HELPFULNESS AND THE IDEA OF DEFEAT
CHAPTER IV

Helplessness and the Idea of Defeat

The thirties of the twentieth century were a transitional period in which the attitudes and preoccupations of the earlier decades worked themselves out and gradually lost their relevance in the eddies of the post-war situation. The post-war cast of mind, determinedly political and a-moral in its spirit and larger affiliations, defined itself as a reaction against the characteristic assumptions of the earlier period. The gloss and glitter of the twenties dissolved as shadows in the whirl. In some obvious senses the post-war ethos was determinedly hollow, in which bitter social realities such as economic depression, unemployment and threats of political dictatorship came to dominate the secular life of the disillusioned generation pressed under the wheels of history.

The consciousness of the thinking people and the writer responded to the situation in diverse ways. The progressive thinkers and the writers, optimistic in their ultimate faith embraced Marxism and the progressive views of the Christian faith for an improvement of the conditions of life. On the other hand, there were others who reinforced moral and spiritual values in order to find a mooring in the superior reality of their consciousness. They were individualists and visionary.

Nevertheless, amidst divergence and disagreement there was a point of agreement, a stasis, which all thinking people shared jointly. The consciousness of failure of the civilisation to contain modern life and an agonizing sense of insecurity were pervasive. These symptoms of disease were quite obvious in the
...moribund society of the hollow and spiritually maimed generation. However, the changed situation offered some of our writers new points of vision. The progressives, the romantics and the visionary individualists sought in their respective ways for a fresh valuation of values. Amidst the chaos and confusion of the modern life and its meaninglessness, an urge to recover faith and values was the dominant incentive.

It seemed quite apparent that materialism, liberalism, communism and socialism, all political and social exigencies, in a word, were inconstant and effete methods of procuring stability and ultimate order. In such a state of changing situation and dissolving social frontiers, even the progressivists and the optimists changed their affiliations and turned intellectual acrobats. There was almost an all-pervasive chaos and perplexity, in both moral and intellectual climate and in the a-moral involvements. It seemed almost an inevitable dilemma, a caged situation.

The odd predicaments of the human situation drifted the visionary individualists like Rimbaud, Yeats and James Joyce to the world of their cherished ideals. Repudiation of the temporality of the hectic society was insisted by their natural revulsion of it. In quest of a spiritual anchorage the visionary writers took refuge in their inmost world of higher reality, a transcendental existence, all the same.

In fact however, the romantic tradition of the English literature and its sustained preoccupation with the ethical views of life determined the course of the English fictional world and the moral, intellectual and emotional affiliations of the English writ
naturally, the alienation of the writers, cynical and apathetic to the inimical forces of amorphous and ugly materialism, is understandable. A viable world within the real one was created as it a hierarchy of the soul, a superior existence of moral and aesthetic fulfilment beyond the crass and confusion of the world of experience? Utterances of the writers confirm that his isolated existence of mystical contemplation and individuality as tainted by anarchy of the emotional life or agonized by tragic consciousness at the core of human existence. There was no escape anyway. The inevitable shadows followed.

Self-imposed alienation of the disenchanted writers as a strategy or as a cynical reply to the inadequacies of the modern industrial civilization resulted in anarchy and loneliness. In fact, the writers with individual vision and mystical leanings led them to a traumatic sense of defeat. The rejection of the conditions of the modern civilization rather unconditionally and the acceptance of alienation presaged a growing sense of insecurity and defeat among the visionary romantics. The dread of the reality, the ghost, impinged on the inward castle of the individualists and the romantics.

It seemed almost certain that the irresistible forces of the modern situation, its sickly proclivities, cynical rejection of values and all-pervasive morbidity, came to dominate the life and literature of contemporary ethos. What was the palliative to such a reekin' condition no one knew for certain. Nevertheless, certain attempts were made to grapple the tenuous reality of truths about the eternal verities. Hence, a sustained search for values for the accommodation spirit ensued.
As a writer on the contemporary situation Evelyn Waugh reveals the comic and the tragic aspects inherent in modern life. In his criticism of the Bright Young People, their throes and thrills, Waugh has not only ridiculed the aimlessness and the hectic and the nervy ways of the life of youth but also has detected tragic tremors at the bottom of life and existence. Youths, a-moral and sceptical, and the elders derelict and hypocritical express the frivolities and the failures of the modern age to contain the post-war life. Satire in the novels of Waugh as instrument of evaluation explain the fundamental problems of the age. One feels for obvious reasons that the glittering surface of his novels is only a facade.

The idea of helplessness and defeat that permeated Waugh's social satires was pressed upon him by his awareness of the post-war crisis and the predicaments. Evelyn Waugh was a visionary artist: As a realist and a satirist he possessed a superficial view of the world. The evils and the vices in his satires are indeed endemic and essentially topical. Apparently, the social perspective in Waugh's novels is the visible world of fun and futility inherent in the sophisticate society of the twenties. The motley humanity in his satires, the marionettes, immersed in lechery and blase sophistication reveals that Evelyn Waugh was a man of the world, a chronicler of the fleshly society of the twenties and the thirties.

In fact, Evelyn Waugh, like the visionary individualists, did not escape into the inward world of superior loneliness and mystical contemplation. On the contrary, he attempted through satire
and fantasy to discover a valid place for the individuals in
the reconstituted society for the accommodation of faith and values.
He was not an escapist, but in his own way a seeker after values.
What matters is how he has gone about his task, quite apart
from whether we believe in his suggested his remedy or accepted
the faith which he has come to accept.

The fantastic capers of the meddley humanity and the macabre
morbidity in the early satires of Waugh starkly reveal the
nature of existing evils in a deplorable society that has sheet
anchor and is now reduced to a state of utter helplessness and
decay. *Decline and Fall* is an apt image of the depth and the
range of Waugh's fictional world. The removal of Paul Pennyfeather
from Oxford for no reason of his own and his inexorable driftings
in the swirling eddies of the society of BoffsChetwynde reveal
the tragic possibility that subsists at the bottom of life in
the contemporary context. With Paul's removal from his cherished
world of scholarship and idealism Waugh begins his exploration
of the contemporary evils that infested the society.

In the process of Paul's sufferings Waugh shows up his
concern with the peculiar inadequacies and failures of the modern
industrial civilization. Paul is a *naïf*, almost a natural man,
ensnared awkwardly in a society of civilised taboos. But unlike
Hamigway's or Huxley's heroes he is less confused by blurred
intellectuality or distorted emotional leanings. Like *Candida*
he is drifted from one hazard to another by the irresistible
forces of the society, his Destiny, though without much difference
to the inmost integrity of his personality. It seems that the
consciousness of a formidable presence in the background of all
human undoings, rendered Paul almost an effete. In fact, through his viscidities Waugh suggests how the impact of modern materialism and the consequent decay of social morality have reduced the individuality to utter helplessness. Paul is a symbol and an objective standard of judgement satirically projected to gauge the nature of social decay. Paul's sense of purpose makes him an outsider in the perplexing society of BestoChetwynd, but not an agnostic. Paul does not reject it for a superior existence in the tenuous world of mystical speculation. On the contrary, he tries, quite persistently, for an accommodation, though thwarted repeatedly by the forces beyond his control.

The comic overtones in Decline and Fall conceal painful inadequacies abounding with the human existence in the mores. Paul Pennyfeather has been characterised as a stupid young person with an innocent heart with untainted affiliations to the healthy spirit of the Christian tradition. His indifference to the sequence of events and undoings show that Paul's disinterest was deliberate. In fact, the personality of Paul was shaped by his unfailing adherence to the noble tradition which had faith in tolerance, sincerity, purpose and morality.

The dominant undertone in the apparently bright world of Waugh is tragic. The misadventures of Paul Pennyfeather in the turgidity of Margot's world show that the freedom of conscience, and humanity are, almost in a society congenitally and outrageously evil. Freedom in the modern mechanistic society is an illusion and a prelude to anarchy. A traumatic sense of insecurity, fear and injustice and a painful surrender to the irresistible forces
mark the fate of the post-war generation.

*Decline and Fall*, which serves as a prelude to Waugh's exposition of the evil forces reveals the ambiguity of human existence and the predicaments through the crisis and agonies of its grotesque characters. The predicaments of Paul Pennyfeather, the crisis of Grimes, the exploitation of Dr Fagan and the fortuitous death of Prendergast confirm the idea of an arbitrary presence beyond the visible world of experience. That is perhaps the reason why in this a-moral world "no one suffers for his offences." The impersonal social forces have converted the individual into a non-entity, a manikin, expressing itself through fantastic gambols. There is neither freedom nor identity.

In *Decline and Fall* characters lead a mysterious life of and changed identity/impatience. Paul, Grimes, Philbrick, Fagen and Prendergast appear rather awkwardly on different occasions in order to assert their individuality. There is no way out of the whirls of the social boggy. Therefore one finds so many escapes and such failures. Grimes, the life force, is the epitome of such unrelieved tension between the inexorable forces of the society and individual passions. In the agony of Grimes Waugh has underlined the dilemma of the human situation. Grimes is a joke figure. There is fun in his swaggering gestures but serious fun, anyway. The agony of captain Grimes is marked by the satirist's ambivalence of attitude.

'Old friends,' said Grimes - and his voice was charged with emotion - 'you see a man standing face to face with retribution. Respect him even if you cannot understand. Those that live by

the flesh shall perish by the flesh. I am a very sinful man, and I am past my first youth. Who shall pity me in that dark desolity to which my steps inevitably seem to tend? I have boasted in my youth and held my head high and gone on my way careless of consequence, but ever behind me, unseen, stood stark Justice with his two-edged sword. 1

In his agony Grimes continues: 'Oh, why did nobody warn me!' I should have been told. They should have warned me about Flossie, not about the fires of hell. I've risked them, and I don't mind risking them again, but they should have told me that at the end of that gay journey and flower-strewn path were the hideous lights of home and the voices of children. I should have been warned of the great lavender-scented bed that was laid out for me, of the wisteria at the windows, of all the intimacy and confidence of family life. But I daresay I shouldn't have listened.

Our life is lived between two homes. We emerge for a little into the light, and then the front door closes. The chintz curtains shut out the sun, and the hearth glows with the fire of home, while upstairs, above our heads, are enacted again the awful accidents of adolescence. There's a home and family waiting for every one of us. We can't escape, try how we may. It's the seed of life we carry about with us like our skeletons, each one of us unconsciously pregnant with desirable villa residences. There's no escape. As individuals we simply do not exist. We are just potential home-builders, beavers, and ants at ... Grimes is amusing, but he provokes us to revaluation of our own existence. Anyway, the inescapable situation asserts that we are little better than

2. Ibid., p. 102.
trapped animals.

*Decline and Fall* is a world without pity or humanity; a world of the antics. Waugh shows little sympathy towards his characters. There is however reason behind such an attitude. In its a-moral world of blase sophistication and blatant incongruities the satirist consistently reveals the inescapable fate of the doomed humanity. The death of Tangent and the murder of Prendergast are revealing. Death rarely evokes any emotional response or pain in the moribund society of Waugh. The death of Tangent and the murder of Prendergast are seen as inevitable consequences in the situation. Hence passed without repentance or remorse.

"From all points of view," writes Waugh, "it was lucky that the madman had chosen Mr Prendergast for attack. Some people even suggested that the choice had been made in more responsible quarter. The death of a prisoner or warder would have called for a Home Office inquiry which might seriously have discouraged the Lucas-Cockery reforms and also reflected some discredit upon the administration of the Chief Warder. Mr Prendergast's death passed almost unnoticed. His assassin was removed to Broadmoor, and the life of the prison went on smoothly."1

The social satires of Waugh, his world of fun and frivolity, are lurid commentaries on the helpless plight of the individual in the contemporary whirl. In such a world self-immolation is our only lot or so it seems. The throes of defeat and helplessness are everywhere. In the end Paul accepts the reality. He understands the fun and fury of his situation.

"You know, Paul, I think it was a mistake you ever got mixed up

with us; don't you? We're different somehow. Don't quite know
dow. Don't think that's rude, do you, Paul?"
'No, I know exactly what you mean. You're dynamic, and I'm static.'
'Is that it? Expect you're right. Funny thing you used to teach
me once; d'you remember? Llannaba - Latin sentences, Quominus
and unice, and the organ; d'you remember?'
'Yes, I remember,' said Paul.
'Funny how things happen. You used to teach me the organ; d'you
remember?'
'Yes, I remember,' said Paul.
'And then Margot Metroland wanted to marry you; d'you remember?'
'Yes,' said Paul.
'And then you went to prison, and Alastair - that's Margot Metroland's
young man - and Metroland - that's her husband - got you out;
d'you remember?'
'Yes,' said Paul, 'I remember.'
'And here we are talking to one another like this, up here, after
all that! Funny, isn't it?'
'Yes, it is rather.'
'Paul, do you remember a thing you said once at the Ritz - Alastair
was there - that's Margot Metroland's young man; you know -
d'you remember? I was rather tight then too. You said, "Fortune,
a much maligned lady." D'you remember that?'
'Yes,' said Paul, 'I remember.'
'Good old Paul! I knew you would. Let's drink to that now; shall
we? How did it go? Damn, I've forgotten it. Never mind. I wish
I didn't feel so ill.'
'You drink too much, Peter.'
'Oh, damn, what else is there to do? You going to be a clergyman, Paul?'

'Yes.'

'Damned funny that. You know you ought never to have got mixed up with me and Metroland. May I have another drink?'

Disintegration as a prelude to decline of the social institutions and all pervasive anarchy marks the individual fate of the apparently meddley characters in *Decline and Fall*. A sense of alienation dominates the psychology of the most of the characters of Waugh. Unlike the aggressive youth of Angus Wilson, Kingsley Amis or John Osborne, the characters especially in the early negative satires of Waugh, though victims and outsiders, do not reject the society. On the contrary, they try innocently rather, to find out an accommodation within its framework. But the society offers them no such mooring.

In *Vile Bodies* the theme of helplessness and defeat is treated with more pith and profundity. Full of chaos, calamity and irrelevance, its permissive parties, overwhelming boredom, the death of Miss Agatha Runcible and finally the war illustrate Waugh's awareness of the contemporary situation, its tragic suspension and comic overtones. Comedy in his satires is superficial, a significant tinsel, beneath lies the dark hiatus. The perverted protagonists in *Vile Bodies* in their hectic and nervy ways reinforce Waugh's view of the predicament and ambiguity inherent in the mores.

Adam is at the centre of the whirl in *Vile Bodies* trapped fortuitously within the impregnable circle which he does not quite understand. Adam is an outsider both morally and emotionally

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I. ibid., pp. 214-16.
in the restless society of the Bright Young People. He is disgusted with the deplorable state of existence which he cannot defy. As a chronicler of the bright twenties Waugh senses the inmost tragedy implicit in the situation. No one finds his goal and everyone is painfully restless and derivative in *Vile Bodies*. The death of Runcible, the epitome of the Bright Young People, is a climax of the ecstasy and the agony of the younger generation. The inescapable impasse, the doom, is shown up in the disillusionment and death of the protagonists of perversion and profanity. *Vile Bodies*, the world of the antics, asserts Waugh's version of the modern situation with nuances.

The idea of helplessness, defeat, terror and pathos are abound in *Vile Bodies* where characters lead a nightmare life of dizzying gaiety and painful hangovers. The experience of Adam, his cynical rejection of values and disappointments leading to apathy and shamelessness and his ultimate surrender to the inevitable chaos and confusion reveal the painful predicament of the disinherited generation.

Tragic suspension in *Vile Bodies*, the underlying tone of the novel, is enforced through Adam's overwhelming consciousness of alienation and defeat. True, Adam has no superior affiliation, but his rather unsuccessful struggle for an accommodation in the social imbroglio or futile attempts to escape makes him an outsider. The thwarted romance of Adam, the woebegone womanhood of Chastity, the selling of Nina to Ginger and finally the inevitable calamity which threatened the annihilation of the civilized world, the broken images, in a word, bear the evidences of Waugh's concern with the modern situation and its fleshly ways.
In Black Mischief the locale changes and the theme of individual helplessness and defeat is taken over to distant Africa. The evil here, as it is everywhere in the satires of Waugh, is endemic. There is a formidable spirit in the background drifting the protagonists of anarchy and perversion in the mire and fury of the social life. It is in Africa, as it is in London, dominating the life and activities of the spiritually maimed generation. Lust, violence, cruelty and terror in the Asiaman kingdom show that the ultimate doom of the sinners cannot be thwarted with impunity. Freedom leads to anarchy and consequent annihilation of individuality in such a world of macabre morbidity. The loathsome murder of Seth, the cannibalism of the Africans and Basil's participation in it, the death of Prudence, and the brutality of the Africans and their seedy a-morality reinforce Waugh's attitude to the human situation. He is convinced that such violence must be countered by a more powerful positive force. But modern man is too weak to undertake that act of recovery. His weakness may be his only sin.

In his theme of loneliness and loss of freedom or defeat Waugh was attracted by the topical rather than the fundamental problems inherent in modern civilization. The society in the fictional world of Waugh is seen in a transitional phase. The process of shift and change not only bear the testimony of the satirist's concern with the dissolving border lines of the social perspective but also asserts his quest for an accommodation in the post-war malaise. From Black Mischief to A Handful of Dust one feels quite an abrupt change in the locale though not in the thematic pattern. Waugh shifts but never inconsistently.
A Handful of Dust, Waugh's climactic assertion of the theme of loneliness and defeat, deals with the problem with insight, imagination and profundity. Irony, in this novel, has turned into pity, and cruelty into humanity. Here Waugh is more humane than he is anywhere in his fictional world. Its deeper understanding of the modern situation is shown in the handling of the loneliness of the individual. In fact, A Handful of Dust marks Waugh's 

dépassement 
of the theme of disintegration leading to gradual decay and turpitude.

As Brenda and Tony show, modern life is essentially inadequate and empty. Inadequate emotional relationship, a grim struggle for freedom mirrored in the marital relationship of Brenda Last and Tony Last and the ultimate destruction of life and values constitute the theme of A Handful of Dust. Both Brenda and Tony are the victims of smug but inessapable social forces. Tony Last, seemingly the last aristocrat of a great tradition, is trapped in the whirls of the contemporary world. His nostalgia for the feudal orders makes it hard for him to adjust to today's mechanized living. Tony is an anachronism, an outsider in the cosmopolitan society of the Beavers.

One feels from the beginning an uneasy suspension of painful consequences in the background of A Handful of Dust. The problem of adjustment between Tony Last and Brenda is a part of a clash of personalities and a crisis of values. In fact, they are seen as victims of the forces of cultural anarchy which they do not understand. Tony Last with his obsession for the idyllic past and Brenda Last with her ultra-modern pursuits of the society of the avant-garde, the cosmopolitans, are driven to the eddies
of the perplexing social bogey.

Brenda and Tony are alarmingly different in their attitudes and preoccupations. Hetton Abbey which Tony admired as a symbol of his cherished ideals was for Brenda a living death. It was pointless and no doubt impossible for her to keep such a house. She did not think it worth preserving nor look upon herself as a custodian of such a tradition. But for Tony it is a symbol of memory and meaning, identity and freedom which Branda's brand of cosmopolitanism regards frivolous. Her passion and individuality are thwarted. Thus through contrariety Waugh has exposed a situation which foreshadows collapse in its ultimate process. Irony in A Handful of Dust hinges on a sustained tragic tone.

Characters in this novel are superficial, the smugs and the philistines, trying vigorously and almost awkwardly for their own kinds of life. Brenda feels Hetton as a cold burden, a passionless presence with meaningless appearance. It presses her to a monotonous life of mediaeval platitudes. Her restless attempts to recover her identity and freedom through infidelity and escapades are forfeited. She is driven to the chaos and confusion of London. Through infidelity she tries to get the better of her loneliness. The death of John Andrew releases her, if it is a release, from the emotional torture of her life in Hetton.

The ridiculous part of Brenda's infatuation, its unreality and futility, is focussed through dizzying gaiety and uneasy hangovers and her infidelity. Brenda's perversion is revealed through irony and meaningful nuances as a part of the corrupt society of the cosmopolitans. A conversion between Brenda and
Marjorie reveals the inconsistency in Brenda's choice. Says Marjorie: 'But, really, Brenda, he's such a dreary young man.'

'I know it all. He's second rate and a snob and, I should think, as cold as a fish, but I happen to have a fancy for him, that's all...besides I'm not sure he's altogether awful...he's got that odious mother whom he adores... and he's always been very poor. I don't think he's had a fair deal. I heard all about it last night. He got engaged once but they couldn't get married because of money and since then he's never had a proper affair with anyone decent... he's got to be taught a whole lot of things. That's part of his attraction.'

Brenda is soon disillusioned. She is lonely again. Beaver escaped to America. Death of John Andrew marks the climax of the defeated purpose and helplessness of Tony and Brenda. John is a victim of the hectic and nervous ways of modern civilization. Loneliness in the waste land is inescapable and all pervasive. There is pathos in the loneliness of John. Brenda's absence strains him. Therefore he is so abusive to all who separated him from his mother. There is a tragic note at the end. John dies in a riding accident and no one is held responsible. Blatant disregard for life is exposed rather cruelly.

Tony Last is a backgazing romantic possessed of a private myth. His personality was shaped by his unfailing devotion to the tradition. In fact, his private myth about the Knights of the Round Table and the Eighteenth Century Squire was a defence mechanism and he refused to come to terms with the reality around him. The terror of being overpowered by Mrs Beaver and her society dominates.

the passion and personality of Tony Last, but the irresistible forces of amorphous materialism are too powerful for Tony's mythic world. This bare reality he refuses to accept. In fact, the only point of attraction about Tony's personality is his embrace for Eton. Without it and his unflagging nostalgia Tony becomes almost a dull and effete figure. Naturally, when Eton was threatened, Tony was terrified. In fact, terror turns his traditional and he considers himself as a custodian of it. Alone in a disintegrating world Tony conceived it his righteous service to the lost culture of Europe.

But Tony is disillusioned and in the end he is defeated and is gradually lost in the whirl. Forces quite out of his control dominated the courses of events in his life. The death of John Andrew and the disintegration of Eton seemed inescapable. Finally his escape to the Brazilian jungle in quest of his ideal City suggests his indirect submission to the pervasive force. Thus Tony, like Brenda, is defeated in his quest for meaning, identity and freedom.

Thus in the life and experience of Adam in *Vile Bodies* and Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust* Waugh has traced the doom and utter destitution of the aimless humanity. They are the most unfortunate characters of Evelyn Waugh. Paul Pennyfeather recovered from his identity by a going-back, a strategy which saved him/complete immersion. Similarly, Guy Grouchback, Waugh's gentleman, recovers his mooring through ultimate surrender to the verities. Adam and Tony are Waugh's most pessimistic characters, perennially lost in the swirling eddies of the social bogey; his purgatorio. This stance of the satirist is indeed unusual.
In *A Handful of Dust* loneliness and defeat are seen as the inescapable fate of the aimless and imprudent individuals. The inadequacies of Tony's past and the smug sophistication of the cosmopolitans, the avant-garde of the new society, are ridiculed and debunked. In fact, individual crisis and confusion and social baseness and cruelty are seen as symptoms of social disease. Tony's snobbery, a mask, and his philistinism, the incongruous cosmopolitanism of Mrs Beaver, the shoddy specimen of bourgeois exploiters and utilitarians, the promiscuity and base sophistication of the Mayfair band and finally the disintegration of Hatton, the epitome of the lost culture, express attitude to individual predicaments and extrinsic forces of the social debris.

The theme of impaired individuality, its helplessness and defeat, and the social debacle are treated with sympathy, humanity and ambivalence. The percolation of pity is quite explicit in the treatment of Tony's dilemma. In *A Handful of Dust* irony and pity are fused with meticulous chic and objectivity in order to establish the satirist's commentary. *A Handful of Dust* is Waugh's tour de force of irony.

The helplessness of Tony is treated with dramatic objectivity. Through his treatment of Tony's nightmares and terror of the heartless society Waugh conveys, from the beginning to the end, from the comfortable country house to the clearing of the Brazilian jungle, a sustained tone of loneliness and deprivation. The fear of the ultra-modern society of Mrs Beaver and the infidelity of Brenda chased him like ghosts in his escapade. The hallucination of Brenda and a toy mouse is quite meaningful.

"It was late in the afternoon when he first saw Brenda. For some
time he had been staring intently at the odd shape amidship
where the stores had been piled; then he realized that it was a
human being.
'So the Indians came back?' he said.
'Yes,'
'I knew they would. Silly of them of them to be scared by a toy.
I suppose the others are following.'
'Yes, I expect so. Try and sit still.'
'Damned fool, being frightened of a toy mouse,' Tony said derisively
to the woman amidships. Then he saw that it was Brenda. 'I'm
sorry,' he said. 'I didn't see it was you. You wouldn't be
frightened of a toy mouse.'
But she didn't answer him. She sat as she used often to sit
when she came back from London, huddled over her bowl of bread
and milk."

The vision of the County Council is significant. Tony sees
in his delirium that that Council settles the question of widening
the corner of Hetton Cross and Brenda's love for Beaver. Tony's
consciousness of defeat is exposed through unfailing dramatisation
of the inmost fear.
'Order,' said the Mayor. 'Lord St Cloud, I suggest you put the
question to the vote.'
'The question is whether the contract for the widening of the
corner of Hetton Cross shall be given to Mrs Beaver. Of the tenders
submitted hers was by far the expensive but I understand that
her plans include a chromium-plated wall on the south side of
the village ...'

"...and two breakfasts," prompted Winnie.

"...and two breakfasts for the men engaged on the work. Those in favour of the motion will make a clucking sound in imitation of hens, those against will say bow-wow."

'A most improper proceeding,' said Reggie. 'What will the servants think?'

'We have got to do something until Brenda has been told."

'..., Me? I'm all right."

'Then I take it the motion is carried."

'Oh, I am glad Mrs Beaver got the job,' said Brenda. 'You see I'm in love with John Beaver, I'm in love with John Beaver, I'm in love with John Beaver."

'Is that the decision of the committee?'

'Yes, she is in love with John Beaver."

'Then that is carried unanimously."

'No,' said Winnie. 'He ate two breakfasts."

'..., by an overwhelming majority."

'Why are you all changing your clothes? asked Tony, for they were putting on hunting coats.

'For the lawn meet, Hounds are meeting here today."

'But you can't hunt in summer."

'Time is difficult in Brazil and there is no bathing."

'I saw a fox yesterday in Bruton Wood. A mechanical green fox with a bell inside him that jingled as he ran. It frightened them so much that they ran away and the whole beach was deserted and there was no bathing except for Beaver. He can bathe every day, for the time is different in Brazil.'

The sense of utter deprivation is revealed again in a moment of self-pity. In his nightmare Tony says angrily:

"...You would bear better and it would be more polite if you stood still when I addressed you instead of walking round in a circle. It is for your own good that I am telling you ... I know you are friends of my wife and that is why you will not listen to me. But be careful. She will say nothing cruel, she will not raise her voice, there will be no hard words. She hopes you will be great friends afterwards as before. But she will leave you. She will go away quietly during the night. She will take her hammock and her rations of ferine ... Listen to me. I know I am not clever but that is no reason why we should forget all courtesy. Let us kill in the gentlest manner. I will tell you what I have learned in the forest, where time is different. There is no City. Mrs Beaver has covered it with chromium plating and converted it into flats. Three guineas a week, each with a separate bathroom. Very suitable for base love. And Polly will be there. She and Mrs Beaver under the fallen battlements ..."!

Tony's vision of ideal City was an illusion, an unreality. And so it dissolved and left behind the throes and anguish of unfulfilment and deprivation. The evil had become overwhelming, and assumed almost a cosmic shape. But Tony, though beaten, does not allow him to accept the bitter reality until the tragic end of his quest. His tragedy is one of intellectual failure. He does not understand that the ideal City, the eternal verity, cannot be recovered by nostalgia and snobbery. His intellectual levity and philistinism destroyed Tony.

1. Ibid. pp. 206-207.
Evelyn Waugh, a realist and a visionary as he is, sees in the living confinement of Tony Last a probable indictment of the age which offers no freedom and identity. But he accepts it with certain conditions. In his quest for accommodation or an anchorage Tony is driven from the Gothic world of Hatton to the savage world of Todd by such forces which he is powerless to resist. Life seemed caged everywhere.

In fact, Tony's penchant for the mediaeval glory and its romantic notions is superficial. His City is a romantic's abode, a vision of beauty and glamour. He is lacking in the inmost quality which saved Guy Crouchback and Paul Pennyfeather amidst chaos and confusions of the reality. Therefore, the dissolving perspectives of his vision left him in unrelieved grief, a traumatic romantic doomed perennially in the inescapable whirls of life. In the disintegration of Hatton he saw the passing away of his cherished world.

"A whole Gothic world had come to grief ... there was now no armour glittering through the forest glades, no embroidered feet on the green sword; the cream and dappled unicorns had fled."¹ The civilized world for him was suddenly "bereft of order; it was as though the whole reasonable and decent constitution of things, the sum of all he experienced or learned to expect, were an inconspicuous, incomprehensible object mislaid somewhere on the dressing table; no outrageous circumstance in which he found himself - no new mad things brought to his notice, could add a jot to all encompassing chaos that shrieked about his ears."²

The captivity of Tony in the Brazilian jungle, his living

¹. Ibid., p. 157.  
². Ibid., pp. 157-58.
death, is poetically just and symbolically true. But the satirist's pity and humanity subdued sophisticated and savage irony. A Handful of Dust ends on a tragic note.

In The Loved One the eclipse of individuality and freedom is traced in the changed social context of the modern Anglo-Americans. Waugh called it 'an Anglo-American tragedy' for its moral implications. Apparently, it is a mordant satire on the cynical rejection of the modern Americans the infallible rules of Heaven and Hell. Forest Lawn Cemetery is an attempt by its protagonists, the avant-garde of the new society, to reverse the old sanctity of Heaven and Hell. The Loved One is Waugh's most powerful satire on the new morale of the protagonists of materialism. The mortuary of the Whispering Glades is a pathetic fallacy of its sickly members, the antitoxids and an epitome of moral and intellectual perversion.

The founder of the cemetery was oddly inspired by the idea of providing permanence, freedom and identity to loved ones even after their death. But actually, as Waugh suggests, the macabre morbidity of the Forest-Lawn Cemetery is in fact the symbol of death in life. The barbed flippancy of the motley humanity of Whispering Glades, however splendid, reveals the baseness and the doom of the a-moral ways of the Americans. Waugh's parody of the spiritually maimed anglo-Americans bears the testimony of his attitude to the modern civilization.

The idea of helplessness and defeat in The Loved One is carried on through self-immolation and escapades. Beneath the fantastic frisks of the characters, the human marionettes, remains an unsettling sense of loneliness and despair. The basic issue
in *The Loved One* is essentially tragic. The dominant undertone in the novel is a feeling of loneliness and despondency. Aimee Thanatogenesis, Dannis Burlow and Joyboy, the specimens of fragmented humanity, are doomed to a life of savage monotony and boredom among the deads. They lead a life of impiety and seedy a-morality. In fact, they are not seen apart from the general immorality and perversion of the Forest-Lawn Cemetery. They are the citizens of the New World, the world without faith and religion.

However, the suicide of Aimee Thanatogenesis and the disillusionment of Dannis Burlow marks the failure of this New World. A tragic suspension at bottom is expressed through Aimee's last thought before death, almost a nostalgia. Waugh writes:

"Her mind was quite free from anxiety. Somehow, somewhere in the blank black hours she had found counsel; she had communed perhaps with the spirits of her ancestors, the impious and haunted race who had deserted the altars of the Gods, had taken ship and wandered, driven by what barbarous tongues! Her father had frequented the Four Square Gospel Temple; her mother drank, Attis voices prompted Aimee to a higher destiny; voices which far away and in another age had sung of the Minotaur, stamping far underground at the end of the passage; which spoke to her more sweetly of the still Boeotian water-front; the armed men all silent in the windless morning, the fleet motionless at anchor, and Agamemnon turning away his eyes; spoke of Alcestis and proud Antigone.

The East lightened. In all the diurnal revolution these first fresh hours alone are untainted by man. They lie late abed in that region. In exaltation, Aimee watched the countless statues
glimmer, whiten, and take shape while the lawns changed from silver and grey to green. She was touched by warmth. Then suddenly all round her and as far as she could see the slopes became a dancing surface of light, of millions of minute rainbow and spots of fire; in the control house the man on duty had turned the irrigation cock and water was flooding through the network of pierced and buried pipes. At the same time parties of gardeners with barrows and tools emerged and tramped to their various duties. It was full day.

Aimee walked swiftly down the gravelled drive to the mortuary entrance. In the reception room the night staff were drinking coffee. They glanced at her inscrutably as she passed silently through them, for urgent work was done at all hours. She took the lift to the top storey where everything was silent and empty save for the sheeted dead. She knew what she wanted and where to find them; a wide mouthed blue bottle and a hypodermic syringe. She indited no letter of farewell or apology. She was far removed from social custom and human obligations. The protagonists, Dennis and Mr Joyboy, were quite forgotten. The matter was between herself and the deity she served.1

Dennis, a cynic and a philistine, is without love or remorse. Aimee's death, Joyboy's agony and anger remain coldly unimpressive for Dennis. In fact, gradually he realises the frivolity and heartlessness inherent in the profane world of Whispering Glades and the Happier Hunting Ground. The manner in which he treats Joyboy is revealing. It conveys the satirist's attitude to the sophisticated frivolity of the protagonists of the mortuary, the

limbo. Dennis is extremely sardonic.

'What have you come to me for?'

Mr Joyboy snorted.

'I can't hear you.'

'Help,' said Mr Joyboy. 'It's your fault. You've gotta do something.'

'This is no time for recrimination, Joyboy. Let me merely point out that you are the man publicly engaged to her. In the circumstances some emotion is natural - but do not go to extremes. Of course I never thought her wholly sane, did you?'

'She was my -'

'Don't say it, Joyboy. Don't say it or I shall turn you out.'

Dennis Burlow is disillusioned when Sir Ambrose Abercrombie tells him:

'It won't do, Barlow. You must allow me an old man's privilege of speaking frankly. It won't do. After all you're an Englishman. They're a splendid bunch of fellows out here, but you know how it is. Even among the best you find a few rotters. You know the international situation as well as I do. There are always a few politicians and journalists simply waiting for the chance to take a knock at the Old Country. A thing like this is playing into their hands. I didn't like it when you started work here. Told you so frankly at the time. But at least this is a more or less private concern. But religion's quite another matter. I expect you're thinking of some pleasant country rectory at home. Religion's not like that here. Take it from me, I know the place.'

'It's odd you should say that, Sir Ambrose. One of my chief aims

was to raise my status."

"Then shuck it, my dear boy, before it's too late."

Satire in *The Loved One* is an instrument of criticism of the
decadent and dehumanizing tendencies in contemporary culture.
Sustained irony and sardonic gibes as Waugh's satirical specula
not only assert his moral standpoint but also help evaluation of
values. Repudiation of the topical is always a guideline to Waugh's
ethical views. In *The Loved One* the satirist's attitude to the
irreverent world of the protagonists of the pets' cemetery, the
mosticsians, is overtly cynical but not inconsistent to his stance
of quest and criticism. As a rooted moralist, Waugh sees in the
contemporary situation, its vile materialism and namad spirituality,
an impending disaster and a painful eclipse of values and humanity.
In such a world of overwhelming forces of chaos one can only wait
helplessly of course for a tragic denouement, a cataclysm.

*Scott–King's Modern Europe* and *Love Among the Ruins* are
repetitions of the attitude expressed in earlier satires. Humanity
is rendered helpless by almost the formidable forces of materialism,
its vices and swaggers. However, Dennis Burlov's disillusionment
and consequent escape from the Whispering Glades are significant.
It shows that the satirist is gradually recovering from the
traumatic sense of helplessness and defeat. In his later satires,
the idea of recovery is more clear. The Crouchback trilogy which
marks the fulfilment of the satirist's aspiration, shows up
Crouchback struggling to recover his shocks of defeat and uneasy
loneliness. In the satires of Waugh one senses a sustained search
for a palliative; an anodyne, in order to assuage the shocks of
loneliness and defeat.

1. Ibid., pp.122-23.