The Images of Modern Man and Death

*Love Among the Ruins: A Romance of the Near Future* (1953) is a satire, a strange dystopian story portraying the picture of England in the near future. Crime is treated not much seriously by the State, and the conditions in prison are quite better than the life outside. Life is bad outside therefore many people are depressed and prefer prison to freedom and death to life.

As the story opens, the central character in the story, Miles Plastic is released from prison. He was convicted arsonist. In the prison, Miles listens to classical music; he is a lover of Tennyson. After his release, Plastic gets a job at a state-run euthanasia center, where the government selects people who have negative qualities. The drama of the story begins when Plastic falls in love with Clara, a bearded ballerina woman, who has changed her mind about the process. Learning that she does not wish to die, Plastic arranges her escape from the center, and the two begin romance. Clara suddenly disappears and appears later in a hospital recovering from an abortion, and a rubber jaw replacing her former bearded face. After visiting her at the hospital, Plastic goes to his former prison and sets it on fire. Unidentified as the perpetrator of the crime, Plastic is elevated as lecturer on the worthiness of the system. Distraught, Plastic burns himself at the end of the process.

The Image of Modern Man

The great difference between the writers of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries is that the writers of the nineteenth century like William Morris, Alfred Tennyson, and Edward Bellamy imagined that the future would be better than the present; where there
was a sense of confidence, innocence, faithfulness, simplicity and stability in the old society; while none of the twentieth century imagines that and Evelyn Waugh is one of them in predicting modern life as an absurd, depressed, meaningless, dreary and inhuman; where the changes in beliefs and political conceptions were influenced by the events of the First and Second World Wars. In such a world in general and in Waugh's future in particular criminals get every comfort while the innocents suffer. With this sense G. C. Thornley and Gwyneth Roberts observe that:

Waugh enjoys the comic effects of confusion, physical as well as moral; his characters can be persuaded to do anything and to accept any idea, however laughable it is, and the innocent people suffer while the real criminals are not punished. (Thornley and Roberts 155)

Accordingly, in Love Among the Ruins, Waugh tries to portray a fantastic future, a short nightmare on the subject of perfected Socialist State of the Euthanasia centre as the main scene of the story. In this world, only prisoners are happy and comfortable, while people are on a long queue for euthanasia. It is a dystopian world without justice and a world of no responsibility. In such a world the Welfare State has acquired complete power. To mock at such a world Waugh starts his story with dry observations and with a joke, through it he pokes fun and criticises the government of the Labour Party. The politicians, like most of the politicians of our time, are only making promises and shaking hands with voters before elections but after they win they do nothing, and instead of handshake, they shake the trust of their electors.

Despite their promises at the last Election, the politicians had not yet changed the climate. The state Meteorological Institute had so far produced only an unseasonable fall of snow and two little thunderbolts no larger than apricots.
The weather varied from day to day and from county to county as it had done of old, most anomalously. \((LATR 1)\)

In an interview, against the justifications of government's supporters concerning the use of tax, Waugh comments that "The real enemies of society are sitting snug behind typewriters and microphones, pursuing their work of destruction and popular applause...."(Quoted in Robert Murray Davis, 1989, 221). In 1951 when he presented himself as a candidate of the public private figure for the Rectorship at Edinburgh University, Waugh again confirmed his negative stand against the public figures, especially the politicians, remarking that:

I have never gone into public life. Most of the ills we suffer are caused by people going into public life. I have never voted in a parliamentary election. I believe a man’s chief civil duty consists in figuring for his King when the men in public life have put the realm in danger. That I have done. I have raised a family and paid such taxes as I find unavoidable. I have learned and practised a very difficult trade with some fair success. (Bradbury, 1964, 1-2)

In his booklet *Evelyn Waugh* Christopher Hollis argues Waugh dislikes the politicians especially the British because he considers them as a disease and trauma; their world is a graceless world, a world without religion. It is a typical world of today’s politicians.

Mr. Waugh does not like politicians. ‘In the sixteenth century’, he writes, ‘human life was disordered and talent stultified by the obsession of theology; to-day we are plague-stricken by politics.’ The politicians who appear in his pages are not the careful, selfless architects of details of social legislation…[they] are interesting to him as example of Power Without Grace- or perhaps one should rather say, the Roman politicians are example of Power without Grace, the British of self-Importance without Grace….Power which makes clever men wicked,
makes stupid men stupider. It is the emptiness of the graceless Self-Important Man which Mr. Waugh finds so ridiculous, and the politician is more ridiculous than other men because he receives more publicity. (Hollis 28-29)

However, in this story, one finds that Waugh has selected different and fantastic ways to signify his impressions on chaos and the decline of values and culture in such a fallen modern world through an illusion of three artists of different ages, Tennyson, Robert Browning and the Italian neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canova. Fredrick J. Stopp observes that:

…. Miles's last night in Arcadia before an inscrutable State decrees his rehabilitation and thrusts him out into the world for which he has been conditioned. Browning's poem 'Love among the Ruins' takes over the setting: 'the site once of a city great and gay', treeless slopes where once

... the domed and daring palace shot its spires

Up like fires...

Here there remains of past glory but a single turret, but the poet knows

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair

Waits me there ...

as Clara waits for Miles in her cubicle in a Nissen hut, filled with the bric-a-brac of a vanished civilization. And Henry Moses's reproductions of Canova's marbles-so reminiscent, in its 1876 binding, of the Victorian drawing-room with perhaps a Venus de Milo in the corner - provides the starting point for the illustrations. By means of a homely paste book technique which must have given Mr. Waugh much innocent amusement, he constructed the figures for the ironic juxtapositions of life in the Greek Polis and in Satellite City: the drawings 'Exiles from Welfare', Experimental Surgery', and others, bearing such inscriptions as 'Canova fec., Moses delin., Waugh perfec.' (Stopp 155-156)

But here, ironically Waugh depicts the prison of Mountjoy as a five star hotel, with a very joyful garden, the rooms of murderers and sex offenders lay along the garden front. "His room was not one of the
grand succession which lay along the garden front. Those were reserved for murderers. Nor was it on the floor above, tenanted mostly by sexual offenders. His was a humbler wing." (LATR, 2). Fredrick L. Beaty says that one of the most appealing ironies in the story is the way in which the narrator introduces the reader to Mountjoy. His description of a splendid manor house and its magnificent gardens give no hint of its being a place of incarceration until he explains that the best rooms "along the garden front (2), are given to murderers and sex offenders." (Beaty 21). Then he portrays the hero of this novella Miles Plastic taking a walk in such a pleasure garden described as "a rich, old-fashioned Tennysonian night." (ALTR 1). But in spite of such a Tennysonian night, which has been dissolved before the brute features of the Welfare State, Waugh portrays a contrast to symbolic atmosphere of such nights associated with stagnancy, lifelessness and death; through the use of special words and description like "the basin, folded lilies, no gold fin winked in the porphyry font" (1), in addition to the killing of the whole flock of the peacock which symbolizes life "....for the whole flock of them [peacocks] had been found mysteriously and rudely slaughtered a day or two ago in the first disturbing flush of this sudden summer." (1). In fact this slaughter is a savage portrait; it is not less than the portrait of the native soldiers in Abyssinia in the novel Black Mischief when the soldiers ate their boots. Through such a savage deed committed by two prisoners, Waugh wants to prove that these prisoners are not rehabilitated. To reflect Waugh's deep intention Stopp remarks that:

The slaughtering of the peacocks may be seen as both satire and burlesque farce. Satire, it reveals the pointlessness of the New Penology of reclamation by culture. Human nature is unregenerate at this level; Sweat slaughtering the peacocks is Connolly's native levies
eating the boots. Farce, because the destruction of an over-ripe aesthetic perfection is pleasurable in itself. But satire is caricature and burlesque when informed by moral indignation; and the besetting weakness of many critics of Mr. Waugh is to infer satire when it is not uniformly present, but only the mixed ingredients of farce, satire, and the comedy of manners. (Stopp 189-190)

Waugh portrays Miles who has been sent to Mountjoy for arson with the first group of prisoners, as he is about to be released as cured. "The next morning, the Governor and the Minister of Welfare congratulate him as the first successful product of Mountjoy, inform him of his new job in the Euthanasia Service, and pose for publicity stills. (Davis, 1989, 227). To confirm the conceit of prisons as more pleasant than the outside world, Miles appears, in his first scene at the beginning of the story, in a slow walking in the garden of the prison as boring and feeling sad because he is nearing his release from the prison. To show his refusal of getting out of the prison, Miles asked these officials about what he can do to come back to the prison. "At last Miles spoke: "What must I do to get back here?" he asked. (LATR 13).

Thus, it is found that the contrast between the old and the new systems is still more heavily underlined by the major expansion of this story in which Waugh moved subtly from training to trail without transition, moving causally from Miles' training in an Air Force station to the crime, so that the nature of Miles' acts appear gradually. Like most of Waugh's heroes, active or passive; Miles is like the other characters who are disappointed, formed on no idea, have no goal, looking for escape or comfort in women and sterile world which formed them. Waugh focuses satirically on the themes of the image of Modern Man surrounded by chaos and disorder. In such a world, when the psychologist defends Miles' act as normal, the Air Force authorities has sympathetic treatment for Miles, and the charges of
multiple manslaughters are reduced to a plain arson and simple charge of Antisocial Activity.

To satirize the state of the social system in producing criminals and negative members in the society Waugh describes Miles Plastic as "The Modern Man" and the one who has been moulded by the State in one of its Orphanages, "But I understood that 'Plastic is from one of our own Orphanages." said the Minister of Welfare ....'Exactly,' said the Chief Guide. 'Miles is our first success, the vindication of the Method." (LATR 10). Waugh wants to mock at the speech of the Chief Guide of the New Penology when he says "In the New Britain which we are building, there are no criminals. There are only the victims of inadequate social services," (10) accordingly, no one is "held responsible for the sequences of his own acts", and 'maladjusted' persons are no longer called criminals. They receive better treatment than ordinary citizens, and life in prison has been made far more comfortable than life outside.

Hence, under such a degraded social system Miles's promotion of his new job in the Euthanasia is not through his qualifications but by his antisocial trait of arsonist. It is in his special way of escaping from boredom, frustration, or against whatever he connects with any annoyance. That is why through each pyromania he committed, opposing to any logic and without any responsibility on his part, he achieves a better opportunity. For example, his burning of an air force base, causing the deaths of many air-men, helps him to change his job of unknown dishwasher and officers' underclothes to a distinguished official in the Department of Euthanasia. Waugh, in this story or in most of his writings, uses such portraits to announce the new class of faithless and rootless people that were arising in the postwar world,
especially whom he called the Bright Young People. Ironically, he mocked them in this story as in some of his novels like *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* "Only the very bright boys get posted to Euthanasia." (*LATR* 19).

Therefore, through an ironic remark on communal lack of enterprise and worthless plans provided by the 1951 Festival buildings, and by their most distinguished feature, the Dome of Discovery; Waugh portrays the Dome of Security which is an example of the complete self-defeating nature of social security projects. (Stopp 154).

The eponymous dome had looked well enough in the architect's model, shallow certainly but amply making up in girth what 'it lacked in height….But to the surprise of all, when the building arose and was seen from the ground, the dome blandly vanished. (*LATR* 15).

Hence, under such unproductive social system, security is planned for all, but it fails to give a straight answer to planners, just, as Waugh says in this story "great sheets of glass to 'trap' the sun, admitted few gleams from stretches in their coat of tar." (18). In such atmosphere the officials lived in decaying and dark domes and get into a state of chaos.

Confirming Waugh's themes of worthlessness, pointlessness and confusedly plans, Davis declares that:

Like many novels set in the future, *Love Among the Ruins* is really about contemporary society, in this case Welfare State England, bleak and unlovely under the post war austerity program instituted by Attlee's Labour government. The Festival of Britain in 1951 was intended to announce to the world that England had recovered in finances and moral, and a central feature of the exposition was the Dome of Discovery- which Waugh converts into the Dome of Security. (Davis, 1989, 220)
After a month at the Health Center, Miles meets Clara, the heroine of this story, a girl whose beard is the result of Voluntary Sterilization. It seems also that Waugh wants to reflect on the abnormality of modern society; through Miles' and Clara’s love from the first meeting and his admiration of Clara's beard "I think your beard is beautiful." (LATR 26). About Waugh’s interest in the image of the bearded ladies like Pimpernel a friend of Parsnip "a poet of the 30s who came daily but usually jostled to the back of the crowd." (44), Cyril Connolly remarks that:

He does, however, reveal two unexpected interests, in pyromania and in bearded ladies. It is the heroine's beard which lures Miles Plastic into the classical past and enfranchises him from his compulsory freedom. This is very odd because a bearded lady is also a central figure in Mr. Auden's libretto, 'The Rake’s Progress', and Messrs. Auden and Isherwood are connected in my mind with Mr. Waugh’s characters Parsnip and Pimpernel, who are resuscitated for a parting thrust in 'Love Among the Ruins'. (Connolly, 1953, 353)

The poet Parsnip who is twice mentioned in two of Waugh’s works is used as an image from Waugh’s fictional history. In Put Out More Flags, Waugh satirised W. H. Auden and his friend Christopher Isherwood in the characters of the two poets Parsnip and Pimpernel that you have not to leave your native land in a difficult time. In Love Among the Ruins Parsnip appears as a weak person; no longer a literary figure, a man of the thirties like Dr Beamish who regularly queues at the Euthanasia center but lacks the stomach to go through the doors. Finally, on a quiet day, Parsnip gains admission to the center and stands firm. Waugh here enjoys in visualizing these figures, Parsnip and Pimpernel, as the embodiment of Auden and his friend Isherwood, who come to destroy themselves rather than live in the world they have created. David Lebedoff remarks that "For
Waugh, these writers became the new Cruttwells, though, English libel laws being what they were, he changed their names to Parsnip and Pimpernel when he ridiculed them in print." (Lebedoff 94).

Nevertheless, Miles' relationship with Clara progressed to a very close friendship. They spend most of their evenings in Clara's room which is furnished with pictures and other old objects of the past. These things remind Miles of prison as he said" It reminds me of prison." (LATR 30). But the narrator here says that Miles' comment is "...the highest praise he knew" (30). Here Waugh reflects the shallowness of Modern Man embodied in the character of Miles who does not know any kind of courtesy which is supposed to be on such occasions. In fact, through the mention of such souvenirs Waugh portrays Clara not only as a symbol of sterile beauty but of the past. About Miles Plastic, Patricia Corr observes that:

…the most incisive comment on the monster modern man is to be found in the description of the state made Miles Plastic, hero of Love among the Ruins: 'No clean-living, God-fearing, Victorian gentleman he; no complete man of the Renaissance; no gentil knight nor dutiful pagan nor, even noble savage he was the Modern man'.

(Corr 389)

The relationship continues between them and Miles' love for her increases and flourishes, mostly because her red beard reminds him of flames which he loves more than the pure human love. One night while they were sitting together at a moony summer night, Miles said that "On such a night as this I burned an Air Force Station and half its occupants." (LATR 30). And to reflect Miles' strange and abnormal pleasure, Waugh connects Miles' memories with the description of Clara's beard "Clara's beard was all silvered like a patriarch's in the midnight radiance." (30). Waugh's basic target
through portraying such a special night is contrary to the "Old-fashioned Tennysonian night", he wants to reflect and mock at the abnormality and the absurdity of Modern Man. For Miles Clara's long, silken, corn-gold beard is the standard of beauty and enjoyment as well. At the same time, this beard inspires Miles with a flame of love for Clara, but such a flame is not the real love of human beings, on the contrary, Miles throws this flame out of his body in a savage and brutal way as a normal process for him to complete his pleasure which is connected with his burning of an Air Force Station. He does so in a moment of ecstasy only to be at the top of his enjoyment. Waugh mocks at the pleasure and wants to express his deep disillusionment with the society of his day. In accordance with that Lebedoff asserts that:

This growing displacement of all values in life by materialism and escapist pleasure was the first big problem that Orwell and Waugh feared in the Modern Age…. The problem is not that entertainment has corrupted modern life, but somewhat the reverse: Our diversions lack content because our lives do as well. A society rich in goods but devoid of values can continually improve the quality of its toys but cannot invent escape from emptiness. (Lebedoff 189)

The other point of view is that, even Clara who is supposed to be a symbol of fertility as a woman, but here Waugh portrays her as a symbol of sterility, as a woman with a beard, especially when he compares her beard with the beard of an old man. Therefore, when she becomes pregnant, she chose to have abortion, in order to return to dance, and to have an operation to replace her beard with "….something quite inhuman, a tight, slippery mask, salmon pink." (LATR 40). Elisa Morera de La Vall remarks that:

In Love Among the Ruins, the representative of the female sex, Clara, has made of art, in the form of dancing, a god,
upon whose altar she is prepared to sacrifice her fertility.
As the result of an operation to make her sterile Clara
grows an incongruous beard, perhaps as a premonition of
a hybrid race in the future. (Vall 297)

On Santa Claus Day, Miles visits Clara in the hospital "one of
the unfinished edifices" with its shallow nature building, reflects the
emptiness behind the facades of New Britain; as it is "all concrete and
steel and glass in front and a jumble of huts behind." (LATR 37).

After a night of love beneath the moon, Miles takes a walk
with restless feelings going to Mountjoy, burning it and going back
home with pleasure. So, he committed a very savage act at a very
holy, sweet and happy day with a very cool blood and without any
responsibility. Reflecting such a chaotic and hypocritical world
Waugh revealed that even the government ministers are unaware of
Miles responsibility for the fire. On the contrary, he is assigned the
important job symbolized by briefcase and umbrella, of promoting
the construction of a new, more modern Mountjoy to rise on the ruins
of the old one.

'A greater Mountjoy will arise from the ashes, said the
Minister.

'Those noble criminal lives have not been lost in
vain.'

'Their memory will inspire us.'

'Yes,' said Miles. 'I heard the broadcast.'

.... Now- I [the Minister] speak confidentially-
that opposition has become vocal and unscrupulous.
There is, in fact, a whispering campaign that the fire was
no accident but the act of one of the very men whom we
were seeking to serve. That campaign must be scotched.'

(LATR 49)

In burning Mountjoy, Miles is cut off from a human future,
and from the unapproachable human past. "He had made a desert in
his imagination which he might call peace. Once before he had
burned his childhood. Now his brief adult life lay in ashes." (LATR 43). Thus, neither Miles nor Clara is prepared for such a romantic love. Miles as a reflection and production of the State is absolutely unprepared for such a kind of love; while Clara regards love as unimportant and prefers to resume her dance. She chose to get rid of both her destructive beard and their unborn child. Waugh says indirectly that Miles is suffering a pathological condition and he would go on to set fire after fire whether he feels happy or sad, or whenever boredom overlapped a full moon. Like Amie'e in The Loved One, Miles finds himself only in destruction to satisfy the demands of his spirit.

Although the burning of Mountjoy destroyed Miles's passion for Clara, but he didn’t not feel happy when the State arranged marriage for him to the "gruesome" Miss Flower. "There is hardly time for them,' said the Minister of Welfare. But we think that psychologically you will have more appeal if you have a wife by your side. Miss Flower here has every qualification." (LATR 51). When this occasion presents him with a new source of unhappiness, it motivates his pyromaniac traits, during the ceremony he plays with his cigarette lighter in his pocket until it inflames.

Then the mood veered.
Miles felt ill at ease during the ceremony and fidgeted with something small and hard which he found in his pocket. It proved to be his cigarette-lighter, a most uncertain apparatus. He pressed the catch and instantly, surprisingly there burst out a tiny flame-gemlike, hymeneal, auspicious. (51)

Consequently, the narrator's description of the "flame-gemlike, hymeneal, auspicious" gives a hint that Miles committed suicide and his flame will likely reduce him and his marriage to ashes as well. Davis comments that:
Some critics find the story's conclusion depressing: Fredrick J. Stopp, contrasting it with Dennis Barlow's burning of "his immediate past" find Miles' pressing of the lighter "no liberating action" and James F. Carens assumes that Waugh is predicting "a civilization in which rebellion itself can only be futile and destructive" Another and perhaps better way of saying it is that, given the society, destruction is itself a creative and laudable act.

(Davis, 1989, 236-237)

Waugh portrays Miles as a psychotic person, and he tries to confirm that Plastic Miles is the direct product of the State and the modern world as well. In fact even his name, Plastic, suggests that he is one of the new product of the modern age. So, he is the complete embodiment of the Modern Man. Accordingly, Waugh affirms that Miles is the son of the State.

The State had made him.

No clean-living, God-fearing, Victorian gentleman, he; no complete man of the renaissance; no gentil knight nor dutiful pagan nor, even, noble savage. All that succession of past worthies had gone its way, content to play a prelude to Miles. *He was the Modern Man.* (LATR 5)

By reflecting Miles' strong desire to go back to prison, Waugh wants to confirm that, in such a modern world, life in prison has been made far more comfortable than life outside and the boredom of prison is the general condition of the new society. As a result, Waugh states that falsification and its end is madness, destruction and death; or what he feared far more than any of these is boredom. So to reflect such perversion connected with the absurdities of socialist system and the endless failure of its administration he is trying to say that; citizens have no choice only to be on a long queue in the euthanasia department in order to relieve the boredom of life through death which is considered to be the only one offering of the social security.
Owing to the waiting crowd of sane depressed people the director of the Euthanasia Centre Dr. Beamish, declares that "We shall have to start making a charge for the service. It’s the only way to keep down the demand."(LATR 22). Dr. Beamish who proudly says that his "father and mother hanged themselves in their own backyard with their own clothes-line."(22) further he criticises these people that "no one will lift a finger to help himself."(22). Adding that the country is full of natural resources of death. "There are still rivers to drown in, trains-every now and then- to put your head under; gas-fires in some of the huts. The country is full of the natural resources of death, but everyone has to come to us." (22). It is one of the most important grotesquerie image sketched by Evelyn Waugh to reflect the deep and serious disillusionment of modern life. A life in which the slayer and the prey are victims. For instance, Dr. Beamish, whose parents hanged themselves with their own cloth-lines, is "an elderly man whose character had been formed in the nervous 30s, now much embittered, like many of his contemporaries, by the fulfilment of his early hopes." (19).

The Image of Death

As it is the door to either infinite punishment, or immortal happiness, death has motivated religions, traditions, ceremonies and cultures since ancient times. Death is the gateway either to Heaven or Hell, or in a state of suspension at the limbo. In fact, this is what Waugh tries to focus on, as a convert to Catholicism, especially at the time that new practices were displacing traditional beliefs in the Western World where the values become inverted and human beings become the goal of a decadent art instead of God. In fact, most critics have noted Waugh's concern with death wish, hopelessness and
despair. But, as Calvin Lane states that Waugh's deaths are ghastly funny and the reader is presented with death in grim and horrible force, as if he gets cruel pleasure in the grotesque detail of death. (Lane 44). Supporting this idea, Vall asserts that Waugh portrays a dystopian society that has lost all hope and therefore does not avoid or beautify death, but rather devalues and embraces it. (Vall 185).

In 1947 Waugh visited America on a business journey to negotiate the film adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited* by MGM. Through his stay in Southern California, he was taken to visit, Forest Lawn, an amazing cemetery. The visit encouraged Waugh to write *The Loved One*, a satirical novel about a deteriorating society that has to use special softened words as a kind of courtesy to veil the rude aspects of death that cannot face. In the novel, Waugh describes the city and its graveyard ironically as a kind of leisure resort where immortal happiness is offered to its inhabitants and a dead person is referred to as "the loved one". A few years later when Waugh wrote *Love Among the Ruins* he became more depressed. Therefore, he portrayed the society as depressing and grim; people were barren of hope and as a result death is not fearful and is happily welcomed as an end to the unbearable burden of life. It is a dystopia of a disillusioned age, as what Ian Littlewood affirms:

> In different ways the worlds of *The Loved One* and *Love Among the Ruins* are just as depressing. Hollywood, Neutralia and the socialist state of the future have a common preference for the second rate and the synthetic. Their citizens are fed with lies. Waugh makes these things amusing, but not casually so. The more anarchic impulses of his humour are now being held in check. (Littlewood 56)

In fact, in Waugh’s dystopian society, led by socialist politicians, directed by unskillful bureaucrats, and supported by unproductive workers, people get nothing except boredom and death.
In such a world, "God has been replaced by the State, and human identity has been reduced to numbers and file cards." (Beaty, 20). Therefore, Waugh portrays the social life in the Welfare State as a fate worse than death and focuses on the Euthanasia Centre as the most popular service and a place of no holiday. "Next day, December 25th, was Santa Claus Day; no holiday in the department of Euthanasia, which was an essential service." (LATR 37). Concerning the concept of Dystopia, Alexander Ruch argues that:

Although the term “dystopia” predates 1900, dystopia became a recognizable literary genre during the twentieth century and has not lost its hold on our imagination in the twenty-first....[Dystopian stories are] cautionary tales, social criticism, and thought experiments, these stories about terrifying futures generally tell us more about the conditions in which they are made than about any anticipated future.... Dystopia is often seen by critics such as Philip Rahv, Irving Howe, and Mark Hillegas as an anti-Utopia genre, in the sense that is often presents a picture of the failure of some attempt to realize a utopia. Others, most notably Tom Moylan, have focused instead on the capacity of dystopia to critique the present state of affairs, perhaps even in the name of some utopian ideal. (Ruch 2-3)

In the utopian society everyone works well with each other and is happy under a very systematic order, but in the world of dystopia things become upside down; the wrong becomes right and the right is wrong, as it is clearly portrayed in Waugh’s Love among the Ruins. It is socially, morally, and politically horrible; a state in which people are dehumanized, oppressed, terrorized, or completely dominated. Things are under a chaotic system. This, of course, is very clear in the ethical behaviour of people and the power system of the State. While visions of utopia are created to inspire hope about an ideal possible life of a perfect society for the future, dystopia portrays a current chaotic situation of any modern society. Accordingly negative visions
of a dystopian world have been highlighted by different authors to generalize the relationship between industrial technology, wars and social changes. Especially, the dystopian writers, who are usually satirists or prophets, play an important role of warning and emphasizing the serious problems that result from the irresponsible behaviour of people due to the loss of faith, declining of values, corruption and totalitarianism of the States. As Bradbury describes it:

...an anti-Utopian macabre comedy projected forward into a 1984 world of totalitarianism, rehabilitation centres, Departments of Euthanasia and the like, rather lacks the required liveliness; while the plot offers a “hopeful” picture of anarchy in man, it is not instinctively and comically engaged with it. (Bradbury, 1964, 103-104)

Huxley’s *Brave New World* is also one of the good examples as a utopian satire, or a dystopia. Many people believe it accurately describes the tendencies inherent in our society today that we are living through the birth of the brave new world. A world in which the system of life is not only becoming chaotic but it is brutal also. A world in which we become not only the victims of the great development of the latest technology but slaves of entertainment, wealth, status, material comfort, youth, and beauty. Most critics agree that *Brave New World* is a satiric work projected to criticize modern assumption about science, technology, progress and the “individual” search of happiness. For instance Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent observe that "Twentieth century science-fiction emerges as the characteristic genre expressing both the hopes and fears of our own era. The modern dystopia crystallizes the anxieties that increasingly accompanied the onward march of progress." (Claeys and Sargent 3). That is why the conditions of Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Waugh’s *Love Among the Ruins* become more suitable for
our age every passing year. Thus, Waugh’s novella was characteristically presented a reversed Utopia, and Orwell's *1984* is also one of the clearest examples of the genre.

While utopian writers have always confirmed that virtue should be kept as one of the main principles in life, they consider adultery, pre-marital sex, prostitution, drunkenness, gambling, theft, as outlawed and severely punished; contrary to that, those social phenomena became the main dominant facts in the dystopian world. For instance, the 20th century has been marked by the prevalence of dystopianism in its anti-utopian sense which represents reflective realism. Dystopian images are the dominant scenes of the modern world now. They become very common in the different modern media, both in fiction and especially in the news, where images of "natural disasters, accidents, crime, war, disease, social injustice . . . convey a picture of a world where nothing works—in short, dystopia now." (L. E. Jennings 212). Therefore, such disastrous and chaotic images can be considered as a declaration of the death of utopia and the reality of dystopia. With this sense Krishan Kumar remarks that:

One is bounced through the ancients—the biblical prophets, Plato and the Greeks; hurried throughout the Middle Ages, with a glance at Augustine; served up More, Campanella and Bacon as a substantial dish; then finished off with the nineteenth–century socialists: often with a coda which proclaims or laments the death of utopia in our own century. (Kumar vii)

Whereas dystopia is usually associated with a bad place based on real fear, we daily live the many dystopian visions of different disasters where the world has been turned into a hell everywhere; utopia, as an imaginary good place, is usually connected with, nowhere, hope and desire. But, on the other hand, looking for alternatives, though it is an imaginary vision, utopia can also be
considered as an essential need at least to give us the required energy to endure the miseries of the present time and to live in a hope that one day we will see and be in touch with the light at the end of the tunnel. Such a vision comes from the sense of what we can imagine we can create. In fact such philosophy could be associated with the Gandhi’s, Martin Luther King’s, and Nelson Mandela’s utopia. They all lived in a dystopian age and endured hardships only for a hope that one day things would be changed and the future would be better. For example, Luther King addressed the gathering at the March on Washington for jobs and freedom where he delivered a famous speech that "I have a Dream". (Speech, 1963). Therefore utopia is important in opening up a better future; while contrary to that dystopia can be strongly associated with disillusionment because it poisons our outlook on the present, or even motivates us to give up trying to do better.

Also we should not neglect the opinion of some critics who argue that to create a utopian vision or dystopian is a matter of personal Ideology. For instance yesterday’s utopia can look like today’s horror show; in the sense that a particular utopian perspective vision might become dark and disturbing to others. For example the USA President George Bush and his comrades had declared a utopian vision when they sought to liberate Iraq in 2003 and to give freedom to the Iraqis may seem dystopian to millions of Arabs displaced and killed and still fighting against that cause. People would quickly admit that, liberty, and the quest of happiness is and has always been an unfulfilled vision. For Kumar who believes that there is no such thing as a classical or a Christian utopia, he remarks that:

But, firstly, utopia is not universal. It appears only in societies with the classical and Christian heritage, that is,
only in the West. Other societies, have in relative abundance, paradises, primitivist myths of a Golden Age of justice and equality, Cokaygne–type fantasies, even messianic beliefs; they do not have utopia. (Kumar 19)

While in Waugh’s dystopia euthanasia is allowed and adopted by the government; it is not in Thomas Moore’s utopia, who was opposed euthanasia but it was practiced by the utopians and suicide was advised by the priests if someone is terminally ill though the sick are well looked-after.

Accordingly, Waugh extrapolates the future of the Welfare State due to the horrible and great impact of the Two World Wars on society, in addition to the change that took place in England by Labour government; such conditions especially between the Two World Wars became shockingly unkind and violent on a grand scale. Adding to that, the loss of identity, and the increasing mechanization of society left people of the time against difficult choice. Therefore, "the future secularized and leveled according to socialist platforms of the 1930's and practices of the 1940’s will be sterile and boring beyond sane endurance." (Davis, 1989, 226).

Actually, many writers of that period like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett choose, diving deeply into the ego of characters, to explore the individual consciousness and to represent alienated and fragmented identity; others, like Compton Burnett and Waugh try to portray and reveal their characters through their actions and words rather than their inner psychological state or their internal stream of consciousness. One can find this technique of writing in portraying the character of Miles Plastic and in most of Waugh's characters as well.

As it seems clear that through most of his writings, Waugh completely believed, as well as other intellectuals like T.S. Eliot,
W.B. Yeats, Oswald Spengler, Wyndham Lewis, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell, that the old world order had been destroyed by the First World War and that the principles which guided the Western civilisation were no longer valid and the future would be gloomy, crazy, anarchic and faithless.

Consequently, Waugh believed that Western civilisation was in advanced state of decay. Jeffrey Heath asserts that Waugh "was convinced that unless civilization is animated by correct religious values, it turns into a shadowy, insubstantial fraud." (Heath 195). Such belief provided him with an order and principle for his work and for his view of the world, and enhanced his writings to be at odds with the modern world like many of his predecessors Joyce, Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Yeats, a world that seemed to them increasingly synthetic. Accordingly, James Matthew Morris and Andrea L. Kross explain that:

Utopia via government has grown, other writers have continued to issue their warnings to the West through their dystopian novels. One of these is Evelyn Waugh's story "Love Among the Ruins": A Romance of the near future (1953), a picture of an England of the future. Yet despite these grim warnings and others, belief in the possibility of achieving a utopian earth has persisted in the 20th century and into the 21st. (Morris and Kross xxxvi)

In this sense, Stopp asserts that "The modern state is just boring, and the mode of its rejection varies between distaste and petulance." (Stopp 191-192). Louis Osborne Coxe also remarks that what bothered Mr. Waugh about the society of modern England are the people. He does not like them, and he does not like life itself because he does not have any attachment to places or people, "...only a vague hagiology, a hankering after some lost innocence, a time when everyone loved Beethoven quarters and could tell good cognac from cheap brandy." (Coxe 363).
In fact, Waugh sees the contemporary world as futile and anarchic; a world without principles. Therefore the absence of any authentic conservers provokes him to express his own philosophy that "man is, by nature, an exile and will never be self-sufficient or complete on this earth." (Quoted in Sykes 256). Justifying Waugh’s disillusionment Bradbury remarks that:

…his view that man is by nature an exile, that his chances of improving his condition are small, that there is no form of government ordained by God as being better than any other, that men naturally arrange themselves into system of classes, that government is necessary because of the anarchic impulse in mankind, and that Art is a natural function of man which can exist in any social system….His historical picture seems, in fact, to be founded on the view that, by schism and political activity, European Catholic civilization went into decline which has gradually brought about a lapse into anarchy, paganism and meaningless action. (Bradbury, 1964, 12)

That is why, due to Waugh's sharp critical and extremist point of views, many critics and scholars reject his works and accuse Waugh of cruelty against modern world. They say that the society Waugh is looking for does not exist anywhere except in his mind. Others like Richard Johnstone observe that it was Waugh who first began "…to feel that he and his generation were not perhaps destined for great things. (Johnstone 14). As a result he saw the continuity of absurdity, chaos, disorder, corruption and the decline of gentlemanly values become visible with a profound sadness.

In one of his letters to Graham Greene, on June 1953, Waugh humbly wrote "Love among the Ruins was a bit of nonsense begun 3 years ago and hastily finished and injudiciously published. But I don’t think it quite as bad as most reviewers do." (Letters 459). On the other hand, David Wykes remarks that Love Among the Ruins
"...is a tiny skirmish in his [Waugh] war against the Modern Age and almost the exception to the rule that nothing he wrote is unreadable. The time of its publication was one of mounting mental stress that was about to come to a crisis." (Wykes 178-179) While Christopher Sykes eagerly supported Waugh's *Love Among the Ruins*:

...if the book is not easily defended, it was the occasion of a not easily forgotten tribute. At a chance gathering of people, all of whom read and knew Evelyn, one of the company remarked that the book was not only disappointing but even bad, to be met with the telling rejoinder: 'Oh yes, but even so Evelyn writing badly is so much better than other people writing well.' (Sykes 476)

However, and with all the respect for such points of view, one can find, feel, touch and understand what is happening nowadays, whether socially or politically, over the entire world, especially in the third world countries. Such images are embodied in clear portraits mentioned in most of Waugh's works, which makes him one of the main satirical novelists of the twentieth century. That is why, as a pessimist and prophetical writer, Waugh's satire goes behind and beyond the absurdities of the contemporary world. In an essay on Waugh's reputation "*A Prophet Without Honour: Evelyn Waugh's Reputation 100 Years On*" published in 2003, Geoffrey Wheatcroft declares that Waugh "was not behind his time, but in so many ways far ahead of it." (Wheatcroft 16). On the other hand, Lebedoff asserts that "For a man who had found the Modern Age untenable even in the 1920s, one can imagine his [Waugh] disgust with the 1960s." (Lebedoff 217). But, on that basis, how can we imagine Waugh's disgust of our present time!
The Influence of Browning’s *Love among the Ruins* on Waugh

Although Waugh has a pessimistic and nihilistic vision in *Love Among the Ruins*, it embodies a message of love by which only we can live in peace and live a life of order. It is the same message of Robert Browning’s poem *Love among the Ruins*. Both are a kind of invitation for love and not for war. A century before Waugh wrote this novella Great Britain was under Queen Victoria’s rule. It was the largest empire the world had ever seen. It was believed that ‘The sun never sets on British soil’ comprising of Asia, Africa, North America, and Australia. But when Waugh wrote this novella the world had totally changed. The British Empire had vanished and London became not more than a ruined city.

The city in Browning’s poem is described, in exciting expressive language, as a capital of great empire though the poet does not mention the name of the king or anyone in the empire. He depicts a portrait of how the people of this empire were moved; it was lively with men who sacrificed their life for glory and war "Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe" (Browning 31). While in Waugh’s novella, London is portrayed as an old, paralyzed and ruined city instead of being an active capital of a great empire.

In Browning’s poem the city was reduced to ruins of an ancient civilisation, and only a "single turret that remains/On the plains" (37–38) which conveyed the story of a great empire, while in Waugh’s city there is nothing that remains except ruins, smoke, fire, sloth and death. Waugh also says that, while Browning’s city was great both in its glory and in peacetime still survives through "the single little turret that remains" (37) on the landscape, the man of this modern age has left nothing, he is destroying everything; he does not leave any proof
of belonging to any civilisation. Man has become a savage and a destructive beast.

Significantly, it is like Browning’s poem *Love among the Ruins* in which the speaker is dedicated to painting the vivid life of an ancient city rather than describing his beloved. Waugh is not focusing on Plastic’s and Clara’s love but on portraying the corruption and the atrocity of the modern Welfare States and its euthanasia centre which instead of helping people with essential needs of surviving they facilitate their death in committing suicide by injecting them. In both the works there is a dramatic irony. In Browning’s poem it emerges from the speaker's fascination with the fallen empire, while in Waugh’s novella it comes out from both: the remarkable fallen morality of modern Man and the city of a fallen empire. The world Plastic and Clara live in is indeed in ruins, ruins of failed ideals.

Therefore, the reality of the chaotic, ordinary and everyday life catches up with them and grinds down their fragile relationship to a failure of love, failure of spiritual insight into their relationship which also refers to the disloyal love. It is an adulterous love; on the one hand, it is like that of Tristan and Isolde, but on the other hand, it cannot continue after death into eternity like the love of Tristan and Isolde because the love of Plastic and Clara, though it is a kind of romantic love, but it is not more than a failed effort for an escape from their troubles. They are living in isolation and a passive atmosphere. Through that one can get the answer of why Waugh used motifs of destruction and love in *Love Among the Ruins*. He did so to give the message that though it is a destructive world and full of ruins it is a story of love. For it to be successful and fruitful it should be faithful and spiritual.
But, though the similarity of the two titles, in Waugh’s novella Miles Plastic is not like the wanderer in Browning’s poem who walks among the ruins where he chants the love of a girl who fascinates him and captures his heart. It is a fertile love, though it has sprung from the ruins of an old civilization, where love is always considered the highest value in life. Through such kind of love Browning wants to say that only love can be everlasting and nothing else. Despite the fact that a majestic city existed then, the speaker clearly prefers the love found on the site compared with the earlier glories that were found in the city. While the other fact that, though the city was reduced to ruins yet another quiet life existed. It was full of peace and love, and better than material glory. The poet contrasts the shame of the men in the former city with the purity of the love the speaker finds in the girl with "eager eyes and yellow hair" (55). Browning uses words that give negative connotation to the "glory and shame" (33) of the former city’s men which he terms as "gold" corrupting them because they were up for sale (35).

But the difference between the two loves is that for Miles Plastic love is associated with hatred and destruction; while for the wanderer love symbolizes glory and happiness; the wanderer finds an absolute enjoyment in such a pure love while Plastic finds an absolute enjoyment in firing and destroying buildings. Miles’ love is a sterile one, his lover though she is a girl yet she has a yellow beard looking as if she were an old man. Even when she became pregnant she aborted her baby. She prefers to be a dancer than of being a mother. She is like the lady of the rocks in T. S. Eliot’s world. She is sterile, unproductive and a source of atrocity and destruction instead of love, fertility and peace, therefore, she is a symbol of the modern age. However, the two works of Browning and Waugh can be considered
as a slogan of being in love instead of war; a slogan which has been adopted by all the antiwar activists especially after the misery and destruction of the Second World War, where the scene of the new world in Waugh’s novella is portrayed as corrupted, disillusioned, deadly and destructive. Therefore Waugh’s message is: to cure this condition there is an urgent need of spiritual love and an attempt to shape outer reality according to the needs of the self to change the miserable reality in which the people find themselves. It is the solution which is well expressed by Browning’s and Waugh’s perception of love as an essential morality under which actions need to be taken.

In his First Inaugural Address on Monday, January 20, 1969, the USA President Richard Milhous Nixon, placed emphasis on Browning’s poem and Waugh’s novella; both of them tried to give a warning that the world is in ruins, and a new beginning must be made. In this speech Nixon considered that the social and political chaos of the period belonged to "crisis of the spirit":

To a crisis of the spirit, we need an answer of the spirit.  
To find that answer, we need only look within ourselves.  
When we listen to "the better angels of our nature," we find that they celebrate the simple things, the basic things—such as goodness, decency, love, kindness.  
Greatness comes in simple trappings.  
The simple things are the ones most needed today if we are to surmount what divides us, and cement what unites us.  
To lower our voices would be a simple thing….  
We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another—until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices.  
(Nixon 21-28)

In fact such philosophy is very much the same as Waugh’s. Waugh believed that the problem of the people in the modern age is
because they are far away from God. There is clear and tangible unfaithfulness and spiritual sloth in the daily behaviour of the modern Man. And to put an end to the anarchic and depressed world is that people should perceive and understand God’s grand plan of creating Man. Man is created to worship Him, to live in peace and dignity neither to be killed nor to be humiliated. But the problem: Is man living peacefully as God wants him to live? The answer of course is not. Man has always paid the price of his failing to love God. Therefore, Life itself, without God or personal identity, has become a kind of death.

We should not forget that the main reason of Man’s anguish is because of the corruption, selfishness and adventures of the rulers. As a result Man has to sacrifice himself for the sake of their foolish and transitory power. Therefore, unfortunately, the suffering of the individual will continue unless he goes back to practice faithfully the real mission of his creation parallel with a wise and justice regimes.

In contrast to Browning’s city, the time when Waugh wrote Love Among the Ruins the whole world was in ruins and London was part of that ruin. But for Britain, like the city in Browning’s poem, was only its first war that brought about chaos, confusion and disillusion which became the dominant scenes in its landscapes. It is like the failure in war caused by the lust for glory in Browning’s Love among the Ruins which is the main theme of the poem:

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force –
Gold, of course.
Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns (73–80)
Paradoxically to Browning’s poem, in which the speaker expresses his enjoyment and happiness, how much better it is now than it was in the past where the area now is filled with pure and innocent love which has the power to endure the difficulties of time "With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!/Love is best." (83, 84). Waugh depicts the days of the present time as filled with recklessness, madness, noisy, wrongdoing and sin. And for that reason, Waugh also wants to give a message that love is the best cure for the segregation and the disintegration of the modern life; it is the pure and faithful love for God.

The other paradoxical image is the setting of Browning’s poem and the setting of Waugh’s novella; in Browning’s setting the landscape is pure, quiet and productive as the poem opens with a balanced description:

Where the quiet−colored end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half−asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war. (Browning 1-12)

While in Waugh’s novella the setting is corrupted, anarchic, depressed, wicked and unfaithful. The more passionate Miles Plastic feels his love for Clara the more he is motivated to fire and destroy things; he is different from the wanderer in Browning’s poem. The more he focuses on the girl, the more he feels peaceful, faithful and glorified. Browning’s poem may be considered as an advanced
warning that the British Empire could go the way of the previous Empires which preceded it like Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome and ended up losing all their greatness and the territorial possessions. This was what actually happened a hundred years later in the aftermath of World War II which Waugh tried to reflect in *Love Among the Ruins*, in addition to the wide spread of disillusionment, melancholy, corruption and the declining of values in all the aspects of life.

To sum up, Waugh's *Love Among the Ruins* embodies a message of love through which only the world can be a happy place to live in peace and harmony, it is the same message of Robert Browning’s poem *Love among the Ruins* in the sense that the both are kind of invitation for love and not war or destruction.

It is titled as *Love Among the Ruins* because love takes place in the ruins. The ruins stand for the state or the times where there is all-round agony, ruin, and death. The times are such that there is destruction and death. And the state is persecuting the lovers. The question of happiness in such circumstances is unthinkable for the lovers. Their love becomes torture for them. In Huxley's *Brave New World* human beings are hatched from incubators, and brought up in communal nurseries and they learn by methodical conditioning to accept their social destiny. There is no individual freedom and a scientifically trouble free society. In Waugh's novella natural pleasure, love, concern and consummation achieved by lovers is not thinkable. One remembers death and cooling of limbs not warmth, passion born of eternal love. The novella has no erotic content, as Connolly observes that "*Love Among the Ruins* has no erotic content; it is pure slapstick, and depends for its success on the neatness of its
paradox and the brilliance of its timing. One must judge such a book as if it were a film sequence or a scene in a revue." (Connolly, 1953, 352). Therefore, it is love among the ruins. The author digests his own annoyance, resentment and regrets. Like Huxley's *Brave New World*, it is a rebel of old-world lovers against the new type of authority.

Through a spare idiom it hits our details that suggest the theme of ruin and bareness. The story comes too close to home, with the unfolding of ruined society. It stands for the unmasking of the self. And the heroine with 'long, silken, corn-gold' beard does not fulfill his demand. At the end Miles chooses to burn himself rather than continue living in such a meaningless world. It is a foolish, hypocritical and disgusting world in which the Man is turned from a particular individual to an absurd fact. The people of such a world have lost authentic existence, and though Death is everywhere it is inconsiderable and not to be feared. This is specifically what Waugh satirises in *Love Among the Ruins*. 