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Alienation in Evelyn Waugh's Novels

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

﴿ يرفع الله الذين آمنوا منكم والذين أوتوا العلم درجات ﴾

صدق الله العظيم

يقوله رسول الله ﷺ

﴿ تعلموا العلم وتعلموا للعلم السمتينة والوقار وتواضعوا لمن تعلمون منه ﴾

صدق رسول الله ﷺ



Dedication

With Love and Gratitude

For :

My Mother .

The Soul of My Father .

My Brother Dr. Mohammed .

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1
Chapter One : Waugh's Theory of the Art of Fiction .	4
Chapter Two : Alienation : What ? Why ? and How ?	68
Chapter Three : Introduction	114
<i>Men at Arms</i>	116
<i>Officers and Gentlemen</i>.....	135
<i>Unconditional Surrender</i>.....	150
Chapter Four : <i>The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold</i>.....	167
Conclusion	192
Bibliography	198

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to illustrate the theme of alienation in Evelyn Waugh's fiction. Discussing such a theme leads to an obligatory discussion of Waugh's personality because there is a strong relationship between Waugh the man and the artist. Before approaching the theme of alienation, it is useful and fruitful to make a study of Waugh's theory of the art of fiction to illustrate his approaches and techniques in his novels, and to show his choice of themes.

This study runs in four chapters and a conclusion :

Chapter One gives a critical account of Waugh's theory of the art of fiction. Waugh's satirical techniques are discussed such as humour, serious comedy, irony and mockery. His satire is directed against the follies of the modern world. Satire is used by the alienated hero in mocking the behaviour of people and the modern institutions from which he is isolated. This chapter shows Waugh's various themes tackled in his fiction such as alienation, infidelity, social and moral disintegration and the decay of the modern world. Reading this chapter illustrates that Waugh's experience affects his art to a great extent because his personality is very clear in his fiction. Waugh's concept of the work of art and the artist is discussed. In this chapter the reader finds a brief reference to most of Waugh's novels, heroes and heroines.

Chapter Two is a study of alienation as a phenomenon and a theme. It discusses also the reasons and symptoms of alienation.

Alienation is caused by social, economic, political, familial and personal factors. The symptoms of alienation are isolation, loneliness, withdrawal, indifference and rejection of modern civilization . The views of several writers, as well as Waugh's on the theme of alienation, are presented . There is a reference to Waugh's personal alienation as a man because the heroes of his novels are his spokesmen, and because his personality is part and parcel of his fiction .

Chapter Three tackles three novels : *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen* and *Unconditional Surrender*. They tell the story of Guy Crouchback the aristocratic gentleman who lives in isolation in Italy .

Men at Arms discusses his life of alienation before war. The breakout of the Second World War was his salvation . He enlisted in war and attended the training . But he was disappointed in his fellow-officers and consequently was led to feel greater alienation .

Officers and Gentlemen presents Guy's life in his regiment Halberdiers where his disillusionment was complete and he was drawn to more alienation . His dream of fighting in a just war was shattered because he found that there were no gentlemen in war . He realized that the morals of the modern world deteriorated . So war did not fulfill his dreams .

Unconditional Surrender depicted Guy's end . Guy became powerless and helpless . So, he surrendered. He was just a spectator . To him everything became clear ; his essential enemy is

the modern age in arms . Guy isolated himself completely from his surroundings , feeling hatred and anger against the modern life .

It should be noted that the war trilogy was edited in three separate volumes , and it was also edited in one volume under a new title *The Sword of Honour* .

Chapter Four discusses one novel , *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* . The hero, Gilbert Pinfold, is a novelist who leads a life of privacy in his village . He thinks of escaping from his life of loneliness and travelling abroad , seeking tranquillity and peace of mind . During his voyage, he isolates himself in his cabin but he is disturbed by accusations and charges coming from imaginary voices , from his unconscious mind . He is drawn to the border of insanity . He is disappointed . So , he returns home to the place from which he escaped before and begins to write the story of his ordeal .

CHAPTER ONE

***WAUGH'S THEORY OF
THE ART OF FICTION***

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Waugh's Theory of the Art of Fiction

Evelyn Waugh, (1903 - 1966), seems always to have realized that as a writer and probably as a man he needs a lot of attention . "How badly I write when there is no audience to arrange my thoughts," ¹ he noted in his diaries . Waugh is an intensely serious writer who laboured with painstaking care to create fiction of lasting merit. Studying Evelyn Waugh shows how his view of the world helped shape his work, and explores the way he imaginatively transmuted his experiences into art .

Evelyn Waugh is one of the truly accomplished figures of the modern period, a writer who provides a startling insight into the nature of his times . His novels are modern both in matter and manner . His art adds in a significant way to the stock of the English novel . This is because Waugh's novels document an age and they contain a share of human truth . They dramatize the desolate world of routine betrayals and casual injustices, and they do so in the measured language of civilized outrage. They expose incompetence and corruption, pretentiousness and fraud. In their insistence on order, taste , reason, responsibility and faith, Waugh's novels promote virtues which are not out of date .

¹ Michael Davie, ed. . *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*. Harmondsworth : Penguin , 1976 , p. 53 .

Waugh's attitude to the art of fiction is revealed in various articles , book reviews and introductions to works by other authors. His attitude is known throughout his own writings and what other writers say about him :

[Waugh] may be judged as a writer of various subgenres ... satires, comedies, near tragedies, melodrama, or realistic novels ... Waugh achieves a level of excellence equal or superior to that of contemporary masters. ¹

He reaches excellence because writing is an easy matter to him as he says :

Writing can be done anywhere at any time by any one. All you need is some ink, a piece of paper, a pen and some vague knowledge of spelling ... the best sort of book to start with is biography . ²

What makes writing an easy art for Waugh is that he deals with the outward, rather than the inward, behaviour of human beings. He is not interested in the inner psychology of characters because this is a difficult task for most writers . As he says :

I regard writing not as an investigation of character, but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed . I have no technical psychological interest . It is drama, speech and events that interest me. ³

¹ J. Cook William. , *Masks, Modes and Morals : The Art of Evelyn Waugh*. New Jersey : Associated UP, 1971 , p. 337 .

² Evelyn Waugh, " Careers for Our Sons : Literature. " in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*. ed. Donat Gallagher, London : Methuen , 1983 , p. 45 .

³ Jacquelline McDonnell , *Evelyn Waugh*. London : Macmillan , 1988, p. 31 .

This does not mean that Waugh wrote without difficulty but he sometimes faced difficulty in writing as he said that writing is like "clock-making, " ¹ a statement which recalls to mind T. S. Eliot's view that artistic creation is like " the making of an efficient engine. " ² Waugh sometimes changes the words of a piece of writing for the better in order that he may reach the best intended meaning : " If I'm at work on a book, the words are running in my head at the time, and I get up in the middle of a meal to run off to change a word. " ³

In his writing Waugh is characterized by lucidity, elegance, individuality and reticence . And what helps him to do so is his love for writing which was his means of coming to terms with the world around him . Writing for him was a sort of comfort because he poured his boredom , despair, resentment and rejection on paper. He used his fiction as a means of exercising states of mind which had to be outgrown . He took to writing as a profession:" I took to writing as I might have taken to archeology or diplomacy or any other profession as a means of coming to terms with the world." ⁴

¹ Fredrick J. Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh : Portrait of an Artist*. London : Chapman & Hall , 1958 , p. 181 .

² T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917 - 1932* . New York : Harcourt, Brace and World , 1952, p. 96.

³ Jeffrey Heath , *The Picturesque Prison : Evelyn Waugh and His Writing*. London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson , 1982, p. 39 .

⁴ Martin Stannard , *Evelyn Waugh: The Critical Heritage* . London : Routledge & Kegan Paul , 1984, p. 171 .

As a modern artist Waugh had his own view on art as he said, " I believe art is a natural function of man. " ¹ But it does not come out of coincidence. All artists have the raw material before them : the world, Nature, the people and political systems of society but the great artist is that who can extract his fine art out of these raw materials like the carpenter who makes varieties out of wood . So Waugh says : " I think a work of art is something exterior to oneself, it is the making of something whether it is a bed-table or a book. " ²

As each profession needs a skill, so does art need various skills as Waugh said :

A work of art is not a matter of thinking beautiful thoughts or experiencing tender emotions ... but of intelligence, skill, taste, proportion, knowledge, discipline and industry . ³

In Waugh's view the artist should be linked to his society, as he himself was linked to the British Empire, and the artist should also be total i.e. he should have a total idea about the European society, then the whole world as he suggested that

The English artist should be European rather than British in his tastes, morally responsible for, because

¹ Evelyn Waugh , *Robbery Under Law : The Mexican Object-lesson* . London : Chapman & Hall, 1939 , p. 12 .

² Evelyn Waugh, " Frankly Speaking . " quoted by : Martin Stannard , *Evelyn Waugh : The Early Years 1903 - 1939* . London : J. M. Dent & Sons , 1986. p. 163 .

³ Heath, pp. 37 - 8 .