

**The Development of Satirical
Techniques in Evelyn Waugh's
Novels Between
(1928 - 1934)**

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Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to discuss Waugh's attitude towards the function of the novel and its treatment to the social issues of the English society. The thesis is also an attempt to examine Waugh's satire which was chiefly directed at the frailties of the upper class world of the English society.

The first part of the thesis is the theoretical part which is divided into two chapters. The first chapter tackles Waugh's view about the nature and function of the novel. It presents the various functions of the novel and Waugh's personal opinion about each of them. The chapter also deals with the moral objectives of the satirist and his obsession with moral ideas which he is anxious to reveal to his readers. Moreover, the chapter discusses the two principal issues of the novel which are the moral element and the story and the fact that they are intermingled in any work of art. The moral element indicates the novelist's relationship with his society whereas the story implies his relationship with his art.

The second chapter deals with the fusion of theme and technique in Waugh's novels. The chapter presents Waugh's most predominant theme in his earlier novels. It also discusses other elements which help in clarifying the theme of the novel such as plot, characterization, and the tone of the novelist. The chapter examines Waugh's objectivity and impartiality in his portrayal of his characters. In addition, the chapter embarks upon Waugh's most prevalent tone in his first novels which determines his attitude towards the characters and the events of the novel. It discusses the different techniques used by Waugh

in his novels including his use of the narrative technique, language, dialogues, and his choice of settings. The chapter deals with each of these techniques in detail.

In addition, it examines the various satiric techniques used by Waugh in his earlier novels and the moral purpose that lies behind his use of each satiric technique. The chapter suggests that Waugh's satire is an indirect satire which he used for the purpose of conveying his moral targets to his readers. Waugh remarkably mingles theme with technique in order to deliver his moral ideas and views to his readers. This chapter marks the end of the theoretical part of the thesis on which the analysis of the three novels is built.

The second part of the thesis is the practical part. It is divided into three chapters. Each chapter is concerned with each of Waugh's earlier novels. It starts with chapter three which deals with Decline and Fall (1928). This novel represents the first period of Waugh's literary career. The chapter discusses Waugh's sharp amusing satire of the fashionable world of the English society as well as his criticism of the defects of the social institutions at that time. The chapter proves that Waugh's satire is a double-edged weapon as he describes the cruelty of the fashionable world in a comic and satirical way so as to alleviate its cruelty. The chapter presents the various satiric methods Waugh employed to bear his moral perspectives to the readers.

Chapter four analyses Black Mischief (1932) which was the result of Waugh's trip to Abyssinia and East Africa in 1930. The novel is based on a deep study of the customs and traditions of the Africans. The novel is a sharp satire against the Africans as well as other people of different nationalities and cultures. The chapter examines Waugh's attack and scorn of both the vices of

modern civilization as well as the follies of the African primitive nations. Moreover, it points out Waugh's deep understanding of the nature of man. The chapter also discusses Waugh's use of his satiric devices to reveal his moral targets.

Chapter five is concerned with the analysis of A Handful of Dust (1934) regarded as Waugh's masterpiece. The chapter presents a new theme tackled by Waugh which is the theme of the betrayed husband. Waugh's satire is mainly directed at a rather different aspect of social life which is married life. The novel is a reflection of the early part of Waugh's private life which is the breakdown of his first marriage. It is also the result of Waugh's trip to Brazil in 1933 which provided him with enough material to write his novel. The chapter then discusses Waugh's satiric techniques and the moral purpose lying behind his use of such techniques.

In the conclusion, the researcher tackled the development of Waugh's employment of his different satiric devices in each of his three novels. She came to the conclusion that the development of Waugh's use of such devices is due to the fact that he became more mature and intellectual by the time he wrote A Handful of Dust in 1934.

The candidate discusses Waugh's skill in conveying his moral ideas to his readers through his use of his satiric methods in each novel. She discusses that his moral ideas and purposes differ more or less each time owing to the fact that his treatment of his themes vary from one novel to the other.

The researcher then states the reasons for Waugh's personal change and its reflection on his novels to the extent that there is a difference between his

first novel and his third one regarding the themes and the techniques he used.

The candidate reached the conclusion that Waugh managed through a complete fusion of theme and technique to expose the moral problems of his society and to deliver his moral thoughts and objectives to his readers.

Part One

Theory

Chapter One: Waugh's Concept of the Nature and Function of Literature

Waugh has in many ways attempted to state his view point about the nature of the novel. For him, the novel is a 'highly enjoyable'¹ form of art. It is 'deeply interesting and deeply significant.'² He sees the novel as an interesting form of literature as it entertains the reader and arouses his curiosity and his desire to know more about reality that surrounds him. He believes that the novel should be 'full of wit and fun and fantasy'³ so as to attract the reader. It should also be 'highly contemporary, modern and readable'⁴ tackling the deficiencies of the English society as well as providing the reader with a moral lesson through which he can learn more about real life and people around him.

In writing a novel, most novelists aim to depict real life. In other words, they aim to convey 'the vividness and feel of living.'⁵ The novel is rather different from any other form of art as it directs the reader's attention towards 'the real world rather than offering an escape from the real world.'⁶ Waugh was in favour of the opinion that the novel should trace the events of everyday life. That is to say, it should deal with the social life of the individuals.

Waugh is regarded as a realist in the sense that in his novels he presents a great coverage of social life to his readers mainly through

criticizing the social life as well as the defects of the social institutions of England at his time particularly in his earlier novels. Realist writers picture life the way it is. Realism is defined as:

the way of presenting life and the natural world as they are and without idealistic or romantic colouring. Realism insists on objective, accurate and detailed description with an emphasis on the ordinary familiar events rather than the strange or heroic.⁷

Some novelists depict an image of the real world in which they live. They tend to be realistic novelists providing the reader with a great coverage of the social vices and follies of the age they are living in despite the various techniques they may resort to. Whereas other novelists escape from reality and run to fantasy and imagination. Their novels are based on ideas existing only in their imagination. In his novels, Waugh urges the reader to face reality and abandon dreams. Likewise, as a satirist his role is to portray real life and satirize the drawbacks of his society for the sake of reforming them.

The author is a very important element in the novel, without him 'there could be no book at all.'⁸ It is the author who creates the world of his books. He creates it through his words, language and his own style. The author is the reason for the existence of the novel. There are three important elements about a novel: 'the events of the novel, the author who has created them and the reader for whom the novel is written.'⁹ They are inseparable elements.

For instance, the events of the novel are there because the author has chosen to put them there. In other words, 'a novel exists in the way it does because an author has chosen to put it together in that particular way.'¹⁰ On the one hand, the events of the novel are its story. In other terms, 'the novel tells a story.'¹¹ It is 'a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence.'¹² The plot of the novel, on the other hand, is its 'logical intellectual aspect.'¹³ Hence, the writer's task is to stimulate the reader's curiosity for the story, his intelligence and recollection for the plot and his sympathy and emotions for the characters.

The writer in Waugh's opinion has a more important task which is to influence the individual's behaviour. He believes that a writer is 'important so far as he influences behaviour.'¹⁴ The writer's task is not only confined to his work but it should extend to affect the reader's behaviour, thoughts, and attitudes as well. Writing is the expression of people's thoughts and views. Writing should imply 'moral standard and criticism.'¹⁵ In this respect, the novel is an 'attempt to represent life.'¹⁶ People are attracted to fiction by their interest in reality. The novel, thus, is a 'perpetual quest for reality.'¹⁷ It is the image of life. It pictures real life through the author's ideas and beliefs. The author's thoughts and beliefs are more or less the themes of his books. In other words, the themes of a novel are there because the author intended them to be. They are the novelist's 'interpretation and judgement of life.'¹⁸

There are several elements that help in clarifying the theme of the novel such as the plot, characterization, and events. The events of the novel, therefore, 'express the themes of books.'¹⁹ Waugh sees that the

theme the novelist tackles in his novel should be 'original and promising.'²⁰ In his opinion, any work of art is not just beautiful thoughts or sympathetic feelings but it is 'intelligence, skill, taste, knowledge, discipline; especially discipline.'²¹

Moreover, he sees that the events the novelist writes are not just haphazard events but 'every incident has significance.'²² This is quite obvious in his novels. His events have significance which is revealed at the end of the novel. It is important to note that both major and minor events are of great importance in his novels.

Most novels deal with almost the same questions; characters and their relationships towards each other and the 'cause and effect in relation to character.'²³ The characters depicted in a novel are imaginary characters as well as the situations. Despite the fact that the characters portrayed are from the writer's own imagination they more or less represent real people living in real life. This resemblance to reality is one of the features that differentiate between the novel and the romance.

The romance is 'usually a love story, especially a sentimental one, but it can also be any adventure that includes a love theme.'²⁴ Moreover, the novel relates a story. This what makes it different from the drama which is a dialogue between two of the characters or more and is acted on stage.

Waugh is also classified as a naturalist in the sense that he describes reality in an objective manner and as a novelist he pays much attention to the social environment surrounding his characters. Naturalism is a 'kind

of fiction that describes life and the natural world in an objective and scientific way rather than involving the spiritual or supernatural.²⁵ Hence, one can deduce that Waugh's novels are an amalgamation of realism and naturalism.

In his earlier novels, Waugh pictured life in the upper class English society in an objective way. He portrayed the fashionable 'Bright Young People' as totally dishonest, vicious, unfaithful, seeking their own interests at the expense of others and taking advantage of other people's misfortunes. Waugh was quite objective in revealing the defects of the fashionable world of the English society as well as the sufferings of the innocent people who are living in that chaotic world.

A novel should be both instructive and amusing, meaning the novelist should possess both the moral sense and the artistic sense so that his novel can be instructive and amusing at the same time. It goes without saying that the quality of a work of art is always the 'quality of the mind of the producer.'²⁶ A good novel does not spring from a superficial mind but it springs from an intellectual profound mind.

The function of the novel is to reveal the relationship between man and his society and his attitude towards the social and the political conditions of his society. The novel also reveals 'the changing rainbow of our living relationships.'²⁷ Furthermore, the novel reveals different aspects of society: political, social, and economic aspects at a particular time.

Novels are directly influenced by the conditions of the society. In other words, there is a strong relationship between fiction and the social

and political state of a particular society. In addition, the function of the novel is to present the existence of different social classes in one society and its effect on the individual. Waugh treated, in his first novels, the theme of the permanence of the social strata in the English society and their impact on the individual and the society. He also tackled the hazard consequences that are usually the outcome of the existence of various social strata.

Another notable function of the novel is educating people in the sense of making them realize and distinguish 'the true from the false both in themselves and in the world.'²⁸ Waugh, for instance, was keen on showing his protagonists the contrast between truth and false pretences. That is to say, between seeming and being. He meant to let his heroes, through the incidents of the novel learn the truth about themselves and the world around them. He made them come to understand the awesome fact that the modern world is not as it seems to be. In other terms, there is neither justice nor stability in modern life. Modern life is characterized by injustice, anarchy, and barbarism. Waugh stated this fact to one of his friends in his letters saying: 'there is no justice in this world.'²⁹

A good novel proves how well a novelist understands human nature. That is to say, how well he understands persons around him and perceives the fact that the nature of man is a combination of good and bad qualities. A good novelist understands deeply the nature of his own society and its principal features as well as the behaviour of its people which varies from one age to the other. Waugh, however, sees that 'manners change not only from age to age but from individual to individual.'³⁰ In other words, in each society there are different types of individuals who behave and react