CHAPTER 3

GREATER COMEDIES

The comic vision of life unfolded in the greater comedies reflects Catholic optimism in the gradual emancipation of the central character from the shackles of error and illusion associated with the static and the dynamic modes of existence to the realm of wisdom and truth associated with the ever-stable Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life. Accordingly, the image of the wheel of life continues to play a dominant role both in making this optimistic view of life vivid and in imparting a suitable aesthetic form to them.

BRIDESHEAD REVISITED (1945):

In Brideshead Revisited (1945), the nature of change and its relationship with progress once again overshadows other considerations. However, while it was secular change that was examined earlier, it is religious change that is being studied here. That is why, the warning on the dust-jacket of the first edition reads:

... Brideshead Revisited is not meant to be funny. There are passages of buffoonery, but the general theme is at once romantic and eschatological. It is ambitious ... nothing less than an attempt to trace the workings of the divine purpose in a pagan world, in the lives of an English Catholic family, half paganised themselves, in the world of 1923-1939.
When Waugh deprives the novel of the element of fun, he means to say that its fun is unlike that of the comedies discussed in chapter 2. In the lesser comedies, characters try to improve their lot or that of the society through participation in and furtherance of secular change. It comes through their revolving round the wheel of life which emphasizes the lack of any meaningful change or progress. The mistaking of apparent progress for the real renders them and their actions comic in the Platonic sense of the word. Comedy here stems from self-ignorance and sterile repetitiveness of life which makes the readers not only laugh at the foolish capers of man but also sympathise with his predicament. But as Waugh is concerned, in this novel, with religious change, the characters who people it are not exposed to comic ridicule. Instead of mistaking the apparent progressiveness of secular change for that of the religious, these characters try to uplift themselves through a spiritual transformation of their personality. That is to say, they discover significance and meaning in directing their efforts towards the hub of the wheel of life which is representative of sub specie aeternitatis vision of the world. The warning that appeared on the dust jacket of the first edition of the novel did not conceal this.

... (to) those who look to the future with black forebodings and need more solid comfort than rosy memories .... I have given my hero, and them, if they will allow me, a hope, not, indeed, that anything but disaster lies ahead, but that the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters.
It is in the sense of the resurrection and redemption of human life that *Brideshead Revisited* lays claim to the appellation of comedy. Such an approach is fully supported by F.M. Cornford's 'The Ritual Origins of Comedy' (1914) and by Northrop Frye's 'The Argument of Comedy' (1949). As the characters here trace their movement from an 'absurd' and vegetative state of existence to a higher and meaningful one, the comedy enacted in the novel may be termed a divine one, after the manner of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

The novel is concerned primarily with the change that Charles Ryder, the narrator of the story of the Flytes, undergoes. It goes to the credit of Waugh's artistic genius that he should make his point clear by externalising the process of Charles Ryder's spiritual progress through the shifts in his association with the different members of the Flyte family. One is reminded of Shakespeare's *King Lear* where the process of Lear's madness and consequent recovery is allegorically conveyed in the extent of his nearness to each of his three daughters. Waugh has, therefore, in a way dramatised the process of Charles Ryder's religious change and progress. This helps him retain his classical poise of objectivity without sacrificing at the same time the thematic value of his work. Bernard Bergonzi, it seems, has been unable to understand this significance of making Charles Ryder, the narrator of the story when he argues:

Certainly the story suffers from being filtered through the consciousness of Ryder; the events can scarcely transcend the personality of their narrator.
In order that the graph of Charles Ryder's gradual religious change be plotted, it is essential to have a look at the members of the Flyte family who individually mark the various stages of his development. In the account that Waugh submitted to the directors of MGM Film Company, he wanted that the 'Flytes should be represented as one of the English noble families which retained their religion throughout the Reformation period'. But in the novel, it is only Lady Marchmain's side of the family which is "old Catholic"; Lord Marchmain's side of the family having given up Roman Catholicism long ago and become Anglican, a form of neo-paganism that suited the 'dynamic' spirit of the times. It is the marriage with Lady Marchmain that restores the family to the faith of its forefathers. The children born of this wedlock embody this schism. While the neo-pagan spirit is inherited by Sebastian and Julia, the Catholic spirit is imbied by Brideshead and Cordelia. The schism within this family takes its toll soon: Lord Marchmain deserts his wife, runs away to Italy and seeks the protection, not love, of his mistress, Cara, against his wife. Sebastian and Julia follow suit, impelled by their wild neo-pagan spirit. The errant members of the Flyte family harbour in themselves the 'dynamic' spirit that we have seen already in characters like Captain Grimes and Basil Seal. It is the whirlpool of dynamic life that sucks them in and thus prevents their progress towards the transcendental hub of the wheel of life.
Charles Ryder who is himself a romantic at heart and thus in the 'static' phase of his life feels fascinated by these dynamic characters. Accordingly, he draws closer to them, one by one. His proximity to these dynamic characters represents an effort on his part to plunge into the world of secular change. In other words, it signifies giving up of the static mode of existence and participation in the dynamic world's futile quest for secular progress. But by virtue of his nearness to these dynamic characters, he also comes across the spiritually inclined characters like Cordelia, Brideshead and Lady Marchmain. As he is, at this moment, far from the realisation of the value of religious change as a means to true progress, he is unable to comprehend their attitude to life. As Harry Blamires has observed:

... the religious view of life differs so fundamentally and comprehensively from the secular view of life that it seems scarcely possible for the Christian to communicate intelligibly with the modern secularist. 6

Yet Charles Ryder's inability, at this stage of his progress, to comprehend the Roman Catholic way of life has irked Nancy Mitford, a close associate of Waugh. In one of her letters to Waugh, she writes:

... I can't explain why but he seemed to me a tiny bit dim. 7

Waugh's reply to Nancy Mitford imputed, quite justifiably, Charles' dimness to the fact of his telling someone else's story,
Yes I know what you mean; he is dim, but then he is telling the story and it is not his story.

V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, without being defensive like Waugh, rather commends Waugh for having made Charles, a non-Catholic, tell the tale of a Catholic family's reaffirmation of its old faith.

The story he has to tell is that of a Catholic family's apostasies and repentances, and it is a brilliant stroke of Mr. Waugh's to tell that story through the mind of a non-Catholic.

While Waugh's reply is explanatory, Clinton-Baddeley's is adulatory. Doubts concerning Charles' capability as a narrator emerge out of a critical approach that overlooks the primacy of Charles' conversion studied in comparison with the return of the Flyte family to its old Catholic fold.

Ryder's increasing familiarity with this family not only helps him overcome his incomprehension of the Catholic view of life but also convinces him of the need of accepting such a standpoint. Salaman Rushdie, in *Midnight's Children* (1980) has adopted a similar technique for displaying simultaneously the development of Salim Sinai and the country of his birth, India. Charles Ryder's conversion, however, is not so smooth. The pagan spirit of the world of change restrains him at every step. Jeffrey Heath has rightly said:

It would be wrong to say that Ryder struggles toward his vocation; in fact he struggles violently against it, repeatedly refusing to conform to the plan God has made for him.
The struggle in his case follows a violent course because he is a pagan through and through while Sebastian and Julia are not; they are only 'half-heathen'. His redemption must therefore follow that of the errant members rather than precede it.

The first of these children to come across Charles Ryder is Sebastian. The meeting has so overpowering an impact that Charles sheds all his old friends and is drawn into the vortex of the Flyte family's fortunes by Sebastian's charm. Unwittingly, he is drawn into a plan that affects both him and the Flyte family. He, however, is struck more by Sebastian's queer habit of carrying a teddy-bear, Aloysius, than by his conspicuous beauty. One other thing that strikes strange to Charles is Sebastian's behaviour during their first joint visit to Brideshead. While Sebastian feels free in introducing Charles to his nanny, Hawkins, he takes precaution against his meeting any other member of the family. Infact, Ryder notices that

The farther we drove from Brideshead, the more he seemed to cast off his uneasiness - the almost furtive restlessness and irritability that had possessed him.11

Also, Sebastian shows an unusual lack of feeling concerning the possession of his house. Pointing towards Brideshead House, he says, 'It's where my family live'. Sebastian's attachment with the teddy-bear and nanny, Hawkins, shows his deliberate refusal to outgrow the fancies of childhood. They
also provide him with a protective garb against the Catholicism of his family. From this standpoint, it is a regressive measure: it takes Sebastian not nearer but farther from the hub of the wheel of life. He is not unaware of this fall as he fully believes in the truth propounded by Roman Catholicism. The only obstacle in his trying to achieve that is the heathen part of his own self which has gained complete authority over his actions. The heathen part of his self makes him drink hard. As most of the members of his family observe, he is not happy when he takes to drink. It is, for him, a means of psychological escape from the domineering personality of his mother, Lady Marchmain who he hates with all his strength, for she epitomises the Roman Catholic values not only in his eyes but in the eyes of others as well. Excessive drinking turns out to be hazardous for his stay at Oxford twice. Each time Lady Marchmain manages to dissuade the authorities from rusticating him. Her attempts to reform him prove futile. Rather, they goad Sebastian to take to his inordinate life with a greater vigour and zest. Drinking also makes him deceitful so that when he is sent with Mr. Samgrass to the Continent for a change, he escapes from the tutelage of his guardianship. Again, when Rex Mottram, his brother-in-law, takes him to the Continent for a cure, he not only loses track of Sebastian but also his money which the latter has taken from him. The life of depravity culminates in Sebastian's eventual departure from Brideshead for good. Following
the example of his errant father whom he likes very much, he leaves for the Continent to stay there for ever, free from the interference of his mother. Sebastian's decision symbolises man's misuse of free will and consequent distance and departure from the hub of stability and eternity. Waugh's recorded account of the misuse of free will is analogous to Dostoevsky's who has depicted in Crime and Punishment, how man sometimes makes a wrong use of his free will and how in consequence, he suffers from fear and mental instability. Sebastian is not happier than Raskolnikov after he takes this step. In the idiom of expression often used by this philosophy of life, it represents a fall and hence, turns out to be a tragedy.

The story of Sebastian's fall follows the same course as his father's does. Both of them choose drinking as a sort of escape from Lady Marchmain whom they detest with all fervour. Like his father, he suspects anyone who is close to his mother. When Charles Ryder's meetings with Lady Marchmain become a more frequent phenomenon, he first grows wary of his friend and then accuses him of conspiring along with his mother against him. Sebastian and his father have even personal resemblances. The two have similar voices. He has therefore been cast in the mould of his father.

The second errant member who is introduced to us and who attracts the novelist's attention very much is
Julia Flyte. Sebastian who dominates the earlier portion of the book seems in consequence to have been consigned to oblivion. Critics have been unhappy over this apparently sudden shift in the novelist's interest in the creation of his characters. David Lodge in his remarkable book *Evelyn Waugh* considers the treatment of Sebastian artistically faulty as he is given disproportionate attention in the first and the second parts of the book.

The book is quite unbalanced by the long and leisurely treatment of Sebastian, who then drops almost entirely out of the picture. Rather clumsy second hand reports of his progress to an unorthodox kind of sanctity, and the attempt to identify him as the "forerunner" of Charles' passion for Julia, do not solve this problem.12

A.E. Dyson has also written in a similar vein against Waugh's artistry.

*Birdeshead Revisited*, which begins like a masterpiece, ends with the most explicit of Waugh's evasions.13

V.C. Clinton-Baddeley, Waugh's reviewer, however, differs on this issue. In his opinion, Julia's supersession of Sebastian is justifiable as the story of the novel is not concerned merely with Sebastian but with the entire Flyte family itself.

But the theme ... is not the story of Sebastian, but the reclamation of the whole family, whose most important member is Julia. Her story is told to perfection.14
While there is some segment of truth in what V.C. Clinton-Baddeley has written, but the remark does not contain the whole truth. The novel is much more than a story of Flyte family. It is the story of Charles Ryder's gradual progress towards comprehending the hub-like value of Roman Catholicism and subsequent conversion. The supersession of Sebastian by Julia should thus be viewed in the light of this thematic intention. Sebastian represents that adolescent phase of Ryder's life which the former has imposed on himself and the latter has never lived fully because of an inimical and unsympathetic father. After Ryder quits Brideshead House and Sebastian's company for good, he is undecided about what he has left behind.

I had left behind me - what? Youth? Adolescence? Romance?15

Notwithstanding his personal inability to single out the phase he has outgrown, it is decidedly by adolescence that he has left behind. Having matured, Ryder must surely taste the life of youthfulness before he may be in a position to distinguish between human and divine love. It is therefore natural that Julia should now enter Ryder's life to fill in the gap left by Sebastian. As he himself confesses,

... as Sebastian in his sharp decline seemed daily to fade and crumble, so much the more did Julia stand out clear and firm.16

It is, therefore, clear that Ryder regards Julia the successor of Charles. She resembles her brother so closely.
that sitting beside her Ryder feels 'confused by the double illusion of familiarity and strangeness'. Not only does she possess her brother's charm but his voice and manner of speech also. Like Sebastian, she is aware of her 'waywardness and wilfulness'. But unlike him, she does not hate her mother and is also not so close to her father; Sebastian is the only member of the family who maintains close contact with Lord Marchmain. The pious aspect of Julia's self is thus not so meek and submissive as that of her brother. But in the conflict that ensues between the sacred impulse towards the Roman Catholic hub of life, which means progress and the profane impulse towards the wheel-like dynamic life, which signifies decline, the latter appears to be victorious in the beginning. Waugh, in suggesting with delicate touches the conflict between human love and divine love or the perilous co-existence of the concepts of decline and progress was really providing an aesthetically pleasing sense of a work that is an integrated whole. *Brideshead Revisited* undoubtedly has an overall plan and a goal; it is constructed. The novel appeals to our innate delight in beholding and appreciating the skill and proportion that go in shaping characters like Julia and Sebastian. When we forget the cross-currents of events, we brood over ideas. What do we really mean by progress, change and decline: ideas which are woven into the texture of a Waugh's novels in an intangible and deft manner. Her downward journey begins with her search for
a husband outside the Roman Catholic community. For some time past she has been dreaming of having a fashionable husband whom she has not been able to find in her own community. Such a man looms up in her life in the person of the flashy and hollow Rex Mottram. She steps out of the sacred confines of her Church even before she gets married to him. She drifts into a pre-marital sexual relationship with him, even when the Church denies her that choice.

'Surely, Father, it can't be wrong to commit a small sin myself in order to keep him from a much worse one? But the gentle old Jesuit was unyielding. She barely listened to him; he was refusing her what she wanted, that was all she wanted to know. When he had finished he said, 'Now you had better make your confession'.

'No, thank you', she said....

From that moment she shut her mind against her religion. 17

Julia's refusal, despite its urbanity, betrays her defiance of the Church. Her disbelief in the chief world religion connoted by Roman Catholicism is therefore responsible for her fall. As she strays away from the hub of the wheel of life, she is thrown into the meaningless circular motion of life. The fact that her marriage with Rex is not going to last long is clear from the very beginning. Rex is too brazenly worldly and unethical. Before they are to get married, it comes to light that he is a divorcée. The Roman Catholic Church prohibits marriage with such a person. Annulment of the previous marriage, the only way
out, is a lengthy and uncertain process. So the two get married according to Protestant rules. Julia thus draws herself away from the Roman Catholic hub which alone can promise true happiness by virtue of its unchangeability.

The lady most affected by these desertions, Lady Marchmain represents to a great extent the Roman Catholic hub of life in the novel. Unable to prevent the fall of her husband, son and daughter, she gets bed-ridden and dies eventually. Her death, however, makes her more potent. The heathen spirit of the errant members of her family may have killed her in body but in spirit, she continues to goad them to their true and eternal refuge, the Roman Catholic hub of life. Her death is followed by all the errant members' reversion to faith in succession. Even Charles Ryder gets converted. It may therefore be said to have acted like the 'invisible line' and 'unseen hook' of Father Brown. Julia compares her death to that of Christ and she believes that like Christ her mother died on the cross of their sin. Thus, Lady Marchmain is martyred for the sake of the sinful and regressive members of her family. Just as the martyrdom of a saint opens the eyes of the sinful, she, though no less saintly, awakens her sinful children and husband to the life of sin they lead and thus makes them return to their true and eternal home, the Roman Catholic Church. The comedy of their lives must be viewed in this context and the profundity of Waugh's comic vision
should be appreciated from this viewpoint.

Sebastian is the first person to be twitched back to the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life. Once he is in French Morocco, he shows signs of outgrowing his imposed adolescence which is an essential preliminary step for the resurrection of his fallen spirit. The teddy-bear Aloysius disappears and his affection, rather mercy, is directed towards a deserving German soldier, Kurt, who is lame and cannot support himself. The devotion with which he serves Kurt is no less than that of a true Christian. Instead of squandering his affection on a toy, he attains Christian humility in the service of the meek and the gentle. With this change, he ensures for himself true progress and prosperity. Even though he continues to drink as hard as he did earlier, he is no longer deprived of the blessings of his Church as it is no longer, for him, a means of escape from the reality of God. Drinking, as Brideshead observes, is good as long as it leads to human fellowship but when it becomes an end in itself, it turns out to be bad. As wine is no longer an end in itself for Sebastian, so it does not come in his way of being a true Roman Catholic. When Lady Marchmain had tried to dissuade him from taking wine, it was then a means of escape for Sebastian. Some time after his mother's death, Sebastian applies for entry into a monastery as a lay-brother. This signifies the ultimate triumph of the pious part of Sebastian's self over the heathen and also his success in
progressing towards the true goal of all human endeavours, the Roman Catholic hub of life. Waugh's comic vision of life reveals its profundity in showing how man, however fallen, can still reclaim himself by attaining the hub of the wheel of life where he is liberated from the meaningless and tiresome circular motion of the wheel which represents fallen life.

Soon after the death of Lady Marchmain, Julia too begins to feel the pangs of conscience that tries to drive home to her the depth of her moral culpability. She believes that it is she who is responsible for the hastening of her mother's end. Her belief is strengthened by the miserable experience of her unhappy and sinful marriage with Rex Mottram. It does not take Julia much time to realise that the selection of her husband was a wrong step. Far from being a complete man, Rex is 'a few faculties of a man highly developed' which give the false impression of a whole man. Julia tells Charles about this late discovery of hers on board the liner.

'You know Father Mowbray hit on the truth about Rex at once, that it took me a year of marriage to see. He simply wasn't all there...... I thought. he was a sort of primitive savage, but he was absolutely modern and up-to-date that only this ghastly age could produce. A tiny bit of a man pretending he was the whole'.

The marriage with Rex, however, helps Julia to understand the wasteful influence of the world of change on man.
A marriage like this can never attain fulfilment and Waugh lends particularity to this idea by making Julia give birth to a dead child. Realising that God's vengeance is upon her, she wishes to put her life in order. Unfortunately, the corrective step she proposes to take is equally or perhaps more sinful; she reflects on the possibility of marriage with Charles Ryder, a man who is already married.

Hereafter, Julia's attempts at progressing towards the hub of life signified by Roman Catholicism, though misdirected in the beginning, get intertwined with Charles Ryder's search for meaning and significance in earthly life. As discussed earlier, Ryder's association with Julia follows that with Sebastian as a sequel. This enables the novelist to give evidence of how Charles comprehends and accepts the immutable truth of life embodied in the Roman Catholic Church. Notwithstanding the fact that he is an artist, Ryder is completely steeped in the world of change. This is evident from the subject of his paintings. The 'symptom of decline' that characterises the dynamic world, is an important feature of his paintings as well. In his own words:

... I was called to all parts of the country to make portraits of houses that were soon to be deserted or debased; indeed, my arrival seemed often to be only a few paces ahead of the auctioneer's, a presage of doom.19

If the subject of his paintings is 'change and decay', the style of his painting is no less unexalted.
my work had nothing to recommend it except my growing technical skill, enthusiasm for my subject, and independence of popular notions. 20

If art helps the artist to realise his own self, then what Ryder has achieved is decay and retrogression. Ryder's paintings register a new low in his life when he goes to paint in the jungles of Mexico and Central America. The jungle signifies anarchy and disorder and is the most prominent quality of the world of change. Change is depicted in quite a different fashion in Proust. The hero-narrator of his novel often remarks on how they have altered physically and also in character traits. We all have identical experience of meeting people after months or years have gone by, and noting with shock and surprise how time has affected them. The recurrent theme of change and growth in Waugh's novels provides the necessary overtone and the understanding of these novels would be most definitely incomplete if we do not realise the nature of change and progress in them. To understand the nature of change in his novels is like overhearing the tick of a clock in a man's soul. In order that Ryder may discover his true self, he must again come in touch with the Flyte family. This happens on board the ship to England. He meets Julia, who too is trying to find her way towards the hub of life. Julia and Ryder drift into an intensely personal and sacrilegious relationship, mistaking it to be a step towards the right goal. Yet they have doubts about their love, right from its inception.
'Oh, my darling, why is it that love makes me hate the world? It's supposed to have quite the opposite effect. I feel as though all mankind, and God, too, were in a conspiracy against us'.
'They are, they are'.

A shadow hangs over their love. Jeffrey Heath explains how Sebastian moves into the 'shadows' as he runs away from his vocation. The same may be said of this love. Their love always finds consummation in the dark. Sunlight rends them apart.

"'Oh dear', said Julia, 'where can we hide in fair weather, we orphans of the storm?'"  

At Brideshead, Julia is made aware of the mistake she is committing by the harsh remark of her fervently Catholic brother, Brideshead. He reminds her that what she is mistaking for an ordered life is the quagmire of sin. Ryder, who still does not understand Roman Catholicism, tries to comfort her, but is unable to do so. He explains her feeling of guilt, in the manner of psychologists, as springing from 'the nonsense you were taught in the nursery'. Julia's reply - 'How I wish it was!' shows her loss of confidence in a life of depravity.

Ryder feels himself a stranger to these moods of Julia. He has the foreboding that their love cannot last long.

'... perhaps all our loves are merely hints and symbols; vagabond - language scrawled on gate-posts and paving-stones along the weary road that others have tramped before us; ... each straining through and beyond the other, snatching a glimpse now and then of the shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us'.

"
Ryder seems to have a premonition of the goal to which he is forging ahead. He therefore regards the human love with Julia as only a stepping stone towards a higher reality signified by the hub of life and the Roman Catholic faith. One other image that comes to his mind at this stage is that of an arctic hut within whose interior the trapper feels warm and cosy so long as the weight of the snow piling on the hut and the heat of the sun do not make it 'open and splinter and disappear, rolling with the avalanche into the ravine'. The hut that Ryder thinks of is no other than the shell of self-preservation that the worldly man constructs around himself. The snow and the sun, breaking it down, are the forces that make him aware of the eternal reality around him. As Harry Blamires has rightly pointed out in *The Christian Mind*

For all teaching of Christian revelation deals with the breaking-in of the greater supernatural order upon our more limited finite world. That conception is at the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is at the heart of every claim to individual experience of God's love and power. The Greater breaks-in upon the Smaller. 25 (p.68)

Ryder and Julia are on the threshold of a religious transformation now and it is hastened by the arrival of the ailing and errant Lord Marchmain at Brideshead. He is afraid of the dark and loneliness. So he keeps the lights of his room on and also makes someone sit in his room. These are the signs of Lord Marchmain's fear of death. With the burden of sin that he carries on his shoulders without
repentance, he finds it difficult to reconcile to the idea of passing away to the other world. Ryder mistakes it for his love of life because he has still not understood the significance of Roman Catholicism. Brideshead's attempt to make his father repent for his sins so that he may be at peace with God and overcome, thereby, the fear of death meet with negative results as Lord Marchmain turns the priest out. The heathen spirit within Lord Marchmain holds him back from marching ahead to the hub of life. Ryder sees in this attempt, a threat to his imminent marriage with Julia. If Lord Marchmain accepts the Last Sacrament, Ryder and Julia's love shall stand condemned as sacrilegious, as it is not permitted by Roman Catholic Church. So he is very happy when the attempt is aborted by Lord Marchmain himself.

I felt triumphant. I had been right, everyone else had been wrong, truth had prevailed; the threat that I had felt hanging over Julia and me ever since that evening at the fountain, had been averted, perhaps dispelled for ever....

But Ryder is wrong in thinking so. The failing health of Lord Marchmain and the fear of an unavoidable death make him feel sinful. Even though the room he is in has all windows open, Lord Marchmain feels stifled to death in his own cellar of sin. The air that he breathes flows through a pipe; it is not free. Lord Marchmain notices the similarity between the state of his soul and that of
the air when he whispers to himself:

'Free as air; that's what they say - "free as air'.
Now they bring me my air in an iron barrel'.26

The obsession brings to his mind the struggle that he waged against his wife and God, for the anarchic freedom found in a 'dynamic' way of life.

'... They said we were fighting for freedom;
I had my own victory. Was it a crime?'27

It is in this state that Julia fetches Father Mackay to him. Ryder, sensing in it the danger to his love-life with Julia, enlists the support of Cara and the doctor in her absence. When she arrives, he makes them speak out the dangerous consequences such a step may have. The doctor forbids it as 'the shock of seeing a priest might well kill him'. Cara thinks similarly; though she is not against the idea of having a priest by his side when he is asleep and oblivious to whatever the priest does. As Lord Marchmain seems to be in a stupor at that time, so she does not object. Julia leads the priest in who administers the last sacred religious rites to him. The priest asks Lord Marchmain to make a sign in recognition of his being sorry for all the sins of his life. When the priest does so, Charles Ryder, who till now had been resisting it finds himself praying to God to make Lord Marchmain make the sign. In the beginning, his prayer is tinged with doubt.

'O God, if there is a God, forgive him his sins,
if there is such a thing as sin'...28
The second time, his prayer is 'more simple' but full of faith.

I prayed more simply; 'God forgive him his sins' and 'Please God, make him accept your forgiveness.'

The result of these prayers, the earlier martyrdom of Lady Marchmain and the mysterious efficacy of the Sacrament is that Lord Marchmain at last makes the sign of the cross with his hand and thus secures the blessings of the Lord he had abjured throughout his life. Yet it is not so abrupt a change as has been alleged by critics. Lord Marchmain has, before taking this step towards the Roman Catholic hub of life, already realised the extent of his sin which only the Lord's blessings can wash off. The administering of the Last Sacrament, however, acts as a catalyst in this process as no rational realisation not aided by divine grace can claim comprehension of truth. Charles Ryder understands for the first time its significance and is therefore impelled to reward the priest for his great service. The priest, however, knows that it has not been possible by virtue of his personal abilities; he has only acted as an agent through whom Divine Grace could descend on the sinner. So he refuses it. That Ryder gives it for the parish now signifies his acceptance of the spirit of fellow-service that the priest exemplifies by his selfless dedication to his holy office. Ryder is not the only person affected by this change for the better in Lord Marchmain; Julia too is. Both realise that their ungodly and decadent love must now come to an
end in order that it may be replaced by divine love. The
death-bed scene sees three people forging their way ahead
to the Roman Catholic hub of life from the hellish wheel
of life. It is one of the most significant scenes in the
book as in the successful journey of three characters from
the low dynamic world to the stable hub of Roman Catholicism,
Waugh suggests the broad parameters of his comic vision of
life. The repetition of motifs closely following the changes in the scale of values is purposive and definitive.
The change for the better discernible in Julia and Lord
Marchmain and the endeavour to reach the Roman Catholic hub
of life provide a means of gaining an aesthetic unity. Ideas
like change and progress, decline or betterment appear over
and over again, often varied a little in rhythm to avoid
monotony but gloriously rising to a climax somewhere. The
transformation in Lord Marchmain is really the translation
of the baser self of a man to a higher self, the forward
movement which provides an additional touch of unity to the
novel and determines the direction usually found in a novel
composed by Waugh.

The ease and care with which Lord Marchmain and the
other errant members of the Flyte family progress towards
the Roman Catholic hub of life appears, however, to have
received less than adequate attention: Edmund Wilson unjustly
criticised Waugh’s ability to find his way out ‘in this
more normal world’, while commenting:
What happens when Evelyn Waugh abandons his comic convention ... turns out to be more or less disastrous. The writer, in this more normal world, no longer knows his way ... 30

He further elaborates by adding that the novelist has supplied 'mere romantic fantasy'. 31 That the final scene of the novel is not 'mere romantic fantasy' is not only clear from the logical inevitability with which the scene and the story reach the climax but also from its having grown out of Waugh's observation of such a scene in real life. In a letter to Ronald Knox, written from Pixton Park, Dulverton, on March 14, 1945, Waugh explains the genesis of this scene.

I am delighted that you became reconciled to B.R. in the end. It was, of course, all about the death bed. I was present at almost exactly that scene, with less extravagant decor, when a friend of mine whom we thought in his final coma and stubbornly impenitent, whose womenfolk would only let the priest in because they thought him unconscious, did exactly that, making the sign of the cross. It was profoundly affecting and I wrote the book about that scene. 32

Stephen Spender, however, chooses to find the real fault not merely in the concluding scenes but also in characterisation of Charles Ryder. He upholds the view that Waugh has failed in delineating his development from agnosticism to an acceptance of Roman Catholicism.
The real failure of *Brideshead Revisited* is not confined, however, to these concluding scenes. It really lies in the character of Charles Ryder. Within his sensibility is the meeting of the minds of his Catholic friends and the agnostic views he supposedly represents. His development should record the emergence of the pattern of the true religion from the unsatisfactory lives of the Marchmains, and also from his own agnosticism.  

The discussion preceding the death-bed scene makes it amply clear that Spender's critical analysis is not supported by acceptable arguments. The critic is oblivious to the gradual development of true religious feeling in Charles Ryder, a process that finds its ultimate and conclusive culmination in Ryder's attitude towards the administering of the Last Sacrement to Lord Marchmain. A.A. De Vitis has, therefore, rightly observed:

> It does not come as a surprise to the reader that Ryder is converted to Roman Catholicism by the novel's end. It is Waugh's subtletest point of artistic merit that he makes his hero, his observer, the one on whom the events of the narrative leave the imprint of faith. Charles' conversion is not explained in words; it is explained by the action of the novel as he moves towards a keener understanding of the family with which his life is inextricably bound.

De Vitis is clearly drawing attention here to the allegorical frame of Charles Ryder's development. Inability to discern this has led critics to overlook the graph of Ryder's gradual upward movement. Ryder's success in touching the Roman Catholic hub of the wheel of life ensures for him freedom from the pointless and decadent nature of
change as represented well by the circular motion of the wheel. It also signifies the resurrection of his life which had till then been deadened by the 'cultural water-wheel' of secular existence. The journey from incomprehension to comprehension of Roman Catholicism, follows the pattern of a greater comedy as enunciated by Northrop Frye and Eric Bentley. Thus Evelyn Waugh reveals his sublime and ultimate comic vision of life through the successful spiritual odyssey of Charles Ryder.

_Brideshead Revisited_ has, however, had to face adverse criticism even for its professedly religious purpose. Rose Macaulay who had praised the so-called lesser comedies for no important merit than a seeming fantasticalion of life, criticised this novel for its Catholic exclusiveness.

No purpose can well have greater importance; no faith can be more asserting than that 'the human spirit, redeemed, can survive all disasters'. But Mr. Waugh seems to equate the divine purpose, the tremendous fact of God at work in the universe, with the obedient membership of a church; the human spirit, if redeemed, must loyally confirm to this church and its rules. It seems to reduce the formidable problems of universe and the human spirit to a level almost parochial.

Undoubtedly Evelyn Waugh measures the progress of mankind in terms of only one church, the one which he accepted, but he never fails to pay attention to the artistic quality in depicting the comic vision of life associated with the liberation of humanity from the shackles of constant meaningless motion, a theme that finds recurrent expression not
only in the lesser comedies of Waugh but also in the plays of the Absurd Dramatists and early poetry of T.S. Eliot. Moreover, its exclusiveness does not violate the taste and refinement of discriminating readers. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, there is open and oblique criticism of all denominations other than the one professed by its hero, Christian. Evelyn Waugh, on the other hand, has pitted Roman Catholicism here not against any other sect but against chaos that is a characteristic feature of the dynamic world. His own words in this context prove revealing in more ways than one:

> It seems to me that in the present phase of European history the essential issue is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and Chaos. It is much the same situation as existed in the early Middle Ages.  

In his narrative the Protestant Rex Mottram is presented in an ugly light, because Waugh felt that the unrestrained freedom in Protestant faith was helping the growth of a spiritual crisis. It is in this context that the universal validity of his (Catholic) message, as pointed by A.A. De Vitis, must surely be understood. In a letter to his mother, Catherine Waugh, dated 5 Feb. 1945, Evelyn himself succeeded in diagnosing the reason for the hostility of the critics to the underlying Catholic message.
The general criticism is that it is religious propaganda. That shows how opinion has changed in 80 years. No one now thinks a book which totally excludes religion is atheistic propaganda; 80 years ago every novel included religion as part of the normal life of the people.38

In fact, what Waugh attempts by bringing in religion in this novel is the portrayal of his ultimate comic vision of life as opposed to the comic view of life revealed in the lesser comedies. Waugh distinguished between a life lived according to secular principles and the one lived according to religious principles. He finds the former's emphasis on secular change as a means to progress not only deceptive but also ludicrous. The desire to progress by undergoing religious change is however venerated and celebrated as it leads man from the world of deception to that of wisdom and reality. Thus this novel completes the comic view of life that Waugh has presented in the lesser comedies. This development is as remarkable as that of Eliot in the composition of poetic plays after poems like The Waste Land. This process of development did not escape the notice of one of Waugh's reviewers, John K. Hutchens. In the New York Times Book Review of 30 December 1945, he maintains:

For Mr. Waugh is very definitely an artist, with something like a genius for precision and clarity not surpassed by any novelist writing in English in his time. This has been apparent from the very beginning of his career - a career in which 'Brideshead Revisited' differs in setting, tone and technique from all his earlier creative work, is yet a logical development.39
The development of Waugh from the lesser comedies to the greater ones is reflected in the structure of this novel. Two kinds of plots co-exist in this novel, one that of the lesser comedies, already discussed and the other, that of the greater or divine comedies. The image of the wheel of life referred to earlier, explains this most fittingly. Just as the rotating portion of the wheel hems in its hub, so does the plot of the lesser comedies contain within it the plot of the greater comedies. The wheel of life with its rotatory motion brings Charles Ryder back to the place, Brideshead that he had known once very intimately. Even the chapter classification is made to underline this fact. The novel begins with a 'Prologue' that is entitled 'Brideshead Revisited' and closes with an 'Epilogue' that is entitled similarly. This circular plot provides the secular frame of the novel, reflecting the themes of stagnation and absurdity of secular change so successfully portrayed in the lesser comedies. Except for this, the narrative primarily indicates the progress of the hero, Charles Ryder who is also the narrator of the progress of the errant members of the Flyte family from the degrading absurdity of dynamic life to the eternal stability of religious life. The motion described is similar to that of a person moving from the circumference of a rotating wheel to its stable centre. While the earlier portion of the novel shows the drift of the characters away from the hub, the later portion shows a resurrection of hope in the renewed effort to reach the hub.
Waugh's architectonic skill in the work of encasing is illustrated by the use of Brideshead House itself. The gaunt and overwhelming facade of this house represents the fate of all secular efforts. Like Hetton Abbey, it is a reconstruction of an older prototype, dismantled for this purpose and like it, Brideshead House has also grown in size over the ages. Every generation of Flytes has added its mite to the enhancement of its grandeur. In the days when the present generation of Flytes live here, it enjoys a splendour and architectural beauty of its own. But when Charles Ryder revisits it, the house appears useless, as Hooper too observes, and the efforts that have gone into its making appear futile.

'The builders did not know the uses to which their work would descend; they made a new house with the stones of old; year by year, generation after generation, they enriched and extended it; year by year the great harvest of timber in the park grew to ripeness; until, in sudden frost came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and all work brought to nothing; Quomodo sedet sola civitas. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'.

In fact, it meets with the same fate that most of the other ancient buildings in the novel are depicted to have suffered from. Waugh's novel is thus a storehouse of recorded values. It springs from and perpetuates hours in the lives of exceptional people who lived in abodes like those of Brideshead House and Hetton Abbey when their control and command of experience was at their highest. Brideshead Revisited is unique in recording the changing facade of life lived by
the Flytes through the ages and the author has the varying possibilities of life clearly projected. The evaluation of this novel and for that matter of subsequent novels will be rewarding when we take into account this measure of change and progress as very greatly desirable and definitive.

Within the secular edifice of Brideshead House is however the changeless and eternal flame burning in the chapel. Notwithstanding the changes undergone by the house, it has remained unchanged over the years. The changing nature of Brideshead House is therefore comparable to the changing nature of the revolving wheel while the unchanging flame in the chapel compares well with the unchanging transcendental hub of the wheel of life. Ryder in his redeemed and elevated state is quick enough to notice this.

'Something quite remote from anything the builders intended, has come out of their work, and out of the fierce little human tragedy in which I played; something none of us thought about at the time; a small red flame - the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Aire of Jerusalem....' 41

The flame therefore metaphorically plays up the significance of the 'eternal perspective' without which life has no value and which, in the words of Harry Blamires, is a 'prime mark of the Christian mind'. 42

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it can be safely inferred that Waugh has presented Ryder's "sacred"
memories in a "profane" frame and not, as Jeffrey Heath maintains, "profane" memories in a "sacred frame". 43

The rejection of the secular way of life is clearly manifest in the plot of the novel and it should have itself absolved Waugh from the charge of snobbery levelled by Donat O' Donnell in the article, 'The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh' published in Bell.

In Catholic countries Catholicism is not romantic, not invariably associated with big houses, or the fate of an aristocracy .... But the Catholicism of Mr Waugh, and of certain other English converts, is hardly separable from a personal romanticism and a class loyalty. 44

T.J. Barrington, another reviewer of Waugh's novels, disputes this claim of Donat O' Donnell as he finds it wanting in evidence.

It is patent that Donat O' Donnell's article fails to prove the existence in Waugh's mind of a necessary connexion between snobbery and Catholicism. To lead us to believe, then, on the evidence produced that there is implicit in 'Brideshead Revisited' an heretical private religion is to attempt to bamboozle us. Waugh's pieties have not been shown to have mingled with Catholicism to produce a private religion, 'a highly personal system of belief and devotion'. 45

Donat O' Donnell's arguments appear substantially fabricated and he succeeds in twisting the facts recorded in the novel. Not without reason Waugh responded to it in right earnest and recorded his reaction thus:
I think perhaps your reviewer is right in calling me a snob; that is to say I am happiest in the company of the European upper-classes; but I do not think this preference is necessarily an offence against Charity, still less against Faith. I can assure you it had no influence on my conversion.

Waugh is justified in making the remark as his decision to join the Roman Catholic Church was not, as Father D'Arcy admits, emotional but intellectual. It is the emotional part of his self which enjoyed the company of the upper-classes and not the intellectual or rational part which saw through this folly and accordingly, steered Waugh away from secular change to a religious change in the act of his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Waugh writes appropriately:

Nor does this preference unduly affect my writing. Besides Hooper there are two characters in *Brideshead Revisited* whom I represent as worldly - Uex Mottram, a millionaire, and Lady Celia Ryder, a lady of high birth. Why did my reverence for money and rank not sanctify these two?

Waugh here suggests that life lived at the secular level of existence, however, resplendent and glorious apparently, is a prey to time and absurdity whereas life lived religiously is alone progressive and significant. In conveying this vision of life Waugh has used characters borrowed from the upper strata of life because they alone, and not the poor, have reached a stage of existence where self-realisation and not self-preservation can dominate the thoughts of men. D.H. Lawrence in his 'Study of Thomas Hardy', published in the collection of his posthumous papers, *Phoenix*, has
supported the use of aristocratic characters in Thomas Hardy in a similar manner. Quite justifiably Waugh took offence about a similar accusation levelled by a close friend like David Pryce-Jones who in his *Time and Tide* had written:

> His essential view of society is indeed based upon a belief in the inherent superiority of one section at the expense of all others.  

Upon knowing, however, of Waugh's displeasure over it, he later on regretted his stand in the matter.

In *Brideshead Revisited* therefore Waugh said what he had left unsaid in the lesser comedies: true progress constitutes a change in the very perspective of man. It is the carving of a path towards the stability of the Roman Catholic hub of life that is free from the delusion of secular progress induced by secular change. It is this message or theme that forms an inseparable and essential part of his comic vision of life, and it is very vividly reflected in the greater comedies. Furthermore, the use of a highly suggestive plot succeeds in shaping his thoughts in an aesthetically satisfying way. Waugh here sees life freed of irrelevancies and his task, we may safely conclude, is to clear away the ordinary trivia, and distractions of our existence and lay bare the core of meaning concerning change and progress in an entertaining manner.
HELENA (1950):

In Helena (1950) Waugh expresses his firm conviction that progress lies not in secular growth but in religious transformation in such a way that his thought creates a kind of compulsion upon the mind of the reader. Progress, as Frank J. Yarts has also maintained, 'involves breaking the cycle (of secular life) with novelty'. Waugh's protagonist in this novel achieves it by realising first the futility of secular change and then rejecting it for the Roman Catholic hub of life which promises eternal novelty in 'the Easter sense in which all things are made new in the risen Christ'. As the dark recesses of her mind keep on getting enlightened with the flame of religious devotion, Helena forges ahead on a linear path towards the hub of the wheel of life which by its intrinsic nature not only transcends the relativism of the wheel but also supports that. In the triumphant conclusion of her progressive journey, not only does she elevate herself to the rank of a spiritual elite but she also gives expression to a fundamental tenet of Roman Catholicism: the historicity of the eternal Christian truth. Helena's transformation for the better is anticipated and conveyed through symbols and images which occur less frequently in Brideshead Revisited. In fact the poetic richness of this novel is unparalleled compared to Waugh's other novels, not excluding Brideshead Revisited. As the novel charts a movement from the insignificance of 'dynamic' existence to the significance
of religious life, the novel may either be termed a divine
comedy or a greater comedy and thus forms a parallel to what
we can find in Dante and Shakespeare.

In order that we may study the cohesiveness of the
events narrated and also their relevance to the novel's
thematic line of intention, a careful consideration of its
plot becomes imperative. After the manner of the eighteenth
century 'histories' in English literature, the novel indi-
cates a temporal movement in its plot. The loss of causality
in such plots is made up by the close connection of the
incidents described with the central character in whose life
they invariably occur. As this novel has a 'plot of charac-
ter', to use Northrop Frye's terminology, sheer temporal
progression does not come in the way of the novelist's
thematic intention. Besides, Waugh's novel is decidedly
superior to its apotheosis in its selective narration of
incidents and in the use of symbolic imagery. The unique
aesthetic form, that is lent to the novel thereby, abjures
logical argument even 'when it reveals the author's comic
vision of life in the gradual emancipation of Helena from
the yoke of sterile 'dynamic' existence. The novel should,
therefore, be read not as a spiritual case-history of Helena's
development but as an aesthetic expression of the theme of
inevitability of progress through religious change. The
recurrent image of the wheel of life plays as always a
dominant role not only in conveying this theme but also in
defining Waugh's ultimate comic vision of life. When the
story opens we are told that Helena is the daughter of the British King Coel, Paramount Chief of the Trinovantes. The words of Christopher Sykes Waugh's friend and biographer, are quite illuminating in this context.

Among the many unreliable accounts of St. Helena's origin, one of the most dubious is that she was a British princess, a daughter of the possibly historic King Cole after whom Colchester is said to be named. Evelyn decided that she should be a daughter of this British King.51

Waugh was a student of history at Oxford and it is curious that his historical sensibility was not offended in selecting a doubtful anecdote. In the 'Preface' to the novel, the reasons for it are mentioned thus:

Where the authorities are doubtful, I have often chosen the picturesque in preference to the plausible ...52

The reasons stated here hardly satisfy standards which one expects in historical exploration. That Waugh's statement is meant to mystify rather than clarify is obvious from his assertion in one of his letters to Nancy Mitford.53 In fact, the idea of declaiming on one's works never gained favour with him.54 For him, as for Eliot, a work of art is its own spokesman. It therefore becomes imperative to hunt for reasons responsible for Waugh's choice within the aesthetic framework of the novel itself. Waugh also tells us that none of Helena's father's family 'had died naturally' and that one had gone crazy and died in a fit of abnormalcy.
These details hint at the irrationality and chaos that have so often been seen to characterise the secular world of change or the dynamic world in Waugh's novels. It invites comparison with the backyards of civilization to be met with in the other novels, prominent among them being, the jungles of Brazil. In fact, to the Romans of that time, Britain was a culturally backward country. By granting a British origin to his heroine, Waugh has therefore placed her in the barbaric environs of the dynamic world. It is essential from the thematic point of view as the novelist has to show Helena's rejection of the cramping dynamic confines not only of Britain, which is obviously barbaric, but also of Rome, in which dynamism is clad in deceptive urbanity, in order that she may break the cycle of the world of change by stepping out of it and make for the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Waugh thus traces the stages of growth in culture and refinement, though there is no such thing as pure thought in this novel. His ideas projecting the endeavour to reach the Roman Catholic hub of life are here always used as handmaids of emotion and become habitual till they attain the dignity of conviction. In making an analytical study of Helena we have, therefore, now no doubt that progress through phases of changes in temporal and spiritual life becomes for the author the major measure of judgement and our study of events becomes rich and rewarding when we identify ourselves with this panorama of change in every possible way.
Helena's father's family traces its descent from the Trojans. But while her father is content with listening to songs that celebrate his proud pedigree, her imagination is fired with the desire to see Troy, the original home of her valiant ancestors. Therefore, often in her conversations, she refers to herself as an 'exile'. With the help of irony, Waugh evokes one of the major Christian symbols in the book. It is a matter of common knowledge among the Christians, but not for Helena who is still a pagan, that man's true home lies in the transcendental City of God. It was because of man's transgression of the will of God that his fall from the Grace of God was precipitated and his exile from the Garden of Eden took place. The pagan world in which Helena is born is the fallen one and her exile gains significance from the Christian context, unknown to her at this stage of her life. The imagery of the wheel of life aptly embodies this distinction between the world of appearance and reality. While the revolving wheel, with its relative states of motion and rest, represents the former, the hub of the wheel with its transcendental Absoluteness represents the latter. Therefore, while Helena's quest for her true home holds, in the Christian context, the potential of the Christian quest for the pre-lapsarian world, it has a universal significance in the context of the wheel-imagery as it mirrors man's quest for the Absolute Transcendental Reality. As the Bible makes it possible for man to do so by entering into the Church, which
in Roman Catholicism is the temporal representative of God after the resurrection of Christ, so Helena's progress lies in understanding the significance of Roman Catholicism in satisfying her yearning for her true home.

The other symbols that presage Helena's quest for the Roman Catholic hub of life include her sexual reveries and fancies. Helena often pictures herself as a horse struggling for supremacy over its rider and then falling in line with the latter's wishes.

Helena had galloped thus in solitude hours without number, but of late years, as her womanhood broke bud, a keener excitement infused the game. Two played it now. There was the will of the rider that spoke down the length of the rein, from the gloved hand to the warm and tender tongue under the bit; articulate, coaxing, commanding, now barely sensible, light as an eyelid, now steel-hard and compelling; that spoke in the stab of the spur and sudden double smart of the whip. And there was the will of the animal to shrink and start, to toss aside the restraint of the bridle and saddle and the firm legs across her, to shake the confident equipoise ... Then at the height of the play, in sweat and blood-flecked foam, came the sweet moment of surrender, the fusion, and the two were off together, single, full-stretched over the resounding earth ... with none but the wind to oppose them. She took some handling, the chestnut.

The symbolism evoked is overtly sexual in the kind of imagery employed for the purpose and Waugh took pains, as is evident, to give a graphic and detailed account of it. It would not perhaps be out of place to mention here Waugh's indebtedness to Penelope Betjeman who upon his request supplied his imagination with the details given in the book. Notwithstanding its sexual overtone, the imagery invoked here has a
deeper symbolic significance hidden in the cloak of irony. The rider stands for the will of God and the horse for the unrestrained and blind human will. While God tries to lead man to the right goal which alone guarantees progress, the will of man, out of its ignorance, struggles against its good and tries to lead man towards false goals. Unconscious of this spiritual struggle, Helena relishes its overtly sexual value alone. The surrender of the horse to the will of the rider signifies the subjugation of Helena's wild desires to the supreme will of God. Thus the reader can easily anticipate Helena's conversion.

The story of Helen of Troy illustrates to good advantage the Christian symbolism contained in the horse imagery. The parallel between the two Helenas is established by casual references and the naming of the second chapter, 'Fair Helena Forfeit'. While Paris abducted the Greek Helen to Troy, leaving her husband, Menelaus fuming and deceived, Constantius wins the hand of the British Helena, with her father's consent though that is given very reluctantly. The naming of the second chapter thus, intends to keep the parallelism between the two stories alive. The story of Helena's abduction is the story of carnal desire, let loose and the comparison serves to highlight, on the surface, the grossness of the love between Constantius and Helena. But the significance of this comparison does not end here. Dr F.J. Stopp has rightly remarked in his essay, 'Grace in Reins':
When Aphrodite first plucked at Helena's gown, it was in the guise of her natural love for Constantius. But the invitation to the mystical marriage of the soul was not for long able to disguise itself under the 'steadfast and bruised passion' of which Helena thought that Constantius was the only object.57

Thus the Hellenic parallel evokes the deeper Christian symbolism of the mystical marriage of the individual soul with the spirit of Christ and prepares the readers as the other symbols employed in the novel do, for Helena's spiritual odyssey.

In order that the symbolism inherent in the ironic value of these images may be unfolded to her, she must first outgrow the static opinions of her adolescence. Until these are shattered, she cannot get attuned to the path of progress which in terms of the wheel-of-life imagery must begin from the highly unstable and capricious fringes and end at the hub; a static attitude towards the world restrains her from leaving the stands from where the spectators can only watch the action of people standing on the wheel. The static opinions Helena nurses have grown out of her cloistered life in the nursery and school-room. These are embodied in her nurse's sapper-sergeant father and Longinus. While the former represents the chivalric ideals which have little authenticity in the dynamic world of the Roman empire, the latter stands for secular learning which bestows on man no immunity from the dangers that beset ordinary men. Dr. Frederick J. Stopp has rightly called them, 'powerful
forerunners in the mind of Helena. Lionel Stevenson's attempt to compare her to the static characters like Paul Pennyfeather, Scott King and William Boot is therefore unjustified for the obvious fact that while they do not outgrow their static personality, Helena does. Besides, her story is not the comedy of ignorance but of victory over ignorance and earthly considerations. Once in Roman confines, the unscrupulous politics and treacherous warfare that characterise the degraded world of the Roman empire, appear in a threatening way and get hold of her illusions. Helena comes to know of the fall of Tetricus at the hands of her husband who has used all his guile and deception for doing so. Unlike the nurse's sapper-sergeant father, her husband, Constantius, scarcely reflects the ideals of chivalry. She realises that the world of Roman empire has no regard for the obsolete code of chivalry. Of necessity she must reject the inadequate and obsolete code of chivalry. Helena must look for ideals which are more permanent and real than these static ones, nurtured in her by her nanny. John Raymond's remark that

 Waugh's converts generally get to Heaven the back way, through having had the right kind of Nanny.

is partial and he largely ignores this change in Helena's mental outlook. Some time later she learns about the death of Longinus. The excellence achieved in secular learning is
hardly able to save him from his death. His learning scarcely raises him above the level of the ordinary mankind. Besides, with his death, all his scholarship comes to nought. With the death of Longinus, all her static opinions are shattered. Helena now finds herself in the wilderness of the dynamic world of Roman empire. As it is itself devoid of order, it fails to provide her with an alternative code of conduct. No sooner is a person established as a king than news arrives that he has been killed by his own men. Moreover, every time an emperor dies, an internecine war for the crown rages which takes toll of life and property. The instability of Roman empire scarcely remains concealed from her and she no longer takes pleasure in the facade of Roman glamour that takes her husband, Constantius, in. So when her husband expresses his desire of becoming an emperor, she is not impressed. She is intelligent enough to realise that their paths are divergent. While her husband's lies round the wheel of life which promises no substantial progress, her lies straight towards the hub of the wheel, a goal that promises permanence and freedom from mere appearance. Even when Constantius turns to religion, he does so not for acquiring any permanent ideals but for earthly considerations which fall within the realm of capricious appearances. Thus, not even for once does he make an attempt to set his feet on the real path of progress as Helena does. Helena's estrangement from Constantius is felt necessary in order to further the mechanics of the plot. In order that she may realise
the significance of the Mystical Marriage with Christ, she needs to eschew the pleasures of the Flesh. Pointing out their tempting nature, Harry Blamires observes:

The magnitude and variety of the evil forces waiting to ensnare the human soul are hinted at in the triple formulation, the World, the Flesh and the Devil.61

Helena's ability to surmount them is anticipated in her decision to go hunting the very next day after her first nuptial night with Constantius.

Next day, while Constantius despatched the advanced-party and distributed the pack-loads, Helena went hunting once more for the last time over the familiar country.62

Hunting here may be rightly interpreted as a metaphor for man's pursuit of the immutable values of life treasured in Roman Catholicism. While Helena like the hounds has to pursue Reality, God like the hunter puts the hounds on the right track. The comparison is appropriate from the Roman Catholic point of view because it believes that the reality of God is unattainable to human reason unaided by Divine Grace.63 The parting of ways between Constantius and Helena reaches the climax in their divorce and Constantius' second marriage.

Her disenchantment both with the secular splendour of Roman state and with her husband's obsession with temporal gains is reflected by what Waugh himself once experienced.
Those who have read my works will perhaps understand the character of the world into which I exuberantly launched myself. Ten years of that world sufficed to show me that life there, or anywhere, was unintelligible and unendurable without God. 64

With the rejection of static as well as dynamic ideals Helena is forced to explore the meaning of purposeful life elsewhere. She is aided in it by her common-sense. In one of her meetings with the Gnostic Marcias who spins a long yarn about the truth of existence in the manner of Sophists, she demands answers to three simple questions. When did the events occur? Where did they occur? and how does he know them? By asking these questions she wishes to be sure about the reality of the supernatural. Marcias, who is really her old tutor, evades and discounts them as 'a child's question'. 65 Lanctatius, the Christian tutor of her grandson, however, answers them without any hesitation. He tells her where and when God was incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. Upon being asked how he knows about it, he replies that he had got this information from the Church which is the custodian of Christian truth and is therefore responsible for handing it down to posterity. He voices here the Roman Catholic belief in the 'body of truth transmitted to the church through the college of bishops preserved by oral tradition (meaning that it was not written in the Scriptures). 66 Satisfied with the authenticity of the Christian truth, Helena is eager to know whether Jesus Christ was a mere historical figure or he transcends the limitations of Time and Space.
so as to testify to the eternity of the Christian truth. She therefore asks him whether He has been seen thereafter. To this Lactantius replies that saints and martyrs have seen him in their visions. To be sure that Lactantius is not hood-winking her, she asks him to name one such saint. Fearing for the safety of such a saint, he refuses to divulge this information to her. As the Church had not yet come out into the open, this information was reserved only for the baptised. Helena's discourse with Lactantius thus convinces her of the reality of the Christian truth. Unlike that of the speculative philosophers, it is one which is real and verifiable historically despite its supernatural dimensions. It is analogous to the hub of the wheel of life which despite transcending the limitations of relativity produced by the circular motion of the wheel, is palpable and real. The exile finds her true home in the reality of Christian Revelation and the conversion to Catholicism anticipated in the symbolism of banishment materialises now. Helena is redeemed from the sinful life of earthly quests in her conversion to Catholic faith and she achieves an important victory in her progressive journey.

Helena's acceptance of Christianity needs to be distinguished from that of Constantine, her son by Constantius. Though Constantine allows the Church to operate without any persecution and even accords an honourable place to the Pope, he himself remains deprived of the Church's redemptive power. In fact, Constantine's benevolent decision stems not out of
any proper understanding of the Church but out of his fear of it as an adversary. The reconciliatory approach towards it is thus born out of political expediency. Besides, he owes it to Pope Sylvester who has cured him of an incurable disease. Even the Cross in whose name he wins his battles against his foes is a Labarum, seen in a vision, which is far from being a Cross. His misunderstanding of the redemptive power of baptism and admission to the Church is such that it prevents him from being baptised; he only places himself under the protection of Christ. Constantine postpones his baptism to the last hours of his life because of the misconception that if he gets baptised earlier than that, he shall have time to sin and will thus become unworthy of Christ's mercy at the time of taking leave of this world. If he gets baptised just a few minutes before his death, then he shall die as a purified soul and be eligible for the mercy of God. He, therefore, perverts the significance of Christianity, the way Mrs. Melrose Ape does in Vile Bodies. In this sense, he continues to be as far from the Roman Catholic hub of life, as his father Constantius was.

Again, the official recognition of Christianity scarcely has any impact on his mode of running the government. His kingdom is run by his pseudo-Christian wife, Fausta, who makes him kill anyone who earns her ill-will by suggesting that the person poses a threat to the stability of his crown. Constantine, as we know, had once told Helena that he must rule if he wants to live. The determination to rule for the
sake of self-preservation is indicative of Constantine's exclusion from the Grace of God. When Fausta tries to incriminate even his mother, Helena, he realises her Mephistophilean grip over his haunted mind. In a true spirit of savage ruthlessness, he has her roasted alive in her much-favoured bath. It contrasts with his mother's forgiving attitude and indicates his inability to comprehend the essence of Christianity. Even the house where he lives is a sort of Kafkaesque world. People do not speak each other's real name and disappearance of the members of the royal household is regarded as a regular phenomenon. He is therefore an epitome of Power without Grace and the world over which he presides continues to be deprived of the stability and order that would have emanated from the spread of Christian zeal in the true spirit. Unable to see his mistake, Constantine is of the opinion that Christianity is not meant for the heathen-blooded Romans and he decides to shift his capital from Rome to a place which is free from the dark past of Rome. His decision is like that of his father who had wished to fence Rome from the onslaught of the marauding barbarians from the north. He fails to understand the significance of the Incarnation of Christ. Helena and Pope Sylvester, on the other hand, are aware that Christ came to redeem the fallen. Besides the Biblical parable of the clean-swept house, infested with devils, shows the magnitude of Constantine's ignorance of the basic spirit of Christianity.
Rome occupies a significant place in Christianity, as it has been a witness to the long and militant history of the Church. It was here that men chose to part with their lives for the sake of devotion to the eternal truth contained in the arrival and resurrection of Christ. While the religious significance of Rome is unknown to Constantine, it no longer escapes Helena's notice who is near the Roman Catholic hub of life now. It is suggestive of Helena's spiritual development from the time when she began to consider Rome no more than a secular centre of human civilisation. Yet it is not altogether unexpected. Even when Helena as a pagan was making for her new home in the Roman Empire, she had questioned Constantius about the necessity of fencing Roman civilisation from the onslaught of the marauding barbarians living in the north. A truly advanced society would indeed throw its doors open to all and sundry rather than shutting itself in; for the test of civilisation lies not only in the ability to withstand barbaric assaults but also in the ability to reform and sublimate the barbarism in man. Roman Catholicism by virtue of its transcendental orientation is capable of doing both and hence a Christian society does not shut its doors upon the fallen who are no others but the barbarians or 'dynamic' people. The philosophical background of Waugh's comic vision of life is, therefore, not exclusive but all inclusive.

Though Helena has found her true home in the transcendental City of God as represented in its temporal form...
by the Church, she has not yet attained elevation to saint-
hood that accrues from her mystical marriage with the Holy
Spirit. The quest for the real Cross helps her attain this
highest of ranks among the mortals. The person she meets in
course of her search for the Cross is Bishop Macarius, a
person as simple as she has been yearning to meet for a long
time. In him can be found embodied the true spirit of Chris-
tianity. He can distinguish between church as a community of
the pious in communion with the Holy Spirit and the church as
a mere temporal edifice in the shape of well constructed and
architecturally splendid edifices. While the former acts as
a rock of faith, the latter is a victim of the depredations
of time and perverse human will. The Bishop in his enthusiasm
for restoring the see of Aelia Capitolina, the birth place
of Jesus Christ, to its original glory and also to save the
laity of his see from the malefic influence of the Bishop of
Caesarea, under whom Macarius' see is a suffragen see, had
asked the Emperor to make it a full-fledged see. Impressed
by the reality of the Christian truth, Constantine shows
his devotion in the only way known to his secular mind: the
excavation of the holy places and their decoration in the
modern style by a new-fangled architect. The poor bishop
is dismayed by this invasion of the secular spirit as it
strips the holy places of their private purity and throws
open the doors of desecration by the casually-interested
tourist public. The humility and concern for truth embodied
in him is matched only by Helena which shows the distance
she has covered ever since she started moving away from the world of intrigue and savagery. It is to his see that Helena repairs for discovering the Cross, unknown even to Pope Sylvester. It is interesting to compare her shift in interest from the excavation of Troy to the Cross, with Tony Last's fateful static quest for the lost City in the jungles of Brazil. Though both of them are explorers, Tony is incapacitated in his quest by his static opinions but Helena, who has outgrown them, is aided by her understanding of the Roman Catholic nature of her goal. So while the former meets with a tragic end, Helena meets with success. Unable to find out the exact spot for the excavatory work from the speculative thinkers, Helena resorts to the best means of knowing it. She undertakes fasting during the Lent with a view to purifying her body for the descent of Divine Grace without whose aid revelation of truth is impossible. With this Helena Takes the final step towards acceptance by God. Renouncing the pleasures of the flesh, she perfects herself for the union with the Divine, a conclusion already foreshadowed in the parallel drawn with the Helena in Greek mythology. The mystical marriage with the Divine grants her an insight into the working of nature and she is able to transcend the barriers of time and space, an idea deftly conveyed by Waugh in her dream about the Wandering Jew. The discovery of the Cross raises her to the ranks of the highest among mortals. In fact, she enters the select community of saints who form a vital link between mortals and God. In addition, her
discovery bears testimony to the historical authenticity of Christian truth. Its significance is better expressed in Waugh's own words:

Everything about the new religion was capable of interpretation, could be refined and diminished; everything except the unreasonable assertion that God became man and dies on the Cross; not a myth or an allegory; true God, truly incarnate, tortured to death at a particular moment in time, at a particular geographical place, as a matter of plain historical truth.

But the discovery also opens the possibility of an obsession with relics (which would not only commercialise but also erode their significance) in drawing attention to the historical veracity of Christian beliefs, for the teeming majority often ignores the essence, and not unoften substitutes the ritual for the essence. This is the warning Helena too has to consider in taking the help of the avaricious Wandering Jew who has an eye on practical purpose in the discovery of the Cross and the consequent popularity of Christian relics, whether real or fictitious. Finding that the supernatural context of these relics outweighs their temporal value, she goes ahead with the work of unearthing it. Waugh thus brings out the dual nature of the relics. As mere earthly things, they have no significance. But as participants in the historical basis of Christianity, they are significant. If man gives undue importance to the former, it does not inculpate them but degrades the stature of man himself.

Christopher Sykes under-estimates this significance while
he writes about it with somewhat less than adequate perception in his book.

I think the book's weakness throughout lies in expression of a false estimate. Unlike Islam, another down-to-earth religion, Christianity does not depend on relics. They are regarded, and even in decadent times have always been regarded as 'aids to devotion', nothing more than that. Jerusalem is a holy city to Christians, but its total destruction would not disturb Christianity as the total destruction of Mecca and the Kaaba would disturb Islam.68

Waugh's own assertion of the point that has been made in our analysis of the novel also amply answers the charge made by Sykes.69

It is not fantastic to claim that her discovery entitles her to a place in the Doctorate of the Church, for she was not merely adding one more stupendous trophy to the hoard of relics which were everywhere being unearthed and enshrined. She was asserting in sensational form a dogma that was in danger of neglect.69

Christopher Sykes has faulted the book even for the introduction of the Wandering Jew in the dream sequence of Helena.70 The first objection to it concerns his characterisation and Waugh's inability to make him rise 'above the music-hall original.' He goes on to say that it 'was not a type of comedy in which he was equipped to compete with the old hands'. His second objection to it stems out of a deeper cause. He maintains that 'the intrusion of the Wandering Jew seriously weakens the dominance' of the admirable theme concerning the literal reality of the Cross. While his first argument is plausible, we have reservation about the
second. The introduction of the Wandering Jew instead of weakening the theme, strengthens it, for it points to the dangers of an attitude giving precedence to the Cross as a material object, over its significance in paying attention to the historicity of the Christian Revelation.

The development of Helena from a static girl with romantic notions to a saint with _sub specie aeternitatis_ vision is accomplished by Waugh not with direct authorial comments and exposition but with the help of images and symbols used sparingly and purposefully. The discriminating reader does not fail to trace different stages of her progress. There is no wobble in the line of development and the character of Helena has been depicted much more meaningfully than Charles Ryder’s. It is somewhat intriguing that A.A. De Vitis should have been impressed by the latter’s development and not by Helena’s.

In _Brideshead Revisited_ it had not been necessary to describe the actual moment of Charles Ryder’s conversion, though Waugh had done so subtly, meaningfully. In _Helena_, however, he asks his readers to accept the fact that an intellectually curious girl develops into a middle-aged woman who seeks a meaning to the riddle of life and through the grace of God is allowed to find religious conviction as well as the wood of the True Cross. These points are not consistent within the portrayal of her character.71

John Raymond’s dissatisfaction with the content of the novel, however, is indicative of his inability to see Waugh’s deft artistry in developing the plot along the line of Helena’s development.
A Christian saint and empress is not perhaps the most suitable theme for a satirist who is irrevocably on the side of the angels.\textsuperscript{72}

Like him, the correspondent of the \textit{Time} complained that not only \textit{Helena} but even \textit{Brideshead Revisited} was an unfortunate aberration from Waugh's normal vein of satiric fiction and he hoped that Waugh would return to his so-called original style.

Several times in his writing life - in his study of Jesuit Edmund Campion, in 'Brideshead Revisited', and now in 'Helena' - Author Waugh has tried to clear the satiric brambles out of his literary field, and to plant in their stead the herb of grace. He has had no very impressive crop so far, but most Waugh's readers don't mind. They can be pretty sure another season will bring forth a bucketful of raspberries on the old Waugh briers.\textsuperscript{73}

Its unsympathetic response smacks of its obliviousness to the skilful portrayal of the relationship between religious change and progress in drawing the character of Helena.

The study of the novel's narrative pattern shows the consistent development in the character of Helena and also the discarding of any incident that may have weakened the framework. It would have in consequence detracted attention from the coherent development of the theme. A.A. De Vitis has, however, castigated the novel for its loose construction. He maintains:
Helena is more valid as an historical commentary and as an apology for Roman Catholicism than as a novel which creates an experience of life. The religious theme is, of course, the controlling one; but it does not sustain the characterization or the plot incidents. Individual scenes are sharply drawn—Fausta's murder, Constantine's sermon—but the elements of the novel remain disparate. The theology underlying the structure is too apparent—too dogmatic, if possible. The religious theme fights for prominence, and it achieves it at the expense of art.74

His argument ignores the pivotal role played by the imagery of the wheel of life in shaping the novelist's comic vision of life and also in endowing its aesthetic expression with structural cohesiveness. Most of the characters and episodes, as has been made clear from the preceding analysis, help in the movement of the plot from the dynamic fringes of the British and the Roman societies, represented in the wheel-imagery by the revolving wheel, to the immutable reality of Roman Catholicism, represented by the hub that both transcends the relativistic duality of the wheel and also supports its existence. Dr. F.J. Stopp has rightly appreciated the movement of the plot along the thematic line of intention which culminates in Helena's supreme act.

But the special interest of this book is that, by choosing as the central character one about whose life almost nothing else is known but this one supreme, final and yet constitutive act, the author has a clear field in which to build up the total rounded picture of a life and a social and historical setting whose every line of development converges on to that point.75

David Lodge's criticism of the novel's structure springs out of according wrong priority to the themes inherent in
in this work. Though, the novel does intend 'to honor St. Helena, and through her to emphasize the historicity of the Incarnation and the common-sense reasonableness of Christian revelation', but that is not its central theme and any attempt aimed at judging its structure by this yardstick is bound to mystify the nature of its plot and consequently, lower Waugh's mastercraftsmanship in it. The theme which structures the all controlling comic vision of life implicit in the novel is that through religious change alone can an individual hope to progress and resurrect life groaning in the grinding mill of the dynamic world. That Divine Grace is made to aid the intellectual efforts of the protagonist in achieving this change is because of the Roman Catholic nature of the religious change intended. Besides, in order that this theme may be plotted graphically, in the literal sense of the term, the protagonist has to be shown rejecting the dynamic world before she may realise the urgency of religious change. This calls for the portrayal of the world rejected. So if the novelist has indicted the world of the fourteenth century Roman Empire and the modern world, through the suggestive use of a modern prose style, he has not, by any means, eroded the impact of the comic vision of life conveyed through Waugh's concept of change and progress. Thus David Lodge's objection to the emphasis laid on the 'oblique comments on modern life', is also not justified.

The message contained in Helena's life regarding the achievement of progress through a religious change is made
more relevant to modern times by the use of a modern prose style which is nearer to modern man's pattern of thinking.

Dr. Frederick J. Stopp has offered another very interesting and plausible reason for its employment in narrating this 'venerable Christian story'. He argues that:

The alleged incongruity is in fact a congruity, that between the supernatural and the natural; and ... this is a problem which will always face the 'Catholic' novel.

A little later, he goes on to suggest:

Further reflection at a distance of time may succeed in revealing this incongruity as the key to Mr. Waugh's greatest success.

What he is trying to suggest can be understood more clearly in the light of the wheel-imagery which moulds the structure of this novel. The hub of the wheel of life, representative of Roman Catholicism, is an eternal reminder of the manifestation of the transcendental reality in the sense-reality. Thus it confirms the fact of the supernatural impinging on the natural, an idea basic to Roman Catholic theology. Harry Blamires has summed up this idea thus:

The conception of truth proper to the Christian mind is determined by the supernatural orientation of the Christian mind. When we Christians speak of "the great truths" of the Christian Faith, we mean especially those doctrines describing the meeting of the temporal and the eternal, doctrines testifying to a reality beyond our finite order, which has impinged upon that order and still impinges upon it; the doctrines of the Divine Creation, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit.
The choice of a 'natural' idiom for the 'supernatural' truth highlighted by Helena's discovery of the Cross is, thus, an admirable literary technique successfully made use of by Waugh.

Asked by Christopher Sykes about its artistic merit, Waugh grew eloquent and ecstatic, comparing it to the best ever done by T.S. Eliot, who shared his concern with the aesthetic expression of religious values in life.

'I think you mean T.S. Eliot. It's just as good as anything he can do. In prose I mean. You've never written anything so good. I don't think Graham Greene has or Tony Powell. It's far the best book I have ever written or ever will write. It's almost as good as Quennell'.

Waugh's enthusiasm is not as unjustified as Sykes considers it. As an aesthetic expression of the novelist's concept of change and progress and an embodiment of his consequent sublime comic vision of life, the novel is without a parallel. The poetic brilliance with which Helena's progress from sterile paganism to meaningful Roman Catholicism has been foreshadowed and conveyed compels critical commendation. I, therefore, regard Helena as the best of all Waugh's novels.
THE SWORD OF HONOUR TRILOGY (1984):

Originally published as three novels, The Sword of Honour Trilogy (1984), is best amenable to critical scrutiny as one literary work. The aggregative study of the trilogy is feasible in view of the fact that it possesses not only one continuous narrative throughout but also one thematic pattern, which together make it one aesthetic whole. Once again the novelist expresses his comic vision of life in terms of his firm faith in the inverse relationship between secular change and progress and direct relationship between religious change and progress.

So oriented, the novelist has staged the action of this story against the backdrop of World War II. One is reminded of the warnings of the destabilisation of world order issued by Father Rothschild in Vile Bodies and also of the skirmishes beyond the outposts of secular civilisation, in novels like Black Mischief and Scoop. In all these novels, war symbolises the precipitation of order into disorder, rationality into irrationality, civility into barbarity and stability into instability. The wheel-of-life imagery, as always, helps in comprehending the significance of such a change. As the secular efforts of man for achieving progress rely on modernisation or the quickening of the pace of secular change, which manifests itself in a circular path on the wheel of life, human society, instead of coming
closer to the stability of the hub of the revolving wheel of life, pushes itself by doing so, farther from that to the outermost orbit of the revolving wheel where the degree of its susceptibility to instability becomes perilously high. It is such an extreme situation that Waugh tries to present in the outbreak of World War II. As the outbreak of such a calamity conveys, in Waugh, both the idea of the futility of secular change and that of its decadence to the barbaric level of existence, portrayed in the two African novels, the enactment of the action of the trilogy during the turbulent times of war enables Waugh to depict on an epic plane the irrationality and disorder that plague the 'dynamic' society of modern man. But as it is an aesthetic work rather than a mere period-piece, it shows how man can extricate himself from the morass of dynamism by resurrecting his dead and sterile spiritual life with the acceptance of a truly religious way of life, a step that would set him going on the linear path that leads to the stability of the hub of the revolving wheel of life. It is in this sense that the trilogy needs to be studied as a 'greater' or 'divine' comedy.

The man in whose life religious change and progress are exhibited is Guy Crouchback, the chief protagonist of this trilogy. Waugh's choice of the name is artistically significant as it reinforces with its rich associations and suggestions, the theme pursued in this work. Waugh's hero
reminds one of the stooped Don Quixote; the ineffectual Catholic conspirator, Guy Fawkes; and Christ, bowed under the Cross of the sin of human kind. Like Don Quixote, Guy is oblivious of the real nature of the world he has launched himself into and has therefore to suffer his apotheosis's fate as long as his ignorance persists. Besides, both plunge into the dynamic world armed with nothing but their obsolete static code of chivalry. Again, like the 'dynamic' Guy Fawkes, Crouchback does not succeed in avenging the loss of his personal honour in the act of his wife's desertion, by fighting for the honour of the endangered Christendom. It is, however, in the suggestion of the Christ, bowed under the Cross, that Evelyn Waugh announces the significance of his life. Like Christ, Guy Crouchback willingly takes up the cross of Virginia's sins when he agrees to father her child by Trimmer. Just as Christ did so in the face of public ignominy, he too does so in spite of the loss of face involved in it. So with the usage of such a name for his central character, Waugh prepares us for the various stages of Guy's progress to the Roman Catholic hub of life.

*Men at Arms* (1952), the first novel occurring in the trilogy, presents Guy Crouchback in the style of the highly comic Don Quixote. However, when the novel begins, we find Guy, a disillusioned person as his sense of personal honour has been wounded by the desertion of his coquettish wife, Virginia Troy. The degree of her 'dynamism' can be gauged
from her knack of changing her husbands and paramours so constantly that she has become the very epitome of inconstancy in human relations. Faith in Protestantism helps her as it allows unbridled freedom to the expression of her unrestrained individuality. In this respect, she bears a faint resemblance to Shakespeare's Cleopatra who is the unrivalled queen of inconstancy and caprice. Guy Crouchback, on the other hand, is a static character who with his blinding faith in the outdated chivalric code of morality is no match for her. Like Paul, Adam, William Boot and Tony Last, he is fit only for the life of the 'stands'. From there he can watch unhurt the acrobatics of dynamic characters on the revolving wheel of life. His marriage with Virginia, like that of Tony Last with Brenda, is a mistake as it exposes him to the fate that a static person has to suffer when he steps rashly on the revolving wheel of life where he can scarcely balance himself for long. No wonder then that Guy flies to the secluded life of Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce after suffering a reverse at the hands of his dynamic wife, Virginia. In Italy, he is not a sympatico for the obvious reason that while the Italians, brimming with vitality, live in the midst of the world of change, Guy keeps aloof from it. Thus when the war breaks out Guy is living on the border of life, nursing his wounded personal honour. 

The outbreak of World War II offers Guy an opportunity of avenging the loss of his sense of personal honour in the
act of killing and exposing himself also to the risk of death just as Yeats' Irish Airman does in *An Irish Airman Foresees his Death*. The Russo-German pact has endangered the entire Christendom by its much too aggressive postures. These two countries appear to Guy as projections of the Modern Age in arms and the sighting of the enemy gives him as great a satisfaction as his grand-parents had when they could consummate their love at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce. Guy's decision to protect the honour of his country and that of the entire Christendom is not only an illusion fostered by the static code of his chivalric and rational attitude to life but also a device with which he can camouflage his real 'dynamic' intention of justifying his manhood in the war. It draws him into the vortex of dynamic world for the line of distinction that he draws between the champions of the Christian cause and the infidels hardly exists. War in Waugh, as has been suggested earlier also, is an expression of the unbridled irrationality and barbarity of mankind. No degree of secular efforts towards modernisation has been able to crush it. If the man living in the jungle makes an unabashed show of his barbarity, the man in the city attires it in urbane guile. Waugh calls both these sets of people 'dynamic' rightly as the 'dynamic' world is characterised by these traits. Guy's crusade is bound to be abortive as it ignores the reality of the situation. This accounts for Guy's disillusionment and comic ineffectuality. But Guy transcends these feelings as
he is much more than an ineffective Don Quixote. Participation in the war proves beneficial to him in so far as it makes him wiser about himself and the world; into which he has launched himself. Guy realises not only the inadequacy of a rational and chivalric outlook on life but also the utter irrationality and valuelessness of the dynamic world. This saves him from the retrogressive step that William Boot takes in *Scoop* and he embarks instead on the odyssey of spiritual regeneration by dedicating himself to the true spirit of Christianity revealed to him by his sagacious father, Gervase Crouchback.

Guy's ineffectuality in the dynamic world and the trend of his future progress on the path of religious transformation is suggested beautifully by the subtle parallel evoked in the mention of Sir Roger of Waybroke, the English saint at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce. Before leaving for England, to join the war, Guy seeks his blessings by touching his sword. Sir Roger of Waybroke too had started from his home in England on a crusade to liberate the Holy land of Jerusalem from the control of the heathens. But as fate would have it, he never reached there. He died, instead, while fighting for a robber-baron, who had saved his life. Seen from the angle of the dynamic world, his mission was unsuccessful and abortive. But looking at his end from the Christian angle, one realises that he proved himself worthy of being God's chosen one by refusing to yield to
the temptation of deserting his Italian saviour in order to earn for himself the fame of a crusader. Sir Roger was humble enough not to spurn the opportunity of proving himself useful to his benefactor by even performing, in comparison with the noble crusading cause, an insignificant act of fighting for him against his foe. The people of Santa Dulcine Delle Rocce have, therefore, rightly cannonised him as a saint. By seeking Sir Roger's blessings, Guy, in a way, is asking for his guidance in leading him away from the dynamic world, into which Guy has plunged himself, towards the Roman Catholic hub of life.

Intimations of his folly come to him ever since he lands in Britain. He finds that no one is really sincere about the war, as he is. The first place he visits upon his arrival in England is that of his sister, Angela who is married to Box-Bender, a Protestant M.P. Unlike Guy, Angela's husband considers war the right time to increase one's income and savings. He, therefore, has no qualms about making money during war. In this sense, he represents the low level of politicking and profiteering in British society. His son, Tony, who has joined the war narrates incidents of irresponsible soldiering and licentiousness in the barracks. Guy's romantic picture of a nation dedicated to upholding the banner of Christendom hardly tallies with the spectacle they present.
However, removed from this dynamic flock of people in Britain is the saintly old Mr. Gervase Crouchback. Though he has been a witness to many a calamity in his family like the madness of Ivo, his son; the death of Gervase, his other son, in the war; and the economic decline of the family; he has kept his cool and remained steadfast in his devotion to God.

He was an innocent, affable old man who had somehow preserved his good humour - much more than that, a mysterious and tranquil joy - throughout a life which to all outward observation had been over-loaded with misfortune. He had many like another been born in full sunlight and lived to see night fall. England was full of such Jobs who had been disappointed in their prospects. The comparison with Job plays up old Mr. Crouchback's unswerving trust in God despite all material hardships. Notwithstanding his pride in his family - which he, however, keeps to himself - he is 'quite without class consciousness' which is but natural for so sincere a Christian. Helena had similarly felt one with the multitude in the Christian sense of being one with the entire 'believing' humanity in the Mystical Body of Christ. He thus dwells on the hub of the revolving wheel of life, which alone can help man to detach himself from the delusion of secular progress induced by the relativistic duality of the dynamic plane of existence. Commenting on his character, Frank Kermode rightly observes:
Royal Corp of Halberdiers as a probationary officer. The former is not at all disturbed by his son's desire to expose himself to the peril of almost certain death in World War II. What he is concerned about, instead, is Guy's spiritual welfare. That is why, he gives Guy Gervase's sacred medal of Our Lady of Lourdes before his departure. The medal had protected Gervase from sin when he was on the point of being seduced by a loose woman. She too could not escape the sobering effect of the medal. This further makes it clear that Guy, if he is to progress, must tread the path that leads towards an outlook on life symbolised by his father.

However, before he may embark on the linear path of progress, he must realise the folly of seeking a justification for his personal honour in the dynamic world which necessitates his understanding of the corruption in thought and action in the dynamic world. Guy can do so only when he steps out of his adolescence which holds him back from gaining any mature insight into the world of barbarity around him. The irresponsible and gay abandon of army life help Guy in coming of age. It is from this angle that the narration of Guy's school-boy pranks and quarrels gain significance. The regiment in which he serves is billeted in a school where "the preparatory school way of life was completely recreated". Ironically enough, Guy receives his first war-wound in the shape of an injury while playing football. It is here that a school-boy war
rages between Brigadier Ritchie Hook and Apthorpe, Guy's middle aged companion-in-arms, over the 'thunder-box' a chemically operated portable field latrine. Christopher Sykes has objected to the inclusion of this horse play on so elaborate a scale. He observes:

Evelyn gave sixteen pages to the adventure of Apthorpe's 'Thunder-Box'. The joke, even to those who relish lavatory-jokes, becomes wearisome through repetition. 85

Considered independently, Sykes' objection stands. But when examined from the point of view of the novel's thematic line of intention, it does not for the lavatory-joke, however offensive it may be to refined and cultured tastes, is here put in as an adolescent game for the delight and ultimate development of Guy out of the adolescent phase of life.

If Apthorpe comes to represent one adolescent myth for Guy, Brigadier Ritchie comes to stand for another. A veteran of World I, Ritchie Hook takes immense pleasure in 'biffing' the enemy. Guy's admiration for him is revealed in his whole-hearted approval of Ritchie Hook's reckless adventure of Dakar landing. In the words of A. A. De Vitis, 'The mission is a culmination of boyhood dreams of high adventure'. 86 Guy imagines himself playing the role of Truslove in embarking on this perilous adventure. Inspired by the destructive capability of Ritchie Hook, his 'dynamic' ideal, Guy brings back the chopped off head of a negro-
sentry which he presents quite rightly to this symbol of
destruction. As a result of this misadventure, Guy has
his military career blotted and is recalled to England to
face an inquiry.

The futility of the 'dynamic' mode of existence is
driven home to Guy in the forestalling of an operation
everytime the men prepare for one. After an initial period
of training, the Halberdiers keep on shifting from one'
probable place of war to another. The prospect of war
fills the bosoms of the new officers, including that of
Guy, with enthusiasm. But every time, their joining the
war-front is put off, it creates a sense of ennui and
listlessness among them. The pointless change of places
lends an air of absurdity to the entire war effort. Their
movement describes a circular course similar to that of
Adam Fenwick Symes in Vile Bodies (1930).

The invasion of Finland compels Guy to take a
fresh look at the war. Contrary to the dismal picture
painted by the Catholic priest of the tin-church, Guy,
soon after joining the army, had thought it a time of
glory and dedication.

The priest was a recent graduate from Maynooth
who had little enthusiasm for the Allied cause or
for the English army, which he regarded merely
as a provocation to immorality in the town. His
sermon that morning was not positively offensive;
there was nothing in it to make the basis of a
complaint; but when he spoke of 'this terrible
time of doubt, danger and suffering in which we
live', Guy stiffened. It was a time of glory
and dedication.87
But now Guy feels otherwise. Though no one at Kut-al-Imara is affected by this invasion, Guy is. His earlier certitude about the nature of war abandons him now. Waugh writes:

No one at Kut-al-Imara seemed much put out by the disaster. For Guy the news quickened the sickening suspicion he had tried to ignore, had succeeded in ignoring more often than not in his service in the Halberdiers; that he was engaged in a war in which courage and a just cause were quite irrelevant to the issue.

Guy is confronted with the irrationality and savage self-expression of the dynamic characters inhabiting the world of constant change. As the circular motion of the revolving wheel of life also suggests, the dynamic mode of existence is wanting in a logical movement; the only motion it knows is temporal. In order that Guy may progress, he must extricate himself from the material concerns of a secular world whose change is counter productive, instead of being progressive. The ultimate comic vision of life in Waugh derives its strength from such revelations. Not long before this disaster Poland had been invaded by Russia without even any protest from Britain. The sight of the Christian states being allowed to slip into the communist hold disconcerts Guy as it is a betrayal of all principles that had inspired Guy to fight for England.

Coupled with the growing disenchantment with the politics of the dynamic world is Guy's increasing awareness of his religious shortcomings. In the initial stage, he realises that he has stopped saying his prayers ever
since his joining the army. Providence only saves him from a deadly sin he is on the verge of committing with his former wife, Virginia. Convinced by Mr. Goodall's deceptive suggestion that there was no harm in the cohabitation of a divorced Catholic couple, Guy launches on a course of action which is both preposterous and humiliating. Guy has for long ceased to think of Virginia as his wife. Resuming sexual relations with her would be no less than committing adultery - Waugh uses the expression, 'auspicious pseudo-adultery' - as such a union would be restricted only to the bodies, their souls being unaffected. It is only after his attempt aborts that he realises the grave sin he was about to commit.

Waugh develops further the idea of irrationality in the 'dynamic' world in the lop-sided working of the counter-espionage department which opens a file on the patriotic Guy on the basis of an inadequate and insignificant piece of evidence. His past antecedents are held in suspicion and a nexus, which in reality does not exist, is established between him and Box-Bender, his brother-in-law.

'But Crouchback's quite another fish. Until September of last year he lived in Italy and is known to have been on good terms with the Fascist authorities. Don't you think I'd better open a file for him?'
'Yes, perhaps it would be as well'.
'For both, sir?'
'Yes, Pop'em all in'.

With this summary trial in absentia, Colonel Grace-Groundling-Marchpole labels the patriotic Guy, a fascist. Such decisions were not uncommon during World War II. D.H. Lawrence whose wife happened to be a German was harassed much for the possible recovery of any incriminating document by the British police, during the war. Waugh himself was the scapegoat of such bear-baiting, though not by the police, but by his literary and journalistic detractors. In his reply to a query regarding which side he would support in the Spanish civil war, he had, after suggesting the impossibility of such a hard choice, declared his support for the government of General Franco, but only in comparison with that of the communists, for the simple reason that anarchic government is better than an irreligious and a wholly lop-sided government. A distortion of it helped them prove Waugh's fascist inclinations. Waugh thus makes fun of such subverters of the rules of logic. 

Men At Arms (1952) concludes with Guy Crouchback’s return to England as a partially disenchanted and disgraced soldier from Dakar. So it scarcely traces Guy's complete detachment from the result of the war and his religious transfiguration which alone can ensure true progress. This gives the novel an air of incompletion, if examined independently. This accounts for Waugh's own lukewarm attitude to this work, as is revealed in his letters. In his letter to Nancy Mitford, he observes:
I have finished that novel - slogging, inelegant, boring - and what little point it has will only be revealed in the fourth volume at least four years hence. Still there were some dunderheads who didn't appreciate Helena. Perhaps they will like it.

Again in his letter of 8 January 1951 (1952) to Clarissa Churchill, Waugh writes:

I have finished a novel - slogging, inelegant, the first volume of four or five, which won't show any shape until the end.

Still again, in his letter of 1 September 1952 to Ann Fleming, Waugh reiterates his belief that the book must be read in conjunction with the volumes that follow for a proper appreciation of its value.

The kindest way is to regard it as the first comic turn of a long musical-hall show, put on to keep the audience quiet as they are taking their seats. If I ever finish writing, and if anyone ever reads, the succession of volumes that I plan to follow it, it will make some sense.

Unaware of this fact, Diana Cooper evaluated the novel as an aesthetically complete expression of the author's viewpoint and consequently felt disenchanted with its literary merit. 'I thought', she told Evelyn, 'that you were going to give us a modern War and Peace, but it's much more like Mrs. Dale's Diary'. John Raymond's analysis also suffers from an ignorance of the novel's introductory character. He is unable to grasp the real theme of progress through religious change when he observes:
Like every satirist at a loss for prey, the writer has made a temporary excursus into Myth. Mr. Waugh's myth ... is the English regimental tradition in 1940.94

That the novel's inconclusiveness owes to its incompleteness as a work of art has, however, been rightly perceived by Christopher Sykes who observes:

The partial failure of the book was due to a familiar error of which Evelyn judging by his letter to Nancy Mitford, seems to have been partly aware; his writing was never amenable to publication by instalments, a large instalment of a very long book but an instalment nonetheless.95

Though Delmore Schwartz has been able to guess what the novel is about, he has done so in the wrong manner. He maintains:

Waugh appears to be saying to the reader: I see the stupidity, foolishness and triviality of human beings just as much you do, but I draw a different conclusion; human beings are ridiculous without religious belief and they are just as ridiculous when they are possessed by religious belief, but at least when they are truly religious, they have a touching pathetic, bewildered quality which makes possible a little comparison amid one's overwhelming contempt.96

While Waugh finds people without any religious beliefs ridiculous, he does not think the religious minded so, especially those who have comprehended the true essence of Christianity. The former are rendered ridiculous because of their inability to understand the futility manifest in the circular nature of secular change.
But the latter are not as they are coolly poised at the hub of the wheel of life where they are liberated from the deception of secular change. If Guy Crouchback looks ridiculous in this novel, it is because he has yet not outgrown his static personality which stands in the way of his understanding the nature of the dynamic world and also in his acceptance of the humble religious path of progress and honour. Thus the comic vision of life that grows in this novel is incomplete and far from clear.

Despite its introductory character, the novel suffers from one serious blemish. It pays much more attention to Apthorpe than Guy Crouchback, the chief protagonist of the novel. In fact, all the three sections are named after him. In the biography of Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Sykes observes rightly:

Its admirers were chiefly attracted by the character Apthorpe who threatened to become the protagonist of the story.97

In fact, Waugh for once, himself seems to be in doubt about who the actual hero of the novel is. In the letter of 23 January (1952) to Lady Mary Lygon, he writes:

I have written a book in poor taste, mostly about WCs and very very dull. Well it is a dull subject isn't it. The only exciting moment is when a WC blows up with Capt. Apthorpe sitting on it. The shock & shame drive him mad. He is the hero.98
Officers and Gentlemen (1955), the second novel occurring in the trilogy, opens with a grim and devastating picture of war-torn London. The end of man's secular efforts, directed towards secular progress, lies naked in the form of death and destruction. Such a life is really a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. London is being reduced to rubble by the German war-planes. Places of festivity have become the funeral pyres of helpless humanity. The phoney war is over and the barbarity of the jungle has at last hemmed in the pseudo-civilised centres of humanity. The savagery of Seth's Azania or for that matter, Jacksons' Ishmaelia, fades into insignificance before this picture of wilful genocide. It is to such a London that Guy returns.

The mercurial Ritchie Hook, like Captain Grimes, not only saves himself from the framing up but also gets his admirer, Guy Crouchback, acquitted. In the absence of any particular official assignment, Guy performs an act of piety towards the deceased Apthorpe. The latter had asked him to trace Chatty Corner and hand over his gear to him. The interest with which he searches Apthorpe's legatee shows the change that has come over him. Guy does not mind caring for Apthorpe's gear, even though it hardly deserves his attention. Only after discovering Chatty Corner does he rest.
Along with Guy's growing humility and piety, Christian virtues, is his declining interest in the war. Once again, Waugh drives home the idea of futility manifest in the dynamic way of life when he describes how army exercises are planned and abandoned. Posted at the Isle of Mugg as a commando, Guy along with other fellow soldiers waits for the ship that has to take them near a Mediterranean island to be captured by them. The promised ship does not appear for days together so that officers and men lose all hopes of ever seeing it and wish they were back with their regiments. Waugh describes the rise and fall of their hopes thus

This unvarying cycle of excitement and disappointment rubbed them bare of paint and exposed the lead beneath.99

The comparison with the circular motion of a ship on a rough sea recalls the image of the wheel of life. The wheel, as it revolves, brings on a semblance of progress. But when its circular motion brings the man standing on it back to his original position, the illusion is shattered. In other words, dynamic mode of life cannot promise hope and progress but only despair and sterility. That quickening of the pace of the wheel of dynamic life only brings man back to his original position sooner is driven home in the abruptness with which military plans keep on changing. In the passage that follows Ian Kilbannock tells
Guy how many operations have been planned and then abandoned before even any one got scant of them.

(Guy): 'There was some loose talk about an island'.
(Ian): 'Operation Bottleneck? That was off weeks ago. Since then there's been Operation Quick sand and Operation Mousetrap. They're both off. It's Operation Badger now, of course'.

(Guy): 'And what is that?'
(Ian): 'If you don't know, I oughtn't to tell you'.
(Guy): 'Too late to go back now'.
(Ian): 'Well, frankly it's simply Quicksand under another name'.

The entire exercise of planning and re-planning looks ridiculous in view of the fact that it lacks a progressive character. Waugh appears to be saying that all secular efforts meet with the same fate.

While the constant planning and putting off of plans discourages Guy, the bloodshed and utter chaos that accompanies the Crete expedition appals him. The army which to an outsider gives the appearance of an ordered organisation is so only as long as it is under orders. The moment it is relieved of orders, it becomes disorderly and unruly. The Crete expedition plays up the disorder and disobedience to authority that is rampant in any secular organisation which has order superimposed upon it. Once the German war plans start hunting and decimating the British soldiers, chaos breaks out. In the scramble for the safety of their lives, Darwinian struggle for survival gets graphically
portrayed. Rank loses significance. The officers suspect their men who in turn suspect their superiors. Authority is undermined and in the forced state of equality, soldiers do not hesitate in rebelling against their superiors. Sometimes, they even murder the latter. The animalistic spirit that possesses them is best presented in the person of Corporal Major Ludovic. Before and while escaping from Crete in a boat, he kills two soldiers, one of them being Major Hound, his superior. Ivor Claire, the man in whom Guy had reposed all his trust of giving the Germans a tough fight, shows his back. The nightmarish picture of war presented here is perhaps one of the best among the novels that have come out of World War II. Though Guy makes good his escape, his psyche is substantially damaged as a result of this catastrophe. This foreshadows Guy's rejection of secular change as a means to progress and his consequent religious transformation.

While efforts are on to restore Guy to normalcy, the news of Russia's alliance with Britain is flashed. This changes the hue of the confrontation. Earlier, the war-camps were divisible ideologically. While the British and the other allies were Christians, the Germans and Russians were heathens. With this new pact, the rational distinction between the friend and the foe gets completely blurred. Political considerations gain ground at the expense of the religious, a fact which is not unnatural in the essentially secular dynamic world. Guy, who has
been unaware of this fact and has consequently been fighting under the impression that it is a religious war, is unnerved by it. His illusion about the nature of the world, he has jumped into, is shattered. He realises that the crusade upon which he had embarked does not exist. It is simply a figment of his mind.

Now that hallucination was dissolved, like the whales and turtles on the voyage from Crete, and he was back after less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion in the old ambiguous world, where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led blundering into dishonour.101

The new alliance is, however, in keeping with the socialist mood that was then sweeping over England. The movement in favour of the common people and against the landed gentry was exaggerated to the point of absurdity in the suggestion that the upper classes stood for fascism. So when Ian tells Guy that this is a People's War, he intends to suggest that this is a war not only against fascism but also against the upper classes. What happens, as a result of the obsession with having people's heroes rather than gentlemen heroes is that a nondescript and undeserving fraud like Trimmer shoots into prominence. Trimmer's success, as opposed to the defeat of many deserving soldiers, highlights the injustice that has crept into the fabric of dynamic world, at every level.
It also brings home the idea of the difference between an unjust People's War and the chivalrous crusades of the past. By castigating the People's War, Waugh, however, does not show any predilection for chivalry as it is an institution which is unreal in the context of the world of change. Guy's disillusionment with it is a case in point. What Waugh is therefore trying to say is that Guy must bid farewell to war and army in order that he may seek his salvation in the real terms of Christianity which is not only an epitome of truth but also a true dispenser of justice.

Had Waugh abandoned the trilogy here as he himself declared in the foreword to the first edition of this novel and in the letter of 16 Nov. 1954, written to Nancy Mitford, the entire work would have suffered the fate of a literary fragment, inviting, as a consequence, misleading interpretations of the theme pursued. As Christopher Gykes has rightly remarked:

The foreword was a great mistake. If it had been a statement of the fact; if Sword of Honour had indeed ended with this second volume, then it would not have been a work to enhance Evelyn's literary reputation. Too many loose ends would have remained; the full intention would have been but vaguely discernible; it would have but been remembered as a minor specimen ... among those works of art which perplex and fascinate us quia imperfectum.

Among the critics who perceived its incompleteness was Geoffrey Moore. Observing the 'tangle of loose threads'
in the plot, he contended very rightly against Waugh's assertion that it and *Men At Arms* could 'form a whole'. Other critics, however, chose to assess them as a whole. Cyril Connolly felt 'disappointed' as he found the characters 'too superficial to sustain the structure'. Only Norman Shrapnel suggested subtly that

Disorganisation is more than merely a subject for his fierce brand of farce; it is an expression of spiritual perversity.

The other voice of appreciation was that of Kingsley Amis who appears not to have read the foreword carefully. He looked forward to 'the continuation of this saga' in order that 'the discursive and episodic' elements of the plot may fall in the right pattern.

One may, however, ask why Waugh issued such a declaration, knowing fully well its adverse impact on the theme he was pursuing. Or was it a statement of Waugh's declining artistic abilities? The answer is provided by the conversation between Graham Greene and Waugh, recorded in the former's review of the *Diaries*.

I had asked him why there was no indication on the dust-wrapper of 'Officers & Gentlemen' that a third volume of the trilogy was to come. He said, 'I'm not sure that I'll be able to write it. I may go off my head again, and this time permanently'.
Waugh's joy in being fit enough to start the third novel is, therefore, understandable. In the letter of 5 September 1960 to Ann Fleming, Waugh writes:

I am busily & happily at work on a sequel to those two war novels I wrote. The trouble is that it is quite unintelligible to anyone who doesn't know them by heart. I have to keep dipping into them to find what I wrote seven or eight years ago. Otherwise it is a gripping tale. 109

That the decision to terminate the trilogy was taken solely because of the author's failing health and not because of Waugh's ignorance of the need of the final and culminating novel in the trilogy becomes clear from what he wrote after having written the third novel.

In 1950 I wrote of Officers and Gentlemen. "I thought at first the story would run into three volumes. I find that two will do the trick". This was not quite candid. I knew that a third volume was needed. 110

The novel, Unconditional Surrender (1961), opens with the exhibition of the 'state sword', an expensive gift of the people of Britain to 'the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad', near 'the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and the sacring place of the kings of England'. That this sword is a symbol of the perversion of sacred Christian values represented by Sir Roger of Waybroke's sword is suggested by its reverse position: 'the escutcheon on the scabbard will be upside down when worn on a baldric'. It is therefore ironical that this sword which is an
image of political expediency and barbarity let loose in the dynamic world, should have been offered a place so close to a shrine and more than that, worshipped. Ludovic, who is thoroughly steeped in the destructive spirit of this pseudo-civilised world does not hesitate in having a close look at it in order that he may celebrate its ignoble glory in a poem for a literary competition. Guy, on the other hand, refuses to pay homage to this symbol of dishonour and destruction for by giving away their 'state sword' to a heathen nation, Britain was dishonouring its Christian heritage and cause. Guy's refusal to be drawn into this dishonourable war is aptly and subtly suggested by his aversion for the 'state sword'. It marks an end of his love affair with the army and psychological association with the dynamic world that has gone berserk.

The association with Guy Fawkes here becomes prominent. Just as Guy Fawkes had failed in his mission of dethroning Queen Elizabeth and installing the Catholic Mary, Crouchback has failed in defending the endangered Christendom from heathen forces as years of secularisation have eclipsed the Christian outlook of the pseudo-Christian societies of the west.
Disillusioned with the irrational ways of the dynamic world, Guy sulks in the absence of an alternative ideal that can redefine an otherwise wasted life. Old Mr. Crouchback reads it on his face and is worried, as before, about his spiritual welfare. Earlier, he had given him a sacred medal for the purpose. This time, he offers an advice that acts as a catalyst in achieving a drastic change in Guy's perception of the world and the individual's role in it. In his letter to Guy, Old Mr. Crouchback writes: though in the contest of the Lateran Treaty.

Quantitative judgements don't apply. If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of face.

In Mr. Crouchback's opinion, honour is to be measured not by worldly standards but by the Christian ones, which at times may entail a 'loss of face' in this world of change. Guy discovers that a person can justify his life and honour not only by fighting for the defence of the entire Christendom, which due to the growing secularisation set in by man's disregard for and ignorance of the eternal Christian perspective has sunk to a level beyond redemption, but also by saving at least one soul from an otherwise certain damnation. It is this movement from illusion to reality that lies at the heart of Evelyn Waugh's greater comedies which contain his sublime comic vision of life. The Evelyn Waugh protagonist rises like a phoenix from the ashes of a sterile 'dynamic' life to
fly to the all-embracing and eternal truth of the Roman Catholic hub of life. The graph of his progress from illusion to truth is, therefore, linear and not circular. Such an opportunity offers itself in the shape of Virginia's illegitimate child by Trimmer. If Guy does not accept Virginia as his wife, the child shall not only been born a bastard but also a foreigner to the Grace of God. If he does, the child shall be saved but Guy himself shall lose face in the society. Guy agrees to undergo personal humiliation for the sake of redeeming the nascent life in the shape of little Trimmer. This is in shining contrast with his past motives in possessing Virginia. Secular considerations such as the perpetuation of the family line with a son of his own fade into insignificance before the religious ones. By emulating his father Mr. Crouchback who himself is a spiritual elite, in the true sense of the word, Guy has not only discovered, to use Joffrey Heath's term, his 'vocation', but has also raised himself to a pedestal near that of his father. In other words, Guy has started seeing life from the sub specie aeternitatis angle of the hub of the revolving wheel of life.

Bernard Bergonzi appears to be, oblivious of this change in Guy's perspective, when he suggests:

... Guy Crouchback embodies the nostalgic myth of so much of Mr. Waugh's writing, the notion that true value lies in a combination of Catholicism and the aristocratic virtues.
His suggestion, similar to that of Donat O Donnell, disregards how Guy willingly undergoes public humility and even forgoes his family pride in the act of accepting Trimmer's child. V.S. Prichett's defence almost admits the presence of class-snobbery in Waugh and thus is equally unjustifiable. He maintains:

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

An extension of Guy's newly discovered 'vocation' is the help he extends to the Jews trapped in Yugoslavia. Posted as a Laison Officer there, he does his best to help them get out of the communist controlled country. The persecution of the Jews, a subject quite ancient in human history and glaringly particular during World War II, fills Guy with pity for them, even though they are not Christians. This should be a case in point for those who have accused Waugh repeatedly of being exclusively Catholic in his art. Guy's efforts do not yield fruit for a long time as the air-lifting of the Jews is repeatedly put off because of bad weather. Even when most of them find their way out, the Kanyis do not as they are executed for their closeness to Guy. This is the little task that Guy could perform in the service of God and he does not flinch in doing it. This shows the level of humanity that he has come to embody ever since his adherence to his father's
advice. Guy's firm pursuit of his Catholic ideals stands in shining contrast with his previous comic capers when he sought to justify his own and the secularised Christendom's honour by taking to a 'dynamic' mode of existence. He ceases to be an anti-hero and he assumes the stature of grand comic heroes as Henry in The Family Reunion.

While Guy has surrendered himself unconditionally to the Divine Will, the other characters in the novel have submitted themselves to the soul-grinding speed of the wheel of irrational world of change. It is on the crest of such a change that Ludovic rises to the rank of a Major and even becomes the Commandant of a Parachute Training Centre where Guy comes as a trainee officer. The appearance of Guy disturbs his peace. He feels haunted by Guy's awareness of the double murders he had committed during the Cretan retreat. Fleeing from his past, he first shuts himself up in his room during Guy's training and later at the end of the war, leaves England for good, buying Guy's Castello at Santa Dulcina Delle Rocce to stay there for ever. He thus becomes a mental wreck. Ludovic's decision to quit England plays up, in terms of the imagery of the wheel of life, his decision to quit the constantly revolving wheel, representative of the world of secular change, and take a seat in the stands. It is a regressive step as it leads him from a dynamic state of existence, however vile and futile, to a static one. Meanwhile, he has also a book published. It is
entitled 'Death Wish'. Way back in 1924, Waugh had perceived such a fatalistic attitude among the youth of his own generation. In "A Letter of Exhortation from an Undergraduate to a Friend Abroad", he observes:

You know, Bill, what we want is another war. I become more and more convinced of that every day. These tiresome historians always find causes for their wars in national expansion and trade rivalry and religion and such things. I don't know about these because, as you know, I am never up in time to read the newspapers, but I gather from those who do that things are pretty unsettled .... we have a great body of young men of all sorts of education just longing for another general disturbance.

A little ahead in the same letter, he expresses the willingness of these young men to fight for any institution or party that would pay them handsomely and offer them a good chance of speedy death. Ludovic's book thus serves to draw attention towards the death-wish that had possessed the minds of the people in the conflagration of war. Indeed, Waugh repeatedly shows in his works the extent of irrationality and barbarity in the secular world of change.

Virginia's life, in contrast, after suffering a long and suffocating dip in the ocean of sin, brightens up with Guy's help. In her ability to change her husbands, she is the very picture of inconstancy. But the affair with Trimmer after exulting her for a while torments her. He not only dins into her ears his repetitive 'You, you, you' but also impregnates her with his child. When she
is unable to get rid of the nascent life within her womb, she tries to deceive Guy into marrying her again. But Guy's willingness to accept Trimmer's child soon changes her. She becomes a Catholic before remarrying him. Her death as a Catholic therefore guarantees the descent of Grace of God upon her as in Lord Marchmain's case. The linear graph of her life once again reveals the nature of Evelyn Waugh's sublime comic attitude to a life that has been 'christianised.'

Acting upon his father's desire that he should stay at Broome after his death, Guy sells the property in Italy and raises a family of his own with Domenica Plessington at Broome. Waugh deleted the happy ending in the succeeding edition of this book as he felt it detracted attention from the novel's real thematic line of intention. His letter dated 31 October 1961, to Anthony Powell makes this explicit. It reads:

I am disconcerted to find I have given the general impression of a 'happy ending'. This was far from my intention. The mistake was allowing Guy legitimate offspring. They shall be deleted in any subsequent edition. I thought it more ironical that there should be real heirs of the Blassed Gervase Crouchback dispossessed by Trimmer but I plainly failed to make that clear. So no nippers for Guy & Domenica in Penguin.116

Most critics interpreted the perpetuation of Guy's own family line in his two children by Domenica as a sign of
Waugh's concern with making Guy comfortable not only spiritually but also materially. Box-Bender's envy over Guy's own progeny was cited as an evidence of this intention. The second edition rectifies the happy ending by leaving Guy issueless by his marriage with Domenica Plessington. This leaves little Trimmer, an outsider, the sole heir to the impeccable family name of the Crouchbacks. Besides, it redeems the evaluation of Guy's progress to the hub of the wheel of life from any material or secular criteria. The second-home coming of Guy is markedly different from the earlier one. While earlier, he had come as a static person, unaware of the dark nature of the dynamic world that is spreading out like a wild fire in the opportune time of war, he now returns for good as a spiritual elite wise in the sub specie aeternitatis wisdom of the Roman Catholic hub of the revolving wheel of life. In other words, the native has returned home from a self-imposed exile. Waugh has, thus, successfully steered the development of Guy Crouchback from the time he was an ineffectual Don Quixote or Guy Fawkes to the time when he becomes the sagacious Christ bent under the Cross of humanity's sin. To those who view the story of his life from a secular angle, it is a tragedy. But to those who view it from the eternal perspective of Roman Catholicism, it is a magnificent and 'divine' comedy. Indeed, the pattern of Waugh's greater comedy is somewhat similar to
that of Eliot. Eliot's chief protagonists also achieve epiphany or resurrection the way Guy does. Waugh therefore succeeds, like Eliot, in showing that abiding progress is possible only through religious change.

Bernard Bergonzi's contention that 'the defeat and disillusions of Guy Crouchback seems to indicate the total collapse of Mr Waugh's dominating myth' is hardly substantiated by the change Guy undergoes in the trilogy. So far as the matter of 'myth' is concerned, it has already been shown that it does not exist at all in Waugh. What he is trying to say, in fact, is that Guy's disillusion and despair is a sign of his submission to the modern world.

... the modern world has triumphed, and the implications of the book's title are everywhere apparent.

In saying that he overlooks the fact that Guy's disillusion grows out of the irrationality and madness of the modern world. Besides, far from submitting to it he rejects it as he refuses to have any truck with its unjust battles and chooses, instead, the transcendental reality of Christianity.

Christopher Derrick has, however, rightly observed the graph of Guy's gradual progress towards the status of a spiritual elite when he says:
... the Italian peasants canonised the English knight, and we can provisionally make a kind of saint out of Guy, whom we leave at the end of the trilogy restored like Job to something better than his former condition, the heavenly visitation over and done with, the sacrifice accepted in tongues of fire, the books balanced, the past still there to be lived with.119

But he falls into the booby-trap of the happy ending and mistakes Waugh’s intentions in giving precedence to the spiritual over the material considerations of evaluating human progress.

Similar mistake is committed by Simon Raven who

inspite of not being oblivious to the progressive course of Guy’s life,

... now as three years ago it still seems to me that Mr. Waugh brings Crouchback’s pilgrimage to a legitimate goal; private salvation through private good faith.120

suggests, wrongly, that an acceptance of Roman Catholicism entails the acceptance of the chivalric England, as well.

there is more than a suggestion that what Crouchback will righteously resist is not merely Nazism but the whole apparatus of modern and secular progress as promoting religious apostasy and social change - two calamities which Mr. Waugh does not, it is true, equate but sees as intimately connected.121

It may be asserted once again that an acceptance of the religious hub of life implies, in terms of the wheel imagery, a rejection of all products of secular efforts, be it chivalry or modernism. The ultimate comic vision
of life in Evelyn Waugh steers away from this emphasis on the pursuit of secular progress which is shown to be deceptive and comically absurd.

Regarding Waugh basically as a satirist, Gore Vidal considers the affirmative aspect of Waugh's fiction, as revealed in this trilogy, no more than romantic daydreaming and hence a drag on him as a critic. He observes:

Waugh ... in the military trilogy, which The End of the Battle (the title of the American edition of Unconditional Surrender) completes, indulges himself in romantic daydreams which are not only quite as unpleasant as the things he satirized, but tend in their silliness to undermine his authority as critic, Juvenal would not have made that mistake.122

Far from indulging in romantic day-dreams, Waugh rejects them, a point that is clear enough in Guy's realisation of the inadequacy of the obsolete code of chivalry. Moreover, Waugh shows realism of par excellence when he makes his protagonist not only comprehend the deep rooted depravity in the dynamic world or the world of change but also withdraw from its concerns and steep himself instead in the realism of the religious hub of life, the Roman Catholic Church. So it is not Waugh but Juvenal who committed a mistake in not outgrowing a mere negative attitude in his artistic expressions.

Commenting on the trilogy, Christopher Sykes observes in Evelyn Waugh:
As hardly needs saying, after a long withdrawal from the subject and preoccupation with work of a different kind, Evelyn eventually and triumphantly finished the trilogy.123

His appreciation owes to the perception that

In this work (Unconditional Surrender) Evelyn attempted to achieve a great ambition: to describe in terms of a fictional experience close to his own the significance to men and women of the ordeal of the crisis of the civilization which reached its climax in World War II.124

Thereafter, he founds his critical opinion of the novel on this thematic approach.

Whether he succeeded; or whether, among others who tried to reflect the Hitlerian catastrophe in fiction, he merely over-reached himself, is the subject of this chapter.125

Though his perception is not wrong, it would yet be wrong, to judge the artistic merit of the book on this basis, as it tells only half the truth about the book's thematic line of intention. Far from being a mere description of the significance of the crisis of civilization, the narrative of the novel aims at showing Guy's progress to the religious hub of life from the irrationality and corruption signified by the bestiality of the Second Great War. In the successful completion of this spiritual odyssey, the hero undergoes a renewal of life that is implicit in the Christian view of progress. Thus, the novel, instead of being a static portrayal of life, charts
the movement of the central character from insignificance to significance. This movement is at the heart of all 'greater comedies', whether written by Waugh or Eliot. The central character extricates himself from the absurd monotony of a circular secular change in order to discover the true meaning of his existence. His success therefore forms the essence of the triumphant conclusion of any greater comedy. Christopher Sykes appears to be ignorant of this change in Guy when he objects to his delineation as an 'ineffectual' person.

... in the first sentence, there occurs the worst blemish on the whole undertaking: the ineffectual hero, Guy Crouchback. He is not something new in Evelyn's writing, he is the victim as the hero again, making a late though not his last appearance. He had first appeared not as farcical in himself but as an effective stimulator of farce... in Decline and Fall and then much later as a stimulator of unorthodox tragedy in A Handful of Dust. His appearances had all been successfully contrived, and they had all followed, with amazing originality, a well-worn path; that of the character who is not interesting in himself but to whom interesting (and horrifying) things happen. Here his appearance as Guy Crouchback was not successful. 126

Guy's ineffectuality, far from being a blemish, is only a part of an essential stage in his development. It sheds light on the inadequacy of his static chivalric code which he must outgrow in order that he may become an effective instrument of Divine Grace on earth. In this sense, he is certainly a development over static characters like Paul Pennyfeather and Tony Last. His development
parallels that of Helena, who similarly reposes faith in the redemptive power of Roman Catholic Church after outgrowing her static opinions. Cyril Connolly has rightly observed the graph of Guy Crouchback's progressive life when he enunciates the theme that his life embodies:

I have left out what is perhaps Mr. Waugh's major theme: the recovery of Crouchback's faith, of the sense of joy and purpose in life which he had lost when his marriage broke up, and which had invalidated his scrupulous orthodoxy.127

In fact, Waugh has brilliantly portrayed the theme of progress through religious change in the developing character of Guy Crouchback, as he did in that of Helena. All the three books together show Waugh's ultimate comic vision of life which is affirmative and poised in the resurgence of life rather than being negatory and indicative of mere absurdity in the dynamic mode of life. No wonder then that Cyril Connolly felt impelled to make a request for the immediate publication of all three novels in one volume.

I strongly urge the publisher to issue all three books in one volume immediately; the cumulative effect is most impressive, and it seems to me unquestionably the finest novel to have come out of the war.128

It should, however, not be mis-construed as a measure of its period interest as the values upheld in this trilogy are universal and eternal.
From an examination of the progressive character of Guy Crouchback's spiritual odyssey, it becomes clear that the comic vision of life in Evelyn Waugh is played up not only by the thematic pattern of the events but also by the structural pattern of the trilogy. The trilogy has a linear plot that begins with Guy loading a 'static' life in his villa in Italy and ends up with him leading a Christian and truly civilized life at Broome, the traditional home of the Catholic family of Crouchback. The artistic harmony achieved between content and form here speaks of the artistic maturity Waugh had achieved by the time he came to write this trilogy. The reputation of Waugh as a literary genius must, therefore, rest on the ease with which he has developed his sublime comic view of life in the greater comedies.