Apthorpe Placatus?

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GILBERT PINFOLD freely admitted that he envied painters because they "are allowed to return to the same theme time and time again, clarifying and enriching until they have done all they can with it. A novelist is condemned to produce a succession of novelties, new names for characters, new incidents for his plots, new scenery; but, Mr. Pinfold maintained, most men harbour the germs of one or two books only; all else is professional trickery . . ."[1] Mr. Pinfold was being excessively modest; nevertheless it is probably true that for most readers of Waugh, two motifs and one tonal quality are preeminent amid the "professional trickery." These are the country house, the double, and the comic macabre. Sometimes isolated and discussed individually as keys to Waugh's fiction, these three characteristics are in fact related aspects of a larger configuration.

To begin with the house: Nigel Dennis noted as early as 1943 that for fifteen years Waugh had "sung the house."[2] Dennis was thinking of King's Thursday, Doubting 'All, Anchorage House, Hetton Abbey, Boot Magna and the house of John Plant's father. Brideshead and Broome followed, and in 1960 Frank Kermode commented: "The great houses of England become by an easy transition types of the Catholic City."[3] If one were to pursue this line of thought it would be easy to show how, under the guise of the house, Waugh covertly establishes a major antithesis between the City of God and the City of Man, an opposition which encompasses a whole spectrum of differences between the genuine and the fraudulent in every realm of human endeavour.

The motif of the double springs from the less conscious levels of Waugh's mind. F. J. Stopp[4] comments on the motif of the double as it appears in *Men at Arms,* the first volume of the Crouchback trilogy. Mr. Stopp's argument is this: "a tense personal drama" takes place between Guy and his double, Apthorpe, and after the cathartic thunder box sequence, Guy slowly succeeds in transferring his allegiance from Apthorpe to Ben Ritchie-Hook, a transference which marks the first of several steps forward in Guy's spiritual odyssey. According to Mr. Stopp, "Guy is a man divided upon himself, between an extended desire to accept the spirit of his new milieu, and internal difficulties in doing so." Apthorpe "*must* die if Mr. Waugh is to achieve his general plan at all . . . *The doppelgänger* must either die, to the lasting benefit of his counterpart, or live and draw the life-force from the hero . . . ." Mr. Stopp's overall thesis is that *Men at Arms* records "the final laying by army life of a ghost — the desire to preserve a civilian sense of personality, the passing of the 'miles gloriosus' and the coming of a new sense of detachment, of impersonality." Predictably, Mr. Stopp's analysis has been maligned, but though we may quibble about details, the evidence — repeated in other novels — compels us to accept it in its broad outlines. If anything, Mr. Stopp has not carried his argument far enough.

If one regards Apthorpe as an externalization of Guy's romantic state of mind, it becomes darkly appropriate that the two "Uncles," both the same age (that is, Waugh's age, 36), should remain inseparable from the day they sit "opposite" one another at Charing Cross Station.[5] Guy and Apthorpe share as comrades the vicissitudes of the Halberdier officer training camp. They begin as equals but it is clear from the first that Guy's friend is destined to rise quickly. The orderly-room clerk keeps the officers' regulation-books up to date for a small fee, but Apthorpe declines: "looks better to do it oneself" (p. 59). He knows the corps history and the parade-drill; he authoritatively chastises impertinent junior officers. Despite Apthorpe's habit of deflecting would-be borrowers from himself to Guy, and bursting in, drunk, to sleep on Guy's floor, the two get on well. Only when Brigadier Ritchie-Hook mistakes Guy for Apthorpe does Apthorpe lose his self-possession.

After Christmas Guy's regiment reassembles at Kut-al-Imara House Preparatory School at Sandhurst, which they are forced to share with a second regiment. Amid overcrowded quarters and reduced comforts, everyone's morale sags: "They were diminished and caricatured by duplication, and the whole hierarchic structure of army life was affronted by this congregation of so many men of perfectly equal rank" (p. 111). Guy has sprained his knee, and when Apthorpe returns from leave Guy learns that his friend has been similarly injured. "Like a pair of twins," Guy says (p. 116), and "when he and Apthorpe appeared at the dining-room door, each leaning on his stick, there was a general turning of heads, then laughter, then a round of clapping from both sides." The episode rivals any hallucination in *Pinfold*, for it is at this point that the reader begins to recognise Apthorpe as Guy's double. The novel's many hints and innuendoes coalesce to show that Guy, full of grandiose dreams, has come to England in search of comrades in arms and has found the most dangerous comrade possible. He has found, or has been found by, that part of himself which cares only about appearances: a constant, critical companion who grows in stature as Guy diminishes, a companion who rapidly becomes Guy's "superior officer."

Apthorpe has no centre, for he derives his existence from Guy's own. Although Apthorpe reeks of fraudulence, Guy is filled with the long-suppressed desire for a close friend and he tries to come nearer. And as Guy moves forward Apthorpe necessarily retreats. Apthorpe's inaccessibility fascinates Guy: "Apthorpe tended to become faceless and tapering the closer he approached" (p. 131). Guy grasps at the least fact about Apthorpe, for "any firm passage between Apthorpe's seemingly dreamlike universe and the world of common experience was a thing to cherish." Thus Guy learns with delight of Apthorpe's aunts and of his career as goalkeeper at nearby Staplehurst. But one aunt is fictitious, Staplehurst has been demolished and Apthorpe, it develops, was only a mediocre substitute goalkeeper (as Waugh was at Lancing): "Guy treasured every nugget of Apthorpe but under assay he found them liable to fade like faery gold."

Repeatedly in the course of *Men at Arms* it is made apparent that Guy is caught in the grip of a shadow which is both responsible for and created by his paralysis. When, Samson-like, he shaves off his moustache in order to please Virginia, he "studied himself . . . in the glass and recognized an old acquaintance he could never cut, to whom he could never hope to give the slip for long, the uncongenial fellow-traveller who would accompany him through life" (p. 153). Immediately afterwards, in the marvellously-realized "seduction-scene" (which Mr. Stopp slightly misinterprets), Guy's unacknowledged concern for decorum crystallizes in three inopportune telephone calls from his clamorous other self, Apthorpe. The scene is a more mature version of Mr. Outrage ineptly seducing the Baroness Yoshiwara in *Vile Bodies*. Both scenes are indebted to Prufrock trying to pose the question while haggling with his superego: "Well . . . we'd better get a move on," says Apthorpe earlier in the novel (pp. 48, 66), "I'm above sex. . . . But I can't do without company." Apthorpe's crescendo of frantic messages is hilarious, poignant and sinister all at once. During his first call Apthorpe says uncomprehendingly, "I don't quite get you" (p. 157). Next, he suggests to Guy, "We might all join forces" (p. 160). Finally, as Guy begs Virginia not to leave, Apthorpe telephones to tell Guy that he has "just put a man under close arrest" (p. 164). Virginia leaves.

The harder Guy works, the more Apthorpe flourishes (just as, in *A Handful of Dust*, Mr. Todd becomes more powerful as Tony Last insistently projects blame). Waugh scrupulously avoids drawing any causal relationship between Guy's mediocre achievements and Apthorpe's surprising series of successes. As the vampire-like "spell of Apthorpe" begins to bear Guy away "to the far gardens of fantasy" (p. 166), Ritchie-Hook intervenes to save Guy through the explosively funny "thunder-box" sequence. The thunder-box is a massive Edwardian field-latrine, substantial, ample, well-made and trade-marked, "Connolly's Chemical Closet." It is well known that Waugh regarded Cyril Connolly as what *Private Eye* would now joyfully label a "pseud." For this reason, among others, the thunder-box is an appropriate petard for hoisting the fraudulent Apthorpe. A hater of pretense, Ben Ritchie-Hook is Apthorpe's natural enemy, and the battle is joined over the ownership of the thunder-box. By means of a series of devious and amusing shifts, Apthorpe preserves the thunder-box for his own especial use until the final day of camp. Then, triumphant in demeanour and impeccable in appearance, Apthorpe sallies forth to use it. A sharp report rings out as an explosion dislodges the closeted Apthorpe. Apthorpe is wearing his steel helmet (as is his custom) and is apparently uninjured, but the thunder-box is destroyed. "Biffed," says Apthorpe (p. 196).

If Waugh's attention to Apthorpe's toilet habits appears unseemly, it can only be said that purgation is the subject of the novel. Although Apthorpe would not have survived his misfortune in an early Waugh satire, his eventual demise dates from the thunder-box episode. As promotion succeeds promotion, Apthorpe's pride and eccentricities increase. The amusing "Matter of the Captain's Salutation" provokes concern for his sanity, while the case of Dunn vs. Apthorpe and the boot shows that Apthorpe, an usurper of personality and a species of psychological invader, is obsessed with other people's boots to the extent of wanting to be in them.

As Apthorpe extends his influence more widely, his power over Guy in particular begins to dissipate. At the end of the novel, after the ill-fated invasion at Dakar, both Apthorpe and Ben Ritchie-Hook lie in the same hospital.

Apthorpe, having evaded inoculation through lying, is now dangerously ill with fever. Ritchie-Hook has been injured in the leg while secretly taking part in "a little bit of unofficial fun" (p. 281) in which Guy has acquitted himself bravely. There can be no doubt that Apthorpe's illness and Guy's bravery are related. The brigadier's injury rounds out the book's notable leg casualties to three, symbolically confirming the obscure but important relationship in which he, Guy and Apthorpe stand to one another. Whether one speaks at this point of a battle between the id and the superego or has recourse to the more conventional terminology of the morality play, it is clear that diametrically opposed forces contend for the person of Guy Crouchback. It is useful to remember that as the landing-party went ashore at Dakar, "Guy experienced the classic illusion of an unknown, unsought, companion among them" (p. 285). This presence is *not* Apthorpe but Ben Ritchie-Hook, a species of "good angel." The point is that Ben Ritchie-Hook saves Guy by means of booby-trapping Apthorpe and then assisting Guy in action. In 1937 Waugh had claimed, "The whole of thought and taste consists in distinguishing between similars."[6] The comic macabre is Waugh's favourite mode of marking distinctions and in *Men at Arms* the discriminating force is embodied in Ben Ritchie-Hook. It is important to note that while Ritchie-Hook softens up the enemy, the *coup de grâce* is reserved for Guy himself. Aided by a power larger than himself, Guy unconsciously defeats his own dangerous romanticism by involuntarily dispatching Apthorpe. His dark self laid to rest on the dark continent, Guy flies away with his good angel, Ritchie-Hook: "Both uncles gone the same day" (p. 314).

The reader who finds this rather occult interpretation incompatible with Waugh's avowedly rational interest in theology is invited to reread *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold.* Mr. Pinfold's neighbour shows him something called "The Box," which could "tune in" to the "life-waves" of the patient in order to provide relief from illness. " 'An extremely dangerous device in the wrong hands . . . I should have thought this Box counted as sorcery,' Mr. Pinfold said to his wife . . . . 'You ought to confess it' " (pp. 5-6). Shortly thereafter, Mr. Pinfold leaves for Ceylon but is pursued by illusory voices which intensify in direct proportion to his attempt to explain them away. One is reminded of the Nemesis which beset Tony in Brazil and Sebastian in North Africa. Mr. Pinfold is able to exorcise the voices by the expedient of recognizing their subjective origin and by abandoning his escape to Ceylon.

A few years after Waugh recovered from his temporary "madness," he told an interviewer, " . . . It was not in the least like losing one's reason, it was simply one's reason working hard on the wrong premises."[7] Like Mr. Pinfold, Guy's reason works hard on the "wrong premises." He is not mad in the same way as his brother Ivo, who "was found barricaded alone in a lodging in Cricklewood where he was starving himself to death" (p. 12), nor even in the same way as his saintly father, whose recusant vision "was not an entirely sane conspectus" (p. 34). Still, Guy's brother-in-law "had for some years been expecting Guy to go mad" (p. 16). Guy's disability is *accidia* aggravated by romanticism. Under a pall of apathy he seeks to recover the paradise he had known at "Eldoret" in Kenya: "It was as though eight years back he had suffered a tiny stroke of paralysis; all his spiritual faculties were just perceptibly impaired" (p. 7). Guy's separation from Virginia "eight years back" has induced an alienation from his homeland, from his English Catholic faith, and in the final analysis, from himself. He felt "no brotherhood," "no sympathy"; he "floated free" (pp. 10-11). Seeking to regain contact, Guy responds patriotically to the outbreak of World War II, but not fully understanding the examples of Sir Roger de Waybroke and Captain Truslove, he begins on romantic premises. For Guy it was not a "terrible time of doubt, anger and suffering" (p. 69) but of "glory and dedication." Guy's vision is defective, and though he buys a monocle to improve his marksmanship, he remains morally and spiritually shortsighted. Although he loves his men and his brother officers, "he did not distinguish between them as human beings" (p. 219), thereby neglecting the all-important Waugh dictum, "quantitative judgments don't apply," later articulated in *Unconditional Surrender* (p. 10) by Guy's father. Even his theology is dangerously simple-minded (p. 89): "The supernatural is real; what we call 'real' is a mere passing shadow, a passing fancy. Don't you agree Padre?" Guy's life as a soldier is marred by mistakes born of bad vision; he is saddled with an incubus and dogged by a shadow, for he is his own worst enemy.

Mild madness is nothing new in Waugh's fiction. In fact, if we read backward from *Pinfold* there is every reason to suppose that conflicts like that between Ritchie-Hook and Apthorpe are objectifications of Waugh's tendency to see himself as the battleground between order and chaos. In Waugh's early short story, "Portrait of Young Man with Career" (*Cherwell*, 1923), a character named "Evelyn" goes briefly berserk and beats in the head of a boring visitor with a poker. In another story, provocatively entitled "Edward of Unique Achievement" (1923) a caddish narrator named "Basil" reveals how "Edward," a student of the cinematograph and History Previous murders his tutor. A third story, "Unacademic Exercise: a nature story" (1923) deals with occult rites and cannibalism. In "The Tutor's Tale" (1928) a young ex-Oxonian who (like Waugh) has no degree, becomes the tutor of George, the eccentric young Lord Stayle. Ernest Vaughan, as the tutor is called, discovers that George is entirely sane; it is his parents who are mad. A short novel entitled *The Temple at Thatch* was incinerated but according to Waugh himself, it dealt with a strange young man who purchased an eighteenth-century classical folly where he practised black magic.[8] In *Rossetti: his Life and Works* (1928) Waugh dwells on Rossetti's drug-induced fits of madness, his "spiritual inadequacy," and his "brooding about magic and suicide" (p. 227). Readers of Waugh's later work will easily recall other notable lunatics: Professor Otto Silenus and the homicidal Calvinist, Agatha Runcible, the Emperor Seth, Mr. Loveday, Eric Olafsen in *Scoop*, and the ubiquitous little madman who blows up the Deputy Assistant Chaplain General in *Put Out More Flags*. Elderly maniacs "gibber and mouth politely behind the railings" in *Brideshead* (p. 14), and in *The Loved One* (p. 46) Dennis Barlow notes with approval the "rich glint of lunacy" in Aimée's eyes. In Waugh, unbalance is the precursor of the comic macabre, which functions in two closely-related frameworks: first of all as a satirically responsible ingredient in the fiction of a defender of taste and theological distinctions and, secondly, as the agent of resolution in a psychodrama of considerable complexity.

The comic macabre helps determine the shape of nearly every Waugh novel. *Men at Arms* is completely typical: a look-alike dualism reduced to a unity by an explosive third term. A search for the origins of this recurrent framework reveals that there are levels to penetrate. It would seem that in *Men at Arms* as in most of his other novels Waugh thought he was writing a loose theological allegory on the Augustinian model. Waugh's novels normally concern choice-making and for the most part the terms of the choice are expressed under the typal metaphor of the house or some other dwelling place. Unvarying target of Waugh's animosity, the wrong way of life ("wrong premises") recurs in his fiction as the arcadian city, house or state which the protagonist mistakenly longs to inhabit. These "lush places" are metaphoric versions of Augustine's earthly city, material attempts to duplicate the City of God. Tony Last's quest for a South American Eldorado in *A Handful of Dust* (1934) is an especially good example of the age-old search for a false city. As Tony's bald-headed friend Dr. Messinger says (p. 251), "I've been looking up the historical side . . . and I more or less know how the City got there. It was the result of a migration from Peru at the beginning of the fifteenth century. . . . One of the younger princes rebelled and led his people off into the forest." The passage is a veiled reference to Augustine's account of the separation of the good and bad angels (*City of God,* Book XI) and to all subsequent schisms, notably the English Reformation.

Seen in an Augustinian perspective, Guy's progress is a gradual ascent to Broome and the full Christian life through a series of false secular "cities." First there is Eldoret in Kenya where "the whole Restoration scene [was] acted out by farmers, eight thousand feet above the steaming seaboard" (p. 158). And after this there is the Castello Crouchback, set in semi-pagan Santa Dulcina della Rocce, where in the parish church "a pre-Christian thunderbolt . . . lay concealed in the back of the altar" (p. 6). In theological terms, Ben Ritchie-Hook's intercession against Apthorpe is a metaphor for Grace. But on a level which it is impossible to ignore, the brigadier's act of sabotage is a psychic detonation in Waugh himself, triggered by his autonomous ego repelling a sinister self-reflection. This latter claim may appear less bizarre in the light of Waugh's first commercially-published story, a short but fascinating tale entitled "The Balance" (1926).

In "The Balance," Adam Doure is in love with Imogen Quest, but Imogen's mother thwarts the marriage. Deprived of Imogen, Adam sentimentally returns to Oxford to invite his friends to his "farewell blind," for he plans to commit suicide. But only his least likable friend, the disreputable and slightly demonic Ernest Vaughan, is able to join him. The ostentatious, Epicurean farewell banquet which Adam had envisioned becomes a squalid procession through the dives of Oxford. As the whisky flows, Adam becomes more melancholy but Ernest Vaughan becomes increasingly more cheerful. Finally, in a fit of inebriation, Ernest commandeers an automobile. Adam leaps in and as they race away the car smashes into a shopfront. Uninjured, Adam looks back to see "something being carried out" (p. 281). Back at his hotel Adam drinks poison, assumes an unnecessarily foetal position under the bedclothes, and passes out. Like Conrad's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* he almost dies. But Adam survives and Ernest, the guest-figure, dies.

Next morning Adam groggily remembers the childhood games which he used to play with his cat, Ozymandias. Adam would begin these games by barricading Ozymandias in the nursery and then frightening the animal half out of its wits. Then, soothingly, he would promise Ozymandias that "the horrible little boy" (p. 285) would not come near him again. "The delectable exercise invariably ended with caresses of passionate reconciliation." Inevitably Ozymandias refuses to play, thereby thwarting the reconciliation-scene which has come to be necessary for Adam. Climbing to retrieve Ozymandias from his hiding-place Adam "overbalances," falls, and experiences pain for the first time. As Adam looks back at the childhood event he realizes that his life since that time has been an attempt to recover the tranquillity of the days when "reconciliation" was easy. He sees that his chronic lack of balance has driven him to attempted suicide, an admission of defeat in "that struggle for detachment" (p. 286). The Ozymandias episode mechanically but effectively stresses the two sides of Adam Doure.

After breakfast Adam needs "immediate escape from the scene upon which the bodiless harlequinade was played, into a third dimension beyond it" (p. 287). He walks to the river, past two fishermen and a child who with unconscionable obviousness is sucking her thumb "in Freudian ecstasy" (p. 287). After a short sleep he tears up his suicide note and holds a dialogue with his "grotesque" reflection as a "great swan" of "impeccable excellence" swims by. He repudiates his dangerous reflection:

> REFLECTION: That is a sorry conclusion, for I am afraid that you are trying to dismiss as a shadow a being in every way as real as yourself. But in your present mood it would be useless to persuade you. Tell me instead, what was the secret which you learned, asleep there in the grass?

ADAM: I found no secret — only a little bodily strength.

REFLECTION: Is the balance of life and death so easily swayed?

ADAM: It is the balance of appetite and reason. The reason remains constant — the appetite varies.

REFLECTION: And is there no appetite for death?

ADAM: None which cannot be appeased by sleep or change or the mere passing of time.

REFLECTION: And in the other scale no reason?

ADAM: None. None.

REFLECTION: No honour to be observed to friends? No interpenetration, so that you cannot depart without bearing away with you something that is part of another?

ADAM: None.

REFLECTION: Your art?

ADAM: Again the appetite to live — to preserve in the shapes of things the personality whose dissolution you foresee inevitably.

REFLECTION: That is the balance then — and in the end circumstance decides.

ADAM: Yes, in the end circumstance.

The passage above is Waugh's most explicit account of a confrontation of self and shadow which recurs regularly in subsequent novels. Its affirmative tone, it should be noted, is based on stoic-aesthetic grounds: there is no appetite for death which sleep, change or time cannot appease; the appetite for life is rooted in art or in the desire "to preserve in the shapes of things the personality whose dissolution you foresee inevitably."

Adam's rejection of his shadow takes us back to the story's beginning, where a number of characters are playing "analogies" about him. Adam's life is a "film," for it is being watched by a cinema audience which includes a young man with a Cambridge accent and, several rows away, two shop-girls from Earl's Court. In *Men at Arms,* twenty-five years later, Guy Crouchback meets Frank de Souza, "the Cambridge man, opposite" (p. 51) at the theatre. Frank de Souza is accompanied by his girl friend; he lives with her in her flat in Earl's Court. Still something of a "film" figure, Guy says, "Come and eat oysters with me" (p. 93) but they are busy. Clearly, Waugh's victory over his reflection in "The Balance" — for it is assuredly Waugh who is speaking — has not been decisive. The early story marks a decision to persevere — but on false premises — in the battle with life's opposites. The "struggle for detachment" is rejoined in each novel; almost everything Waugh ever wrote expresses the attempt to recover a balance between the look-alike opposites in himself.

In view of the tensions revealed in "The Balance" it is not surprising to learn that the operative principles in all Waugh fiction are analogy, inversion, and collapsible dualisms. In *Rossetti* (1928), for example, Waugh speaks of two attitudes, the "mystical" and the "romantic," which can and do coexist in the mind of the same man. In *Decline and Fall* (1928) Paul Pennyfeather's other half is his former school-fellow, Potts, who shadows Paul for The League of Nations. At the end of the novel Stubbs, a second double, replaces Potts. The principle of the film provides the dualism in *Vile Bodies*, where the implication is that since post-Reformation England is a fake anyway, Mr. Isaacs is filming an imitation of an imitation. Similarly, in *Black Mischief* the Emperor Seth attempts to create a duplicate of an England which is already a feeble duplicate of its own past. *A Handful of Dust* is hair-raisingly inevitable in structure: the farther Tony flees from England and unethical conduct the closer he gets to his foreordained Nemesis, the hideous Mr. Todd, who is everything Tony has disowned and rejected. *Scoop* again concerns the problem of which Boot fits best. In *Work Suspended* John Plant and Roger Atwater constitute the typal pair, but the resolving agency of the comic macabre is not much in evidence — which explains, perhaps, why the work was suspended. In *Put Out More Flags* an extremely interesting dispersal takes place. Basil Seal tries repeatedly to shake off the "Connolly kids" but he profits rather than suffers from these shadow-figures. He and his sister form one look-alike duo: "They saw themselves, each in the other's eyes. There's no one like Basil, thought Barbara, seeing herself, no one like him, when he's nice" (p. 101). She is wrong of course, for *she* is like him "when he's nice." And the sinister Mr. Todhunter, who takes over the Connollies from Basil, is like Basil when he's not nice: "A game leg, stuck awkwardly askew, explained why he was not in uniform. He had got this injury in a motor-race. . . . He had ginger hair and a ginger moustache and malevolent pinkish eyes" (p. 161). That is, he is Waugh himself. In *Brideshead Revisited* Charles Ryder has several alter egos but the most interesting is the strange, red-haired "Captain Foulenough," who gate-crashes a party and eats caviar from a swan made of ice — a direct throw-back to "The Balance." Early in the novel Charles and Sebastian are said to be "in pursuit of their own shadows" (p. 37). Sebastian overtakes Kurt in North Africa and Charles overtakes "Foulenough" in mid-Atlantic. When Foulenough reaches England the police take him into custody; Charles's relationship with Julia immediately blossoms and a new phase of his life begins. Even in Waugh's final and admittedly feeble venture in fiction, *Basil Seal Rides Again* (1963), Basil has a double: a disreputable young man named Albright, who proposes to Basil's daughter. Basil ends the engagement by telling his daughter that her financé is her half-brother.

On the basis of such repeated evidence it is safe to say that the paradigm for each novel is a dualism collapsing into a unity. One must conclude that Waugh's art has much to do with the desire to be alone, to be of "unique achievement." In *Men at Arms* Waugh describes the way the members of Guy's regiment "were diminished and caricatured by duplication" (p. 111). An even more revealing passage appears in the first edition of *Brideshead Revisited* (p. 198). Here Charles Ryder laments:

> The human soul enjoys these rare, classic periods, but apart from them we are seldom single and unique; we keep company in this world with a hoard of abstractions and reflexions and counterfeits of ourselves — the sensual man, the economic man, the man of reason, the beast, the machine and the sleepwalker, and heaven knows what besides, all in our own image, indistinguishable from ourselves to the outward eye. We get borne along, out of sight in the press, unresisting, till we get the chance to drop behind unnoticed, or to dodge down a side street, pause, breathe freely and take our bearings, or to push ahead, outdistance our shadows, lead them a dance, so that when at length they catch up with us, they look at one another askance, knowing we have a secret we shall never share.

The protagonist's attempt to elude his shadow (and he often has more than one) succeeds or fails according to his heroism or moral insight. If he "dodges" or "pushes ahead" through a decisive act, like Guy Crouchback and Charles Ryder, the leech-like shadow dies or is "arrested." But if the protagonist attempts to elude his shadow without taking significant moral action, then his incubus only tightens his grip, as in the case of Tony Last.

Waugh hated the bogus or the pseudo. He knew well that duplication "diminished and caricatured," thus duplication is one of his major satirical devices. To Waugh, imitations were necessarily distortions, whether they existed in the realm of art, emotion, politics or theology and his conservatism stems from the belief that each revolution produces only a feebler version of its predecessor.

At this point, fashionable strictures against studying the poet instead of the poetry notwithstanding, it is necessary to stray a little from the literary preserve in order to relate Waugh's work to his personality. This is not the place to list anecdotes about the starchy and sometimes anti-social "testy Colonel" that Waugh became. It is sufficient to say that his outstanding characteristic was chronic depression; indeed, the melancholia of his last years (he died in 1966) was so black that his close friends knew his death was a wished-for release. In *Remote People* (1932) he admitted with jaunty candour, "I am constitutionally a martyr to boredom" (p. 116) and suggested compiling an anthology of bored verse. At twenty-three he had attempted to drown himself. In *A Little Learning* (p. 230) the literary flourish about the "gibbous moon" picks up his early preoccupation with Silenus, Dionysus' tutor, and implies that he sensed something malign in the ascendancy over his personality. At the age of seventeen Waugh composed a cynical poem on "Tedium," a play on the *Te Deum*. And at twelve he wrote "The World to Come," a remarkable poem in which he seems himself after death under instruction from the archangel "Cyprian."

Readers of *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* will know that Waugh's other notable characteristic was a persecution complex. After Waugh's marriage broke down Alec asked Evelyn's wife how Evelyn was taking it. "It's terrible. He's drinking too much. It makes him feel ill. And he thinks I'm trying to poison him."[9] There was also a house in Ireland which Waugh liked because there were "no conspiracies" there.

Lest it should appear that I am trying to turn Waugh into a monster, I wish to stress that he could also be loving and generous. But his fiction does not have its roots in his kindness. What seems to be directly absorbed into his writing is a psychic antagonism toward choice. With the appropriate apologies I now lapse into clinical language in order to discuss the libidinal rebounding which is said to occur between the ego and the objects of its affection. As Norman O. Brown says, "We give up a loved object (object-choice) only on condition of making an identification with the lost object."[10] In other words, if we cannot actually make love to our loved one, we engage in *"passive remodelling of the self so as to erect in the self a substitute for the object lost"* (italics mine). Now in the "average" person, the reflection of libido from lost object back upon the ego has no harmful consequences. In the melancholic the reduplication of love object within the ego takes place as usual but, according to Freud, "the ego is then treated as though it were the abandoned object; it suffers all the revengeful and aggressive treatment which is designed for the object."[11] In the melancholic the substitute love object, remodelled in the ego's image, is the recipient of punishment; in the paranoiac the look-alike self prompts the fear of observation and criticism.

Waugh both hated and feared the Apthorpe within him and, on a subliminal level, wished to exorcise him. Further, like anyone else, he was struggling to transcend the entire uncomfortable ego-object split by returning to the primal condition in which ego-love and object-love cannot be distinguished. The comic macabre is often used in Waugh as an agent of theological and aesthetic discrimination, but its real source lies, first, in a subconscious hatred of the very need to choose and, secondly, in a violent reaction against the threatening, observant pseudo-self which is in some cases the result of choice. This psychic process is borne out in Waugh's writing, for through his collapsible dualisms he repeatedly rejects sets of false alternatives in favour of situations in which he need not choose at all. Waugh repeatedly exploits what rhetoricians call the "either-or fallacy" and what psychiatrists term the "black-or-white syndrome." Once the reader is well inside Waugh's book-length disjunctive syllogism, Waugh ironically dynamites the false alternatives which obscure the "true" one. Needless to say the careless reader is often land-mined along with whichever false opinion he has chosen, but the perserving reader is led by a series of recognitions to convert the decoy choice-situation into a major illumination. In *A Handful of Dust,* for example, Hetton Abbey is falsely contrasted with Eldorado, and humanism with animalism. But through the smoke of Tony Last's macabre fate the reader discerns a paradise which is neither Victorian nor Brazilian but Christian.

Ultimately, Waugh's conscious locus of non-choice is Augustine's City of God. Since it is perfect it contains no dualisms and therefore requires no choice-making — though of course there is a preliminary choice to be made between it and the look-alike City of Man. The theological and psychological levels of Waugh's writing merge in the image of the house, which represents, in both frameworks, an ideal restoration to a state of primal unity. "Other houses maintained a virginal modesty or a manly defiance," Waugh says in *Put Out More Flags* (pp. 13-14), "but Malfrey [was] a Cleopatra among houses." I do not mean to imply that those who strive for the City of God do so because they suffer from back-to-the-womb tendencies, but I do suggest that in Waugh's case an aversion to choice-making and duplicity found an answer in a theological system which anticipated Freud in many ways.

There is always the possibility that Waugh had read Freud as thoroughly as he had read Augustine, but on the whole I think it unlikely that Waugh knew more of Freudian theory than what he heard at cocktail parties. Waugh repeatedly denied all knowledge of psychiatry, and Gilbert Pinfold rejects the assistance of a "looney doctor" out of hand. When J. B. Priestly used "some tags from Jung" to diagnose "What was Wrong with Pinfold,"[12] Waugh indignantly denied that he would "soon go permanently . . . cuckoo."[13] F. J. Stopp also claims that "apart from the false medication which was the physical cause of the voices,"[14] nothing was wrong with Waugh. The word "wrong" remains open to definition, but whether one uses the language of art, Augustine, Freud,[15] Jung or the Conservative Party, the general diagnoses must remain the same: Waugh's governing impulse, reflected throughout his work, was a compulsive, and often uncharitably bitter, drive to perfection. Waugh's work is a reaction against all posturing, conscious or unconscious. While there are undoubtedly those who would label Waugh himself a *poseur*, his fiction is in fact the record of his life-long attempt to booby-trap his *doppelgänger,* and there is a dazzling display of comic and stylistic brilliance all along the way. There is also pathos, for Waugh's constantly defeated quest for resolution often resembles Beckett's ironic search for the self.

Men at Arms, then, operates on three distinct levels. It is a fine comic war novel; it is the first novel in an Augustinian trilogy, and it is an engrossing psychodrama. *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961) indicate that towards the end of his life Waugh succeeded in achieving a measure of inner peace and compassion, thereby redressing to some extent "Adam Doure's" lost balance and attaining the *caritas* hitherto absent from his Augustinian perspective. One hopes that this is so, for behind Waugh's remarkable work there are traces of a life of complexity and extraordinary sorrow.

NOTES

[1] Evelyn Waugh, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1957), p. 2. Further page references to *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* appear parenthetically.

[2] Nigel Dennis, "Evelyn Waugh: The Pillar of Anchorage House," *Partisan Review,* 10 (July-August 1943), 352-53.

[3] Frank Kermode, "Mr. Waugh's Cities," *Puzzles and Epiphanies: Essays and Reviews 1958-1961* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 164-75.

[4] Frederick J. Stopp, "The Circle and the Tangent," *Month,* n.s., 12 (July 1954), 18-34.

[5] Evelyn Waugh, *Men at Arms* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1952), p. 47. Further page references to *Men at Arms* appear parenthetically.

[6] Evelyn Waugh, "More Barren Leaves," *Night and Day* (December 23, 1937), p. 24.

[7] Evelyn Waugh, "Face to Face," interview by John Freeman (B.B.C. T.V., June 26, 1960).

[8] Evelyn Waugh, *A Little Learning* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1964), p. 223.

[9] Alec Waugh, *My Brother Evelyn and Other Profiles* (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 191.

[10] Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (London: Sphere Books, 1959), p. 49.

[11] Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), p. 434.

[12] J. B. Priestley, "What Was Wrong With Pinfold," *New Statesman,* n.s., 54 (July-December 1957), p. 244.

[13] Evelyn Waugh, "Anything Wrong With Priestley?" *Spectator*, 199 (September 13, 1957), p. 328.

[14] F. J. Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), p. 232.

[15] See also Joseph Vredenburgh, "The Character of the Incest Object: A Study of Alternation between Narcissism and Object-Choice," *American Imago*, 14 (1957), 45-52.

Prime

If you live with a guy for forty years
you're bound to get to know what makes him tick.
What makes me go is simply this   they wound
my motor up and it started me off
I've been going ever since   heart pumping
nerves responding things keep catching my eye
sounds come out of my mouth and food goes in
the whole thing really runs itself   has to
look who's in charge   never changed a lightbulb
till he was twenty-one   even today
the prick can hardly tell the difference
between a vulva and a volkswagen.
You're in your prime — young as your liver is,
old as you think you are — there is still time.

ANTHONY EDKINS