're asking? (Untitled Manuscript A 2)

Waugh's wrath in the manuscript seems to misfire. The basic targets are present in the medicalization of crime (the prisoners receive "treatment" rather than punishment), the reduction of the private individual to the mass produced object or the political unit ("first batch," "citizenship"), and the corruption of art and religion by secular, utilitarian humanism. In the manuscript, however, the targets seem to be merely an index of subjects that remain unfocused because they are unattached to an implicit moral standard. "[C]itizenship, therapeutic painting, atheism" seem in the manuscript to be one with Gilbert Pinfold's litany of dislikes, a catalogue not of a satirist concerned with the destruction of values, but of a testy colonel in a bad mood with Atlee.

In contrast, the published text fleshes out what Waugh saw as the root of the illness of which "citizenship, therapeutic painting, atheism" are mere symptoms:

> Now what with prison commissioners and Preventive Custody and Corrective Treatment they can keep you in or push you out just as it suits them. It's not right.
> "I'll tell you what it is, chum," continued Mr Sweat. "There's no understanding of crime these days like what there was. I remember when I was a nipper, the first time I came up before the beak, he spoke up straight: 'My lad,' he says, 'you are embarking upon a course of life that can only lead to disaster and degradation in this world and everlasting damnation in the next.' Now that's talking. It's plain sense and it shows a personal interest. But last time I was up, when they sent me here, they called me an 'anti-social phenomenon'; said I was 'maladjusted.' . . . I tell you it's made a lot of the boys uncomfortable your going out all of a sudden like this. Who'll be next time, that's what we're wondering?" (*Love Among the Ruins* 4)

Buried in the middle of Mr. Sweat's diatribe is the crux of Waugh's argument, veiled by the humor of incongruity inherent in a prisoner's complaint against freedom. Mr. Sweat correctly surmises that the punitive system in New Britain is "not right" because "there's no understanding of crime." While initially the reader expects this argument to be based on the effort involved in crime versus the sentence given, it soon becomes clear that Sweat's view, though that of a criminal, is more steeped in the moral code than is the Corrective Treatment of the modern penology. To

Mr. Sweat, it is "plain sense" that crime leads to "everlasting damnation." Waugh obliquely shows, a mere four pages into his novel, that in New Britain there is no understanding of sin.

In *Decline and Fall*, the misguided sociological ideas espoused by Sir Wilfred Lucas-Dockery view crime as simply a syndrome requiring treatment, rather than the product of individual, anarchic sin that requires punishment, and result in the decapitation of Mr. Prendergast. Waugh's satire is double-edged (attacking Sir Wilfred while simultaneously approving of the cruelty inflicted upon Mr. Prendergast) and deadly, because, although Sir Wilfred's treatment works in the opposite way to which he had intended, it achieves the necessary punitive result. In *Love Among the Ruins*, judgment is made against a society that refuses to pass judgment. Corrective treatment, Picasso, and constructive play, which glare in the manuscript as items of Waugh's particular disgust, are, in the detached published text, simply products of a secular humanist society that has systematically stripped itself of the knowledge of humankind's intrinsic fallenness. The reverse of secular humanism is the notion of the earthly human perfectibility which leads to Clara's inhuman face and sterile body and eviscerates meaning not only from life, but from death also.

A high body count is almost a necessity in satire for the figural punishment of vice and folly. Satire is situated in the opposition between "*laus et vituperatio,*" that is, praise and blame. The element of blame must carry an appropriate punishment. Satirists are executioners; both the person wielding the axe, and the axe itself. In Waugh's satirical novels the reader is presented with death in grim, gruesome force, by a narrator so detached as to discourage any type of emotional engagement. Death becomes a part of the entertainment, an arabesque in the satirical patterning. As in Thomas de Quincey's mock-lecture, "On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts," death in Waugh's novels is an aspect of the satirical aesthetic which veils judgment.

Donat O'Donnell identified two characteristics of his early writing crucial for an understanding of the function of death in Waugh's satire; one, that he has a "schoolboy delight in cruelty," and two, with particular regard to *Vile Bodies*, that his writing is "rich in unregarded death" (195). Waugh's "schoolboy delight in cruelty" colors the deaths of, for instance, Lord Tangent and Mr. Prendergast in *Decline and Fall*, Prudence Courteney in *Black Mischief*, and Sir Francis Hinsley and Aimée Thanatogenos in *The Loved One*. Earlier in his career, Waugh's delight in cruel mockery appears in *Black Mischief*, in the death of Prudence, and in his open letter to the Archbishop of Westminster, which replied to Ernest Oldmeadow's

censorious review of *Black Mischief*. In a medium for which such delight would surely be most inappropriate (a letter to an Archbishop) Waugh takes cruel pleasure in the grotesque detail of death, and in meting out punishment on the ineffectual and the foolish.

Prudence's death becomes a site for grisly reflection not on the Wanda tribesmen but on Basil and Prudence's adultery. Basil and Prudence's assignation is dominated by the image of the stub of the Burma cheroot "slowly unfurling" in the hip bath. The image, grossly suggestive of sexual intercourse, associates both Basil and Prudence with disposable matter. The manner in which Prudence is cooked, "stewed to a pulp among peppers and aromatic roots," quietly echoes the cigar and hip-bath image, while the verbal associations of sexual intercourse, eating, and death become symbolically prescient in his later phrase, "You're a grand girl, Prudence, and I'd like to eat you" (*Mischief* 183). Basil's symbolic consumption of Prudence is literalized in the cannibal feast.

Upon the publication of *Black Mischief*, Ernest Oldmeadow, the editor of the Catholic journal *The Tablet*, attacked the novel as "obscene and blasphemous" and impugned Waugh's faith as a Catholic. Waugh denied these charges in an open letter to the Archbishop of Westminster. Part of Oldmeadow's complaint against Waugh's "foul invention" was the specificity of the method by which Prudence was cooked at the cannibal feast. Waugh's reply to this charge is gleefully sadistic:

> But this is a peculiar prejudice of the Editor's, attributable perhaps, like much of his criticism, to defective digestion. It cannot matter whether she was roasted, grilled, braised or pickled, cut into sandwiches or devoured hot on toast as a savoury . . . (*Letters* 78)

Waugh's response echoes Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, in which a year-old baby is considered to be a "most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome Food; whether *Stewed*, *Roasted*, *Baked*, or *Boiled*" (111), and Waugh's list of recipes serves not as a denial of obscenity but rather as a reminder of Prudence's essential consumability. Instead of defending the episode as necessary to the structure of the novel, Waugh takes the opportunity to skewer the reader afresh. When charged with cruelty, Waugh the satirist responds not only with greater cruelty, but also with an allusion to another great satirist. Oldmeadow's condemnation of the novel is mired in misunderstanding and folly and liable for a satirical lashing.

The Loved One represents a conspicuous example of the "delight in cruelty" which masks an urgent satirical point. The conspicuous deaths of Aimée Thanatogenos — whose name critics have often noted means "born of death" — and Sir Francis Hinsley are exemplary of Waugh's interest in the grotesque, horrific, and, in Aimée's case, comic elements of death. Sir

Francis's suicide is one of the grislier deaths in Waugh's fiction, for though the narrator's eye does not see the moment of death, the remembrance is vividly described. The description of Sir Francis's hanged body makes conspicuous use of literary tropes that suggest that Sir Francis is no longer Sir Francis. His cheeks are like the "end-papers of a ledger," his tongue "protruding like an end of black sausage," his body a "sack" (38). The sausage, ledger, and sack are perishable items, and Waugh's similes here intimate that the human body is disposable.

In contrast with Whispering Glades's insistence on the preservation of youthful beauty via embalming and painting, Waugh's description of the hanged body of Sir Francis serves as a *memento mori* of the Christian understanding of the body as temporary housing for the soul. This understanding still, however, views the body as natural. When Sir Francis's body is put into the care of Whispering Glades, the result is the final, complete transformation of the natural body into something horrifically "inhuman." Waugh dramatizes the startling confrontation of the human being, possessed of "mobility and intelligence" with the "complete stillness" of the "thing": this "obscene travesty" is no longer merely flesh but has become alien, "ageless," and "inhuman" (65). Dennis transcribes this confrontation into verse, first calling up the "red protruding eye-balls and black protruding tongue" before fixing the horrific sight into the disgust of "shrimp-pink incorruptible" (73). This disgust is echoed and transformed later, in Miles's reaction to Clara's transplanted face — significantly, "salmon" pink, in *Love Among the Ruins* (40).

In contrast to the disgust engendered by Sir Francis's painted corpse, the death and disposal of Aimée's body is related with ironic detachment, for the novel implies that Aimée, obsessed with the aesthetics of death, lacks authentic existence. Though Dennis is attracted to her as a "decadent," and she is set apart from her fellow American women by her "rich glint of lunacy" (*Loved One* 45-46), she nevertheless shares in common with them a likeness to the assembly-line object (74). Moreover her identity, typified by her name, is shifting:

> . . . I'm called Aimée, after Aimée Macpherson. Dad wanted to change the name after he lost his money. I wanted to change it too but it kinda stuck. Mother always kept forgetting what we'd changed it to and then she'd find a new one. Once you start changing a name, you see, there's no reason ever to stop. (77)

Rhetorical instability, in which "Aimée" signifies both the human individual and the abstraction, here highlights the tenuousness of her humanity. Her name should serve to signify her identity, but it only exposes a void. Aimée can thus be associated with the image of Kaiser's stoneless

peaches, which replace the real peach with "a ball of damp, sweet cotton-wool" (74): the human being that should be Aimée is mere flesh, housing nothing.[3] Thus, when the news of her death is brought to Dennis, he can act with cool detachment, for Aimée was not really human.

The disposal of Aimée's body is ripe with the humour of extreme detachment. Dennis's cool irony, which "in the circumstances" admits "some emotion is natural," is juxtaposed with "the spectacle" of Mr. Joyboy's "abandoned weeping" (135). While Dennis's detachment seems callously cruel, his figuring of Aimée as "a little pet" is no more dehumanizing than Joyboy's repetitious characterization of her as his "honey-baby" (134). The closing paragraphs of the novel indicate that Dennis's detachment has been engendered by the same circumstances that cause Joyboy's nonsensical blubbering. Whispering Glades's secular humanist emphasis on the perfectability of the dead body has removed the fact of death, degrading the value of human life and effacing the emotions associated with life and death. Aimée and Mr. Joyboy, born in the moral void, are capable of feeling nothing more than trite sentimentalities, but the European artist does not leave unscathed. Though the narrator suggests that Dennis is "not only unravished but enriched," his enrichment — "the artist's load" — is bought with the sacrifice of "his young heart" (144). Like Miles in *Love Among the Ruins*, whose incineration of Mountjoy brings "a desert in his imagination which he might call peace" (*Love Among the Ruins* 43), Dennis's sacrifice suggests that the artist can only be reconciled to the modern world by destroying that part — the soul, the heart, the imagination — that makes him human.

O'Donnell's characterization of *Vile Bodies* as "rich in unregarded death" opens an aperture for the analysis of several of the deaths in his novels. The metaphorical deaths of Paul Pennyfeather, William Boot, Tony Last, Ambrose Silk, and Scott-King, and the meaningless deaths of Agatha Runcible, Simon Balcairn, John Andrew Last, and the Euthanasia clients of the New Britain of *Love Among the Ruins*, represent a state in which the body and soul are trapped, damned not to hell but to limbo. Agatha's final, mad analysis of the world of *Vile Bodies*, in which there is "*nothing at all . . . nothing*" (193) indicates that for these lost souls, death in the modern age is neither release nor purgation but merely a continuation of dehumanizing chaos.

In *Love Among the Ruins*, Waugh presents a world in which social custom has wilfully abandoned the awe with which the fact of death should be approached. In this dystopia, even more so than in *The Loved One*, society is "in love with easeful death." Little wonder that the New Britons yearn for "easeful death," as life in this world is stultifying.

While critics have compared *Love Among the Ruins* to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Waugh's New Britain is a dystopia of a different sort from Orwell's Airstrip One.[4] In the manuscript, Waugh initially presents a more Orwellian state, in which citizens "lived in daily expectation of imprisonment on one charge or another"; but this representation is excised for a world in which boredom, not terror, is dominant (Untitled Manuscript A10). Extrapolating from the socialist democratic reforms instituted by the post-war Clement-Atlee coalition, Waugh creates a world in which everything is provided for but nothing is interesting. There are echoes of Huxley here, this time of the dystopian *Brave New World*, where consumption drives all human activity, sex is detached from notions of romantic love, fertility is "merely a nuisance," and the "guaranteed" sterility of freemartin females leads, as it does with Waugh's Clara, to "the slightest tendency to grow beards" (22).

New Britain is a world in which "play" is by necessity "constructive," in which dancing is "therapeutic," in which political power attempts to overcome the natural variations of the weather, in which sex is a facet not of love but of biology, and in which walls are adorned with the uniform canvases of modern abstract art. In Huxley's novel, Bernard Marx seems alone in his malaise and boredom with the world. But in Waugh's dystopia, all are afflicted with the disease of discontent. The citizens of the drab New Britain, not world weary but "welfare-weary," flock to bulging Euthanasia centers in order to utilize their "mysteries." In such a world boredom, and not pain or suffering, is the primary reason for self-murder (*Love Among the Ruins* 44).

In the character of Dr. Beamish, the director of the Satellite City Euthanasia Service, "a man whose character had been formed in the nervous '30s" (19), Waugh makes explicit the connection between interbelline agitation for socialist reforms and the ennui characteristic of his speculative dystopia. Dr. Beamish, who had "signed manifestos . . . raised his fist in Barcelona and had painted abstractedly for *Horizon* . . . ; had stood beside Spender at great concourses of Youth" (20), and has his final bitter "reward" in witnessing "the fulfilment of his early hopes" (19). Spender, *Horizon*, the Spanish war, manifestos: here Waugh lists the early symptoms of the disease of the Britain of the future. Unlike Orwell, Waugh's vision predicts the evil of socialist reform to be not political terror or totalitarianism, but unremitting banality.

The representation of outmoded socialism in Dr. Beamish is joined by a spectre from Waugh's fictional history: the poet Parsnip. In *Put Out More Flags*, Parsnip, though offstage, is the subject of intense interest as an avatar of the wartime avant-garde. In *Love Among the Ruins*, Parsnip appears in person, greatly diminished. No longer a literary lion, Parsnip

is "a comic character" (44), a man of the thirties like Dr. Beamish who regularly queues at the Euthanasia center but just as regularly lacks the stomach to go through the doors. Finally, on a quiet day, Parsnip gains admission to the center and stands firm. The connection between socialist reform, the avant-garde, and the banality of the future is clear. Waugh here delights in imagining that figures such as Parsnip/Auden will come to destroy themselves rather than live in the world they have created.

TOWARDS the end of his career, Waugh published two essays that further illuminate these post-war satires. "I See Nothing But Boredom . . . Everywhere," published in 1959, and "Sloth," published in 1962, lay out Waugh's disgust with the societal and moral decay of the modern age. "I See Nothing But Boredom . . . Everywhere" begins with a dismissal of the fear of world destruction in the nuclear age: "I can see nothing objectionable in the total destruction of the earth, provided it is done . . . inadvertently. If it is done in malice someone will have behaved culpably." Waugh's reduction of the end of the world to such terms upholds the pose of cruelty cultivated throughout his career. The essay continues with what Waugh does fear: boredom. Political and social measures conceived during the Second World War under the Emergency Powers Act have wrought massive changes upon English society. The "variety" and "elaborately stratified" system that once distinguished England from other nations is fading away:

> All those things that gave the salt to English life and were the raw material of our Arts are being dissolved. When I was last in the Tate Gallery there were exposed a series of casts from a work by Matisse, showing the disappearance of a human figure. The first showed the clumsy but recognizable back of a woman; the last a mere absurdity; and between them the earnest student could study the stages of dissolution in the master's mind. Something like this is happening to the English. (*Essays* 539)

Waugh's evocation of Matisse is telling: like the Picassos and Legers that cause Miles Plastic to "yawn," the Matisse casts represent the "dissolution" of individuality. The human being is turned from a recognizable individual to an absurd abstraction. This is precisely what Waugh satirizes in *Love Among the Ruins*, the satirical culmination of a theme that was consistently important in his novels from *Put Out More Flags* onwards. While his early satires see individual liberty as symptomatic of a depraved modernity, Waugh's experience of the war and Labor government led him to valorize the liberty, diversity, and privacy of the individual.

With the waxing power of the Century of the Common Man, Waugh the satirist increasingly gave literary expression to his belief that the individual soul was better destroyed "inadvertently," than homogenized into an abstraction.

"Sloth," first published in the *Sunday Times* and later collected in Raymond Mortimer's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, examines the implications of sloth as a mortal sin. Sloth is not mere indolence, Waugh argues, for indolence "is one of the most amiable of weaknesses. . . . If only politicians and scientists were lazier, how much happier we should all be" (*Essays* 572). Rather, Waugh presents a Thomistic account of sloth as "*tristitia de bono spirituali*, sadness in the face of spiritual good" (*Essays* 573). Waugh suggests that the "despair" and "refusal of joy" characteristic of sloth are endemic in a society "deprived by the state of religious instruction" and cites as a parallel the "browned-off" men of the armed services, who engage in great activity in getting away from the enemy but are "bored . . . and indifferent" to the outcome of the battle. "There were ill-found camps and stations in the war where men refused to take the actions which would have alleviated their own condition, but instead luxuriated in apathy and resentment" (*Essays* 574). Similarly, sloth infects ordinary men and women who look out their windows instead of working at the services that would make their lives better, the modern writers who present their publishers either with "truck-loads of typescript" or with "rough notes and sketches . . . and pretend to a unity in what are mere scraps of articles and lectures" (*Essays* 576). Finally, Waugh suggests, sloth is the sin most dangerous to the aged. "Medical science has oppressed us with a new huge burden of longevity":

> It is in that last undesired decade, when passion is cold, appetites feeble, curiosity dulled and experience has begotten cynicism, that *accidia* lies in wait as the final temptation to destruction. . . . For few of us the hero's and martyr's privilege of a few clear days ending on the scaffold; instead an attenuated, bemused drifting into eternity. Death has not lost its terror in the new clinical arctic twilight. In this state we shall have to face the last deadly assault of the devil. (*Essays* 576)

Waugh's description of old age echoes the spectre of New Britain in *Love Among the Ruins*. Cold, feeble, dull, and clinical, New Britain is a world overwhelmed by sloth. Its citizens drift in a "perpetual twilight" (*Love Among the Ruins* 18), in which the darkness has an increasing hold — predominantly caused by cuts in electricity from the continuous striking of the coal miners. Sadness in the face of spiritual good

is everywhere displayed. Miles, the "child of Welfare; strictly schooled to a life of boredom" (21), still feels a kind of joy in the tranquil melancholy of Mountjoy and in the flame-like beauty of Clara's beard but, unable to understand the feelings engendered by beauty and unable to cope with the pain caused by the loss of his child, transforms his joy into destruction. Finally, his child lost, his beloved rendered inhuman and his sanctuary destroyed, Miles quits a world utterly bereft of interest and self-immolates in "gem-like, hymeneal" flame (51).

In Miles's ritualistic end, Waugh suggests that the seemingly irrepressible arsonist has finally succumbed to the state-wide sin of sloth. Infected with sadness, Miles chooses to burn rather than continue living in such a world. The ignorance of this world of the fact of death has caused the wilful miscarriage of the joys of life. Crashaw's confident enumeration of the beauties, both physical and spiritual, of his "supposed mistress" is impossible in a world made over in plastic "salmon-pink." The modern humanist emphasis on earthly paradise and human perfectibility has engendered nothing but an attenuation of human existence, and though Death is everywhere in *Love Among the Ruins*, it is unregarded, because, as Waugh suggests, the people of such a society have forfeited authentic existence.

Notes

1) See, for instance, Christopher Ames, "Shakespeare's Grave: The British Fiction of Hollywood," *Twentieth Century Literature* 47:3 (Fall 2001): 407-430. James J. Lynch, "Tennyson's Tithonus, Huxley's *After Many a Summer* and Waugh's *The Loved One*." *South Atlantic Review* 51:4 (Nov 1986): 31-47.

2) Ayesha, like the characters in *After Many a Summer*, suffers literal devolution after passing through the apparently life-giving pillar of flame. Unlike Huxley's characters, however, her devolution happens in mere moments and ends in death.

3) Dennis, of course, explicitly associates the Kaiser's peach with Sir Francis (*Loved One* 74).

4) For representative comparisons of *Love Among the Ruins* and *Nineteen Eighty Four*, see reviews by Connolly and an anonymous TLS reviewer in *Critical Heritage*, 352-355; Davis, *Evelyn Waugh and the Forms of His Time*, 237-241; Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh*, 151; Heath, *The Picturesque Prison*, 209; Myers, *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil*, 84; Jacqueline McDonnell, *Evelyn Waugh*, 129. As DeCoste notes, most critical comparisons are "uncharitable" towards Waugh's dystopia (50). David Lebedoff has recently published a book tracing connections between Waugh and Orwell (2008).

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