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### SWORD OF HONOUR: THE IRONIST PLACATUS

*Sword of Honour* offers plenty of critical problems quite sufficient unto themselves, but they are further complicated by the mere fact of the trilogy's place in the canon. Because it comes at the end of Waugh's long career the reader is bound to be influenced, more or less unavoidably, by his general view of the earlier work, by his overall conception of an author whom he has enjoyed—or resented—for almost four decades. At least three such general views seem to have emerged over the years, and a brief look at them will suggest that a fourth might prove useful.

Those readers who consider Waugh "essentially a comedian",<sup>1</sup> for example, should find *Men at Arms* the most attractive part of the trilogy, and thus it should surprise no one that this book, the least important of the three, has been called "the best of Waugh's novels".<sup>2</sup> Readers convinced that Waugh is the twentieth century's archetypal snob, and prejudiced champion of a defunct aristocracy, must find *Officers and Gentlemen* impossible and parts of *Unconditional Surrender* difficult to accept. Those who view him as primarily a disgruntled Tory satirist—probably the majority, and the best of the lot—will find abundant grist for their aesthetic mills throughout the trilogy, but they will also encounter solid blocks of material which their machinery cannot easily accommodate. There is nothing conspicuously satiric about the relationship between Guy and his father,<sup>3</sup> about the deaths of Gervase and Ivo, Tony Box-Bender's becoming a monk, Guy's betrayal by Virginia, Guy's devotion to the ideal represented by Sir Roger of Waybroke, Guy's escape from Crete, Mr. Crouchback's funeral, the death of Virginia and Uncle Peregrine; above all, there is no satire in Guy's relationship with the displaced Jews, in his remarrying

Virginia and accepting Trimmer's child, in his difficult re-entry into life after eight years of apathy and solitude at Santa Dulcina. Still, the assumption that Waugh is basically a satirist underlies much excellent criticism,<sup>4</sup> and—so far as it goes—this working premise deserves respect. My quarrel with it is simply that it does not go far enough. Too much of both Waugh and his work, both early and late, has to be sold short. Waugh was the devout Catholic as well as the amused observer of the bright young people, the author of *Edmund Campion* as well as *Black Mischief*, the superb stylist and craftsman as well as the writer of *Brideshead Revisited*. More fundamentally, he was the man who, for a lifetime, was able to hold such contrary drives in some sort of equilibrium within himself, keep his sanity, and create a memorable body of work out of the tensions to which, quite obviously, he was subjected. And such a mind implies the ironist, not the satirist.

An ironist, to use this term in a decidedly *unliterary* fashion, signifies a peculiar cast of mind, a mental house divided against itself which obstinately refuses to collapse. Such a man unavoidably perceives in terms of a double realm of values where another man, who is not an ironist, will perceive only a single realm. The ironist perceives, simultaneously and separately, his own internal ethical standard and the innumerable particular aspects of external reality which oppose, or tend pragmatically to contradict, this ethical norm.<sup>5</sup> Such a person, therefore,

is unsure, inclined to hopelessness about mankind in general. At the same time he is acutely unhappy about man's fate because he is highly idealistic. . . . And he is highly intelligent and perceptive . . . likely to be all the more melancholy because of the clearness of his vision. He is caught in a painful dilemma, and for him irony [of expression] is a partial relief . . . [a] defense against himself.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the *saeva indignatio* occasionally encountered in satire seldom informs the work of an ironist; instead, one finds melancholy or general hopelessness leavened by an exceedingly sharp wit. Nostalgia, particularly for the period of his own childhood, is apt to have a more potent appeal for the ironist than for a satirist, probably because during this part of his life he was psychologically secure, more or less like any other reasonably fortunate child, that is, before experience and awareness have raised an innate capacity of his mind to an active function. Once the perceptual coming-of-age occurs, the most reliable

sign of the ironic mind is its detachment from *both* aspects of its perception. Unlike that of a scientist or, in literature, a naturalist, the ironist's detachment "is an interested objectivity; he is detached but not indifferent, withdrawn but not removed. . . . In fact the ironist is deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions he perceives."<sup>7</sup> His detachment, in other words, extends only so far as is necessary to keep his contradictory perceptions mutually distinct.

Such a mind, therefore, generally will reveal three possible emphases in its expression: an emphasis upon the ethical norm which is not in consonance with the external reality surrounding the ironist (an emphasis present in *Edmund Campion*, *Robbery Under Law*, *The Life of the Right Reverend Ronald Knox*, occasionally in the travel books, and most obviously in a few articles<sup>8</sup>), an emphasis upon the particularities of the external world which are opposed to his internal standards (the essential subject of the comic novels and stories), or the emphasis—never more than an implication—upon the private, personal orientation which allows the ironist to transcend and control his own contradictory perception. The satiric approach can cope very well indeed with the first two of these emphases, but it seems unable to do much with the third. And the novels after *Work Suspended—Brideshead Revisited*, *Helena*, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, and pre-eminently *Sword of Honour*—all imply the personal struggles of an ironist deliberately trying to resolve the contradictions in his own perception. Hence, if such a view is at all reasonable, the assumption that Waugh is primarily a satirist is likely to ignore a most important element of his craftsmanship. All ironists presumably should be capable of decent satire, but not all satirists need be ironists.

One other preliminary matter, the superficial notion that *Sword of Honour* is a 'war' novel, deserves brief comment because war in itself is not much more important to this trilogy than it is to *The Red Badge of Courage*. The war is merely the external cause which turns to chaos the world in which Guy Crouchback has to create his own life, a chaos which, not at all unreasonably, should recall the chaotic world of the comic novels. The real subject of the trilogy was admirably set forth by Waugh himself in 1937—after he had already treated aspects of it in four novels, but long before he thought of writing a 'war' novel—when he reviewed *Vain Glory*, edited by Guy Chapman:

He has, generally speaking, avoided the temptation, ignobly exploited in a hundred war-books, to make the flesh creep. He is occupied primarily with the spiritual consequences, the pollution of truth, the deterioration of human character in prolonged unnatural stress, the emergence of the bully and cad, the obliteration of chivalry.<sup>9</sup>

In general, the plot of *Sword of Honour* traces a familiar progression in the hero's fortunes, a psychological pilgrimage which readily divides itself into three parts: misguided hope and great expectations, awareness through bitter disillusionment, and finally a private or moral fulfilment achieved by personal strength of character in the very teeth of the collapse of earlier hopes. In the process of the action the hero moves from isolation to moral and social involvement and commitment; and if he ends at "Lesser House" at least this is a solid and real institution, permanent in a way that a training camp or Hazardous Offensive Operations Headquarters is not. He learns that any human action is contingent upon externalities—chance, weather, the motives and actions of others—that any human action is therefore fraught with ambiguities; that a man can be sure of only his personal honour, his own intentions and conduct, no matter how his actions may be interpreted by others; and thus he is able to attain a limited success and happiness in a world which Waugh considered "absolutely uninhabitable for anyone of civilized taste". Considered in such fashion, there is nothing unusual about the plot; and the theme has been exploited, in one way or another, in countless novels of the *bildungsroman* variety. Also, there is nothing specifically Catholic about plot or theme. No reasonable person would ever suspect that this plot "had been suggested by a demented canon lawyer".<sup>10</sup> And though Guy is so completely a Catholic that "when he dreams he is falling from a great height, he automatically makes an act of contrition";<sup>11</sup> though Catholic ritual comprises an important means of Guy's growth and development (he acquires his greatest insight while he prays at his father's funeral); the final position which he attains would have been quite acceptable to Marcus Aurelius.

Once one gets beneath such a bird's-eye view of plot and theme, however, one becomes happily entangled in a complex, comic profusion. The historical situation is presented in detail, but almost always ironically because, as Waugh argued, the writer at war "has no duty to glorify the cause of his rulers. He is their natural enemy. He is immune

from the emotions of the crowd. But he battens on the individual lives of his fellow-men."<sup>12</sup> The more obviously comic of Guy's fellow-men—Apthorpe, Ritchie-Hook, Fido Hound, Ludovic, and less important clowns such as Dr. Glendening-Rees, Chatty Corner, Dr. Akonanga, Mugg and Miss Carmichael—"have prominent parts in the structure of the story, but not in its theme" (*SH*, p.9). Waugh's admitting that such characters are not thematically important should imply immediately that the structure of these novels is not as conventional as their plot and theme might suggest. The basic structural unit is the ironic contrast, a device which in Waugh's work harks all the way back to the precise opposition established by the character traits of Paul Pennyfeather and Captain Grimes. The great advantage of this device for Waugh is essentially the same as it was for Fielding, who used it in a different manner:<sup>13</sup> the simultaneous achievement of comic profusion and tight control. But Waugh's preoccupations in his *use* of this device changed significantly during the years between *Decline and Fall* and *Sword of Honour*.

Such a change may emerge more clearly if Basil Seal is substituted for Captain Grimes as Paul Pennyfeather's archetypal opposite. The one, an eternal *Candide*, naive, passive, gentle, morally good, outrageously pathetic in his inability to cope with a fallen world, is always a potential victim awaiting immolation. The other is just the opposite: knowledgeable, experienced, energetic, either morally ambiguous or an obvious bounder, able to manipulate life to his own ends, an exploiter rather than the exploited. Because this ironic opposition recurs throughout Waugh's novels few readers can have remained unaware of it; but still fewer seem to have explored its implications. If, for example, "the Innocent is one whose essential virginity is untouched by the escapades in which he is involved, the Bounder is . . . similarly immune [to] the contagion of experience, not indeed through passivity but through an excess of activity which adds up nevertheless to inertia, because he has removed himself from feeling in order to stand over and exploit an externalized world."<sup>14</sup> To state the same claim in different terms, any author who equally enjoys both of these opposed archetypes—as Waugh obviously does—cannot logically affirm either of them. What is needed, of course, is the moral decency and gentleness of the one merged with the energy, awareness, and effectiveness of the other; but such an amalgamation is rigidly excluded from the comic

novels. What, instead, is included, implicit in the formal elements of Waugh's work—just as it is in any ironic writing—is “the felt presence of the author's taste and reservations about human nature”.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the real Evelyn Waugh—neither Paul Pennyfeather nor Basil Seal—is the detached ironist capable of grouping the possible alternatives of characterization in such a way that neither archetype is wholly desirable, and of sustaining this tension, without noticeably slipping, through some eight comic novels. But the logical corollary of such a technique is the craftsman's implicit urge to do away with the opposition and the tension necessary to sustain it, to merge the contradictory perceptions at least once into a reality that will satisfy the very mind which, unavoidably, perceives in terms of the contradictions themselves. Waugh specifically seems to attack this problem for the first time in *Work Suspended*, which may help to explain why this work was abandoned. He tried again with *Brideshead Revisited* and learned—one suspects—that any such resolution, if it is to satisfy the ironist himself, has to hold up under a deliberately ironic reading, as *Brideshead* certainly does not. He tried again with Guy Crouchback and, as I shall argue, succeeded brilliantly. It therefore seems most fitting that *Sword of Honour* should be the final work: the master has performed his most difficult feat and thereby has created his “first real hero”.<sup>16</sup>

*Sword of Honour*, instead of exploiting a comparatively simple Plant-Atwater opposition, bristles with ironic parallels and contrasts, each of which is in some way related to the hero. Continually, we are given Guy himself, or action in which he participates, or values in which he would like to believe, and a contrast: the sword of Sir Roger and the misbegotten sword of Stalingrad, Guy's raid at Dakar and Trimmer's “Operation Poppun”, Guy's Catholic medal and the dead soldier's identity disc, Guy's notions of justice and the political expediency of everyone else, Guy's leaving Santa Dulcina and Ludovic's retreat to it, Tony Box-Bender's action upon being ordered to surrender and Ivo Claire's reaction to the same order, Mr. Crouchback's advice that “quantitative judgements don't apply” and the whole wartime world which operates strictly in terms of such judgements, Guy's unsuccessful designs upon Virginia and her successful designs upon him (including, particularly, the role of the Catholic religion in both episodes), what

actually happens almost anywhere in the trilogy and the official version of what happens—such a list is by no means exhaustive. These paired ironic perceptions comprise the formal steps by means of which Guy's character changes and develops, the rungs which he ascends to awareness; but they do not in themselves embody the theme.

The thematic burden is borne by specific traditions which Guy gradually becomes aware of; and—as might be expected in a novel crammed with ironic contrasts—these thematic elements are constants: they do not change in themselves during the course of the action, but the hero's understanding of them, or awareness of their real significance, does change. These traditional values—which indeed have long been either present or implicit in Waugh's work—are permanent and therefore morally real; all else is morally temporary, no matter how securely entrenched it may seem in the fallen world, and hence, by comparison, it is illusory, merely the appearance of a moral reality. Waugh's insistence upon the distinction between appearance and reality is constant, and implicit, throughout the trilogy. Two outstanding clues assert its presence: one is that reality is given an explicit antithesis—Trimmer, the eternal fraud, ubiquitous in one form or another in all three novels, the very essence of unreality—and the other is Waugh's continual play upon the concept of madness (to be examined later). The explicit traditions which embody the real and the enduring are three: the chivalric code exemplified by Sir Roger, the Catholic religion exemplified by Mr. Crouchback, and—less important, but clearly present in the first two volumes—the military code of the Halberdiers exemplified by Colonel Tickeridge.<sup>17</sup> Each tradition is a stronghold of stability in a dissolving world, and each has its fairly obvious emphasis or sphere of influence: that of the chivalric code and Sir Roger is primarily social, that of the Catholic religion and Mr. Crouchback is primarily moral, and that of the Halberdiers and Colonel Tickeridge is, of course, primarily military. Waugh's precise craftsmanship is implied by the fact that each of the three novels stresses one of these areas of activity: *Men at Arms*, which concerns the period of Guy's greatest devotion to soldiering, is primarily military; *Officers and Gentlemen* is primarily social; and *Unconditional Surrender*—with Mr. Crouchback's funeral, Guy's acceptance of Virginia and Trimmer's child, and the episode of the displaced Jews—is overwhelmingly moral. Each novel,



moreover, has a constant of its own which ironically contrasts with its primary emphasis. *Men at Arms* expertly exploits a prep-school militarism (already examined in *Put Out More Flags*) through Kut-al-Imara house, Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook. *Officers and Gentlemen* is slyly laced with constant references to a low animalism,<sup>18</sup> the negation of all that is socially significant, and this burlesque reaches its apotheosis in Fido Hound's literally going to the dogs. *Unconditional Surrender* has its communist conspiracy, a sub-society consisting mostly of homosexuals to imply that its moral code is also a perversion of the British norm; and Ludovic—the zombie, Major Dracula, author of "The Death Wish," a lonely, guilt-ridden, homosexual introvert who, apparently, is even beneath communism—exemplifies this negation of life.

Finally, as a measure of Waugh's hard-headed common sense, one must insist that none of these thematic elements—not even his beloved Catholic religion—is presented as in itself an infallible good: each is vulnerable to misuse; each can be an active force in this world only through the commitment and action of living men. Sir Roger lost his life in a local brawl, and his chivalric code is an absurd anachronism in the mass engagements of the modern age at arms. The Catholic religion has not in itself moved Guy one jot from his apathy in eight years, and the Church harbours spies; Mr. Crouchback is gulled by the public view of Trimmer's exploit. The Halberdiers accept people such as Apthorpe, Trimmer, and Sarum-Smith, and—as the conclusion of *Men at Arms* shows—they have to function strictly according to the letter of *King's Regulations* even though they also best embody its spirit. In other words, the real, the good, or the enduring, is presented as in itself an inert factor in human life, inert in the sense of Kant's claim that the good does not exist until it is practised in human action, or in the sense of the curse on Oedipus which lies dormant for almost two decades until human action brings it to fruition. At any specific moment reality is the given, that which must be correctly perceived simply as a prerequisite to significant human accomplishment. What is needed, eternally, is the willed commitment and energy of decent men who are aware that this need is itself a crucial part of the nature of reality—an awareness that does not come to Guy until the final volume. Only through the actions of such men can the stability of truth be eternally re-created in a continuous present. Such an awareness is implicit in Sir



Roger, Mr. Crouchback, and Colonel Tickeridge: in spite of their obvious errors and limitations their actions do sustain, and thus re-create, the essential moral stability of the reality by which they live, respectively, the chivalric code, the Catholic religion, and the profession of arms in the service of the Crown.

*Men at Arms* is easily the funniest, the most relaxed in mood, and critically the least important of the three novels. Because it deals with Guy's illusory hope of personal regeneration through soldiering he in this volume appears at his worst—in his failure to respond to Colonel Tickeridge's "Here's how" (*SH*, pp.45, 48), in his snubbing the "decent, melancholy old man" from the ENSA company (*SH*, p.65), his juvenile rage at Trimmer (*SH*, p.119), his failure with the Goanese steward aboard the troop-ship (*SH*, p.234), above all in his attempt upon Virginia after hearing Mr. Goodall's disquisition on permissible sexual adventures for separated Catholics. Virginia's quite reasonable reaction marks the low point in Guy's pilgrimage:

Tears of rage and humiliation were flowing unresisted. 'I thought you'd taken a fancy to me again and wanted a bit of fun for the sake of old times. I thought you'd chosen me specifically, and by God you had. Because I was the only woman in the whole world your priests would let you go to bed with. That was my attraction. You wet, smug, obscene, pompous, sexless, lunatic pig' [*SH*, pp.148-9].

As the focus of Virginia's rage implies, this mess results from Guy's personal failing and is in no way the fault of the Catholic religion. In like fashion, Waugh's explicit statement of Guy's awareness of each failure, after the event, shows that the chivalric code of Sir Roger and the military code of the British army are as blameless in Guy's lapses as the Catholic religion is. Such a technique necessarily presupposes two matters of importance: that Guy's pilgrimage is primarily a journey to awareness, and that the essential values, of which Guy is not yet aware, have already been set forth so that the reader can recognize Guy's errors.

Waugh accomplishes wonders of unobtrusive exposition in the first twenty pages. By the time Guy leaves Santa Dulcina the only important thematic element *not* set forth is the military standard embodied in Colonel Tickeridge; and this is revealed gradually, in the action of the first volume, as Guy becomes aware of it through experience. But all other essentials—the protagonist, the nature of reality, the Catholic

religion, the chivalric code—are solidly established. Guy Crouchback, for example, differs from John Plant, Charles Ryder, and Scott-King, the dim heroes of the later novels; and although, like his predecessors, he is forced out of his bolt-hole and into life by an external event, Guy's distinction is crucial. He has not always been withdrawn into the emptiness he reveals when his tale begins: he has been alive, committed, married to a woman he loved, farming in Kenya, and his present apathy is not his normal state. His inability to surmount Virginia's betrayal—"as though eight years back he had suffered a tiny stroke of paralysis; all his spiritual faculties were just perceptibly impaired" (*SH*, p.17)—has resulted in his doing "nothing worth the telling" ever since, but he does not enjoy such a life. He wants to break out of his prison, as his eagerness to go to war implies, and thus he is no John Plant or Scott-King.

The fact that the Castello and Santa Dulcina constitute a place of imprisonment for Guy poses the question of what is real and what illusory. The excellent tale of Guy's grandparents, the association of the property with their celebration of joy in love, is set against Guy's emptiness and apathy—"merely a void . . . no wish to persuade or convince or to share his opinions . . . not loved . . . either by his household or in the town . . . not *simpatico* . . . as untouchable in his new-found contentment as in his old despair" (*SH*, pp.17-20). However, "the Castello kept the character of its origin . . . a place of joy and love" (*SH*, p.13). Such a contrast should proclaim that the nature of reality is moral and private, a conclusion which nothing in the trilogy questions and which is stated with considerable force in the final volume. The Castello itself, like Lesser House, Broome, the Halberdiers' Mess, the Marine Hotel, is merely a piece of the world's external furniture, in itself morally neutral, and its significant reality derives from the life lived within it. For Gervase and Hermione it is a place of joy and love, for Guy a prison, and for Ludovic heaven only knows what it will be; but in no instance can praise or blame be attributed to the Castello itself. Waugh presents the Catholic religion, and chivalric code, and the military standard in much the same fashion if with more subtlety.

Guy is a devout Catholic, a fact which is established immediately:

[But] even in his religion he felt no brotherhood. Often he wished that he lived in penal times when Broome had been a solitary outpost of the Faith,

surrounded by aliens. Sometimes [cf. Ivo's madness] he imagined himself serving the last mass for the last Pope in a catacomb at the end of the world. . . . On the lowest, as on the highest plane, there was no sympathy between him and his fellow men [*SH*, pp.19-20].

As Guy's father later tells him, in a different context, all of this is "the most terrible nonsense. . . . That isn't at all what the Church is like. It isn't what she's *for*" (*SH*, p.544). The Church is not to be blamed for Guy's apathy. Despite its divine origin and the existence of the Mystical Body, the visible Church is an institution sustained by men; and it is their collective affirmation, continually reaffirmed in the celebration of the mass, which makes the Church a rock of stability in a world of flux. The whole moral reality of the Church is always available to Guy, but for him to profit from it in this life he first has to perceive correctly what the Church is—in Mr. Crouchback's phrase, "What she's *for*"—and then make intelligent use of what she offers any decent man. For eight years the Church has not helped Guy back to the world of the living for the excellent reason that Guy has merely observed the prescribed forms: he has withdrawn himself from all active participation in the moral realities which these forms and rituals symbolize.

Sir Roger's chivalry is likewise a tradition which had to be sustained by men. It has become an anachronism to the professional man of arms because "in the sombre wars of modern democracy chivalry finds no place. Dull butcheries on a gigantic scale and mass effects overwhelm all detached sentiment."<sup>19</sup> Yet the knightly virtues of loyalty, bravery, endurance, selflessness, courtesy, and gentleness are as real today as they were when Sir Roger practised them. Methods of warfare have changed as weapons changed. Yet the only sources of honour associated with any weapon, from club to flame-thrower, are the reasons for its creation and the way in which it is used—both of which prove the sword of Stalingrad eminently dishonourable (*SH*, pp.555, 557)—and both these sources derived from private motivation and purpose even at the time of the second crusade. Sir Roger fell in an ambiguous private quarrel, but at least his ultimate purpose was honourable: his sword was drawn in the service of the man who had promised to take him to the Holy Land. Guy, hoping to become a modern knight in a cause which is both public and just, has to learn that the knightly virtues have to be practised in private encounters, that "no good comes from public causes; only from private causes of the soul."<sup>20</sup> Guy also embarks upon

a crusade, enlists under a local authority whom he believes will take him to the Holy Land he seeks, is led against a European neighbour, falls from his first commitment—the “Holy Land” of the public cause having proved illusory (*SH*, p.532)—and like Sir Roger, he finally attains a private place of honour despite some disapproval. His ultimate purpose of rehabilitating himself is worthy enough, but his motivation for going to war to pursue this purpose is as dubious as Sir Roger’s committing himself to the local squabble. The “deep peace” which the Russian-German alliance brings to his heart is morally pretty bad because a spiritual regeneration of oneself can hardly grow out of the sufferings of others. And such an error suggests that his other important view of the war may be equally unsound—his belief that “now, splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. . . . the Modern Age in arms” (*SH*, p.15). Thus, the hero begins as a faithful Catholic, quite unselfish, spiritually and emotionally scarred, a good man, but a man who has much to learn.

In England Guy soon learns that no one is interested in the justice of the cause and that no one, apparently, wishes to engage a knight. The talk at Bellamy’s—where there are “no depressing conventions against the bandying of ladies’ names”—and the fact that Box-Bender is a Member of Parliament and Ian Kilbannock a peer of the realm suggest that chivalry is not doing well these days, at least in public. Men think in terms of expediency; and the public, instead of being given the truth, is fed whatever will produce a calculated response (*SH*, pp.64-5, 141). After weeks of fruitless manoeuvring in this murky world, Guy is at last accepted by the Halberdiers through the good offices of a man who, implicitly, has decided that any son of Mr. Crouchback cannot be entirely worthless. Thus the knight is engaged. When his training begins he enters into an experience that “he had missed in boyhood, a happy adolescence” (*SH*, p.53).

The general characteristics of male adolescence provide the basis for the two most delightfully comic characters in the trilogy, Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook—the one an *enfant terrible*, the other more simply an *enfant*. Whatever one of these boys is, the other is just the opposite. One is easily frightened, absolutely without any sense of humour, burdened with two tons of gear, vain, vague—“there was about

Apthorpe a sort of fundamental implausibility. . . . [He] tended to become faceless and tapering the closer he approached" (*SH*, p.122)—the inventor of his own legend complete with an extra aunt, bumbling and hesitant, militarily stupid, a creature of forms and rules, and easily killed. The other is indestructible, a connoisseur of what can be got away with in spite of forms and rules, militarily knowledgeable, swift and decisive, a man who lives his own legend in a perpetual self-dramatization, a sharp and clear personality untroubled by vanity, a man who travels with only a shaving kit, an inspired practical joker, and absolutely fearless. Ritchie-Hook, in short, is an ideal biffer, and Apthorpe—to wrench Lawrence—an ideal biffée. The fact that Ritchie-Hook is by far the more appealing character should not obscure his limitations. He is the sort of officer who attains his zenith early in his career and thereafter becomes unpromotable. "There's nothing in life like leading a company in action," he tells Guy. "Next best thing is doing a job on your own. Everything else is just bumf and telephones" (*SH*, p.232). Or in the words of the book's real professional soldier, "He's the wrong age. You can be an *enfant terrible* or you can be a national figure no one dares touch. But the brig's neither of those things" (*SH*, p.248). Still, on his own terms he is the man to get things done—to shake up Kut-al-Imara, to sack Trimmer, to wield over recruits the "potent spell, big magic", which for Guy sets "swinging all the chimes of his boyhood" (*SH*, pp.152, 182)—and it is only after considerable experience that Guy suspects a certain absurdity in a brigadier general's sneaking out for a bit of head-hunting. Apthorpe, by comparison, is merely a husk that looks like a soldier.

By bringing these two antithetical adolescents together Waugh punctuates Guy's training with hilarity. "The man's mad," says Apthorpe. "A dangerous, certifiable maniac"—this from the man who wears his steel helmet while enjoying his thunder-box. Guy is easily Apthorpe's superior, and he never really enters into the competition with him which Apthorpe takes so seriously. He is temporarily "haunted by Apthorpe in the role of *doppel-ganger*" (*SH*, p.119) when they are both lame, but his loyalties toward Apthorpe resemble those an intelligent man would extend to a big, stupid, innocently comic dog: "As Guy foresaw, those mad March days and nights of hide-and-seek drained into a deep well of refreshment in his mind" (*SH*, p.171). Ritchie-Hook and particularly Apthorpe both belong to the prep-school

world of boarders and day-boys, lessons and schedules, juvenile heroics—all an essential part of Guy's education. His ritualistic act of placating Apthorpe's departed spirit is justified partly by gratitude for the sheer joy that Apthorpe had brought him, partly by Guy's promise to deliver the gear, partly by Guy's share of the responsibility for Apthorpe's death. But the ritual celebrated by the mythic allusions—Chatty is found in a dark tower; he reveals the reality of Apthorpe, and upon his signing the receipt (three copies) "suddenly the wind dropped. It was a holy moment. Guy rose in silence and ritually received the book. The spirit of Apthorpe was placated" (*SH*, p.324)—is Guy's graduation from the schoolboy militarism which Apthorpe embodied, an attainment which is clearly implied by Guy's feat of transporting two tons of junk across wartime England to its elusive owner.

Prior to this graduation Guy is allowed two moments of great satisfaction while learning the ropes: one is his participation in the guest-night festivities (from which he emerges lame), and the other is his first setting foot ashore at Dakar (from which he emerges "under a cloud"). The personal exhilaration he enjoys is real, even though it stems from his success in playing the military role he has assumed. The comparable moments of despair, when the role proves too much for him, are his sorry day at Mudshore and his even sorrier attempt on Virginia (his temporary gloom over his appointment as platoon leader, which he believes implies he has not done well in school, is removed when Major Erskine explains this appointment as a sign that he has done very well). The role is a necessary one, and insofar as Guy can fill it he avails himself of the military values embodied in his beloved Halberdiers; but Guy in uniform is still Guy. A military moustache on his face is not real. When it is shaved off Guy recognizes that "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" (*SH*, p.140)—not a military rake, too old for rigger with a wastebasket, unable to see a target without his eye-glass. Guy will never be the practical, uncomplicated professional such as Colonel Tickeridge, who simply knows his job and does it expertly, untroubled by any "sickening suspicion . . . that he was in a war in which courage and a just cause were quite irrelevant to the issue" (*SH*, p.156).



Guy's education in this volume culminates in the raid at Dakar and in Apthorpe's death from the whiskey Guy had smuggled to him. These events bring home to him the great unwritten law of army life: someone always has to be held responsible. In both episodes Guy's intentions are honourable and his conduct irreproachable; but out in the real world beyond the classroom consequences are also real, good consequences are in no way guaranteed by good intentions or even by irreproachable conduct, and schoolboys had best realize these facts of life and accept them. Guy may still be burdened with certain illusions, but his actions imply that he has successfully passed into the world of real soldiering: he offers Dunn the cocoon which he brought back from Dakar (the adventure which in *Men at Arms* he has privately called "Operation Truslove"), "a very special nut. The trophy of a battle I've lost interest in" (*SH*, p.261).<sup>21</sup>

In *Officers and Gentlemen*, therefore, Guy is not so wet, and the aesthetic stakes are raised from comparatively relaxed humour to a "bitter hard sense".<sup>22</sup> As its ironic title implies, this volume examines the social aspect of the war, and its leit-motif is betrayal: Mr. Crouchback tells the tale of Father Gervase's betrayal, and is himself the victim of a thwarted attempt by the greedy Cuthberts; Ivor Claire deserts; Julia Stitch betrays Guy and, unintentionally, the unknown dead; a priest is a spy; General Whale and Ian Kilbannock are "accomplices in fraud" with Trimmer as their stock in trade; Virginia, with some help from Ian, betrays herself into a liaison with Trimmer; even Jumbo is accidentally betrayed when he is left behind at Mugg; and the final betrayal which Major Hound suffers from Ludovic happens off-stage. According to Mr. Crouchback's tale of the past, "All our own people were true. It was a spy . . . pretending to be a Catholic" who betrayed Father Gervase. This volume shows that in the present age 'our own people' are all too often not 'true', that there are many officers but all too few gentlemen who do not betray the tradition they pretend to serve.

Lord Ian Kilbannock, member of Bellamy's, an "arch-imposter in his Air Force dress" who aspires "to be known as one of the soft-faced men who did well out of the war", is socially acceptable anywhere and morally dead. His character is succinctly fixed, in the first volume, when after describing Air Marshal Beech precisely to Guy he man-



oeuvres Guy into signing this man's application to Bellamy's. Ian is intelligent, imaginative, highly sophisticated, but motivated only by self-interest, and as such he implicitly illustrates the reality of using the war as a personal opportunity. Also, as his sphere of operations is publicity, he has great powers of mischief and manipulation.<sup>23</sup> Like Basil Seal, he has an ironic sense of humour—"I never trusted the Air Force. Must be something wrong with people who'd accept *me*" (*SH*, p.768)—but a monumental selfishness such as he displays is the root cause of the dissolution and betrayal exhibited in this volume. Trimmer, by comparison, is a mere lout: boring, brainless, a fraud so blatant that he would be harmless without Ian's amoral intelligence and the irresponsibility of the press. Trimmer, in fact, is such a dullard that he cannot even sustain the role which has been created for him, a congenital fraud unable to take advantage of his greatest opportunity.

The war is solidly under way, the services mushrooming with useless organizations and crackpots, and all the good jobs are got at Bellamy's—at least for officers able to get into Bellamy's. "It's going to be a long war," says Tommy Blackhouse. "The great thing is to spend it among friends" (*SH*, p.311). Other Ranks and officers not of 'our own people' get their jobs through "the general parcel-post". While there is nothing at all wrong with such an arrangement provided the privileged bear a comparably greater responsibility, the actual result is X Commando. "Delightful fellows," says Ian, "prohetically drunk":

Just like Bellamy's without the bombing. . . . I've been round the other Commandos. Not at all the same sort of fellows. I should like to write a piece about you all. But it wouldn't do. . . . Wrong Period. Last-war stuff, Guy. Went out with Rupert Brooke. . . . Hopelessly upper class. You're the "Fine Flower of the Nation" . . . and it won't do. . . . This is a People's War. . . . We want heroes of the People [*SH*, pp.374-5].

Ian manufactures his own hero of the people, of course (and in the final volume Waugh shows us a people's war complete with people's courts), but X Commando's fine flowers of the nation do not 'do' much better than Trimmer does.

Their ultimate failure in Crete is clearly foreshadowed. Bellamy's, for example, harbours Air Marshal Beech, Ian, Ivor Claire, Box-Bender and such nonentities as Elderberry. At Mugg, Jumbo notes that "there are several fellows here already who wouldn't quite do in the Corps. Decent fellows, mind you, but not up to the mark" (*SH*, P.352). Tommy

accepts Trimmer as one of his officers. Ivor cheats during the night manoeuvre by commandeering a bus. And X Commando's fine flowers indulge in a petty inter-regimental snobbism even among themselves (*SH*, pp.359-60, 377), a penchant which leads Ivor to remark that "what they need is Julie Stitch to keep them in order." Moreover, Tommy Blackhouse is not the most capable of commanding officers, even without a broken leg. At Sidi Bishr his command declines "from boredom to disorder" (*SH*, pp.392, 436, 438) because discipline has been relaxed, and for a professional soldier he is quite innocent: not only does he swallow Ian's tale of Trimmer, but also, just before embarking for Crete, he tells Guy that

'Everything in Crete is under control. The navy broke up the sea landings and sunk the lot. The enemy only hold two pockets and the New Zealanders have got them completely contained. Reinforcements are rolling in every night for the counter-attack. The B.G.S. from Cairo says it's in the bag. . . .'

Tommy believed all this. So did Major Hound [*SH*, p.442].

Also, with excellent irony that only reveals itself later, "there was Mrs. Stitch. . . X Commando felt her presence as that of a benevolent, alert deity, their own protectress. Things could not go absolutely wrong with them while Mrs. Stitch was about" (*SH*, p.436). Guy is aware of most of these slips and weaknesses, and it is while he is at Sidi Bishr that the first overt mention of his disenchantment is given: "Already, without deliberation, he had begun to dissociate himself from the army in matters of real concern" (*SH*, p.395). This specially formed unit is not a stable fighting force; it is ready to fall apart at the first real crisis or stroke of bad luck. Yet Guy still identifies with, and has great faith in, his fellow officers. Socially, these men *are* the fine flower of England, Guy's 'own people'—Tommy, Eddie, Bertie, and most of all Ivor, "the fine flower of them all. He was quintessential England, the man Hitler had not taken into account" (*SH*, p.386). The bad luck comes, however, when Tommy breaks his leg, and a partial responsibility of field command descends upon Major Hound, the paper soldier.

Fido Hound is a useless military past, common to all armies, whose career is based on a desperate "faith in the magic of official forms. In bumf lay salvation" (*SH*, p.484). Even though he came to X Commando as a replacement, this man's inheriting any field command at all is Tommy's most serious error, for it is the commanding officer's

duty—to both those above him and the men in his unit—to see that all incompetent officers are removed from the direct chain of command.<sup>24</sup> With Fido even near the driver's seat the military machine is ditched. All order and effectiveness collapse because Fido betrays his sworn responsibilities as abominably as Ivor betrays his own; the difference, of course, is that Ivor's desertion is deliberate while Fido, in his incompetence, merely reverts to his primitive canine instincts. In his flight he loses everything of any value, except his major's insignia, to the Cretan peasant—a capable man with a stray dog—and at his flight's end Ludovic presumably kills him for his crowns and badges.

Caught up in this chaos, Guy does the best he can: he looks after the men in his own squad and stands by his superior officer as long as possible. His belief “that he was behaving pretty much as a Halberdier should” presents the standard of conduct on such occasions, a norm which is confirmed immediately by the appearance of the Halberdiers themselves—disciplined, competent, cheerful, “cleanshaven, . . . all their equipment in place, just as they had appeared during battalion exercises at Penkirk” (*SH*, p.461). When Guy longs to rejoin them after Fido disappears, he is, of course, refused: he is a member of Hookforce, not unemployed like the New Zealanders, and Hookforce shares the responsibility for the rear-guard with the Halberdiers. Thus, Guy on his own gets his section safely to the beach, obtains the surrender order in writing from the G.O.C. for the Hookforce commanders, and he does not take his final chance in the boat without first offering the same chance to his men. His two important experiences before leaving Crete are his last meeting with Ivor and his finding the corpse of the British soldier. Ivor's argument by analogy with duelling for changing conceptions of honour, logically unsound because it confuses the quality itself with a particular means of expressing it, is morally unsound because—at this point unknown to Guy—it is mere rationalization for a cowardly decision already taken. The dead soldier is young, unmarked, “undamaged it seemed. He lay as though at rest . . . like an effigy on a tomb—like Sir Roger in his shadowy shrine at Santa Dulcina” (*SH*, p.490). The association with Sir Roger and the absence of any visible cause of death should suggest the collapse of illusion, specifically the death of those illusory notions Guy had held when he left Santa Dulcina.<sup>25</sup> “Guy saluted and passed on.”

Such a metaphorical return to his starting place is justified by Guy's

prolonged silence in hospital, an even more extreme withdrawal from life than his existence at the Castello had been. Ironically, he is brought out of this silence by Julia Stich. Much more ironically, he emerges only to learn that Ivor has deserted, that Julia is covering for him, that Tommy has no wish to do anything about it—"the best thing is for everyone to keep quiet and forget the whole business" (*SH*, p.527)—and finally, some few days later, that because of the German invasion Russia has become England's ally. Most ironic of all, however, is Julia's unnecessary betrayal of both Guy and the nameless dead, again to protect Ivor. Although Guy has burned the evidence against Ivor, Julia's fear of Ritchie-Hook makes her ship Guy home by the slowest means available, and thus he is prevented from rejoining his old battalion; although the envelope contains only the identification of the dead, Julia's fear of the address makes her discard it, and thus a man who upheld his responsibilities is denied a human identity.

Conduct on the home front is not much better. General Whale's efforts to preserve his hitherto useless department, close kin to Julia's effort to preserve a traitor, lead to Operation Popgun and the whole Trimmer mess. Operation Popgun is an ironic parody of Guy's raid on Dakar, as Stopp argues, and "the Minister who minutes his desire for 'an assurance that McTavish has been found employment suitable to his merits', travesties all unknowingly a similar Churchillian message concerning Ritchie-Hook."<sup>26</sup> But this episode is also associated with the thunder-box operation through Ian's using Latimer's last words to Ridley,<sup>27</sup> and—more immediately—it is the ironic contrast to Guy's action in Crete. Guy is a brave man who behaves honourably, suffers greatly, and is rewarded with the loss of his temporary captaincy, bitter disillusionment, and betrayal: Trimmer is a coward who acts dishonourably, suffers not at all, and is rewarded—through the illusion deliberately fostered by a pair of liars—with a promotion to colonel and Guy's former wife as his mistress. Guy is shanghied home aboard the *Canary Castle*, and Trimmer is proclaimed a national hero. As Waugh states, in a different context, "the barrier between hairdresser and first-class passenger was down. It was important to start the new relationship on the proper level—a low one" (*SH*, p.345).

Trimmer's meteoric resurrection from obscurity—Operation Popgun is planned on Holy Saturday—implies a general degeneration of values

at this stage of the war. While he is obviously the antithesis of Guy, it may not be so obvious that he is also the antithesis of Sir Roger, Mr. Crouchback, Colonel Tickeridge, and those values which these characters affirm. "I fairly whizzed through O.C.T.U.," he tells Guy. "None of that pomp and ceremony of the Halberdiers. I get a good laugh when I remember those guest nights and the snuff and all that rot" (*SH*, p.318)—a boast which reveals nothing new about the Halberdiers but implies a great deal about O.C.T.U. Trimmer is without tradition of any sort—social, religious, or military—and he is therefore without values except those of self-gratification, without direction or purpose, other than simple opportunism. His ubiquity and his international names—Trimmer, McTavish, Ali, Gustave—suggest a general growth of such mindless opportunism (by contrast Lieutenant Padfield, Captain Grimes's other descendant—with his "very significant" readiness to be impressed and his frightful urge to insinuate himself into everything—is wholly American). When Ian urges 'Master Trimmer' to 'play the man' Waugh places Trimmer precisely in his thematic position: in spite of his energy and ubiquity, Trimmer himself is without values and is therefore unreal; and in himself he is an inert force in life, not really dangerous, because he lacks direction and purpose. The real villain (like the real hero) is the one who seizes upon the given, assigns it purpose and direction, and thus *creates* a fraudulent value, a sham reality, as an active force in human affairs. Such a process, at any rate, is beautifully implied by the contrasting reactions to the discovery that Trimmer has been a hairdresser:

'You know,' said Kerstie, 'I think that rather spoils our joke. I mean there's nothing very funny about his being what he is when one knows what he is—is there?—if you see what I mean,'

'I see what you mean,' said Virginia [*SH*, p.411].

Ian's reaction is given a few pages later: "It's important about his having been a hairdresser. A first-class story" (*SH*, p.416).

Further evidence of Trimmer's thematic position is the fact that we do not really feel toward him as we feel toward Ian, General Whale, Ivor, Julia Stitch, the priest who is a spy, or even Grigshawe and the Cuthberts: these people, who give purpose and direction to the latent Trimmerism in their own natures, are morally culpable in a way that Trimmer himself is not. Moreover, the most shockingly guilty of them—Ian, Ivor, Julia, and perhaps the priest—are those who are most

closely associated with a tradition: the value of the tradition they betray implies the depth of their guilt. When Mr. Cuthbert tells his wife that Mr. Crouchback's mind "seems to work different than yours and mine," the same observation could be made by Ian, Ivor, or Julia about Sir Roger, the spying priest about Christ, or Grigshawe about Colonel Tickeridge. Miss Vavasour, in her own way aware of such things, defines the threat to Mr. Crouchback in terms of this volume's title: "You are too trustful, Mr. Crouchback. You treat everyone as if he were a gentleman. That officer definitely was *not*" (*SH*, p.283). And it is no accident that on the same page we are told "she had cherished a *chivalrous* devotion for him since she first settled at Matchet" (italics mine). Yet the best evidence for Waugh's philosophical position is offered by Guy himself. Guy is fully aware of the traditions to which he is heir, and he is, as Waugh described him, "essentially an unselfish character".<sup>28</sup> But he cannot make the traditional values he affirms an *active* force in his own conduct until he commits himself to some real action which recreates these values in the present; and he cannot make such a commitment until his illusory notions have been purged by experience.

This required experience is his by the end of this volume; the illusions have been pierced and Guy is returned to his starting point:

It was just such a sunny, breezy Mediterranean day two years before when he read of the Russo-German alliance, when a decade of shame seemed to be ending in light and reason, when the Enemy was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off; the modern age in arms.

Now that hallucination was dissolved . . . and he was back [—] after less than two years' pilgrimage in a Holy Land of illusion [—] in the old ambiguous world, where priests were spies and gallant friends proved traitors and his country was led blundering into dishonour.

That afternoon he took his pocket-book to the incinerator . . . and thrust it in. It was a symbolic act; he stood like the man at Sphakia who dismembered his Bren and threw its parts one by one out into the harbour, splash, splash, splash, into the scum [*SH*, pp.531-2].

In a world of scum, however, a man still has to act, still has to create his own life. One excellent means of doing this is suggested when Tony Box-Bender sends for the religious books, for "the cloister offers a saner and more civilized life than 'the world'."<sup>29</sup> Another means is presented in the final volume; and in the first edition's "Synopsis of Preceding volumes" Waugh tersely states what Guy has left to work



with after his illusions have been swept away: "Personal honour alone remains" (*US*, p.4). Such a bleak moral outpost, typical of an ironist, is all very well as a realistic point of departure; but Guy has yet to learn that if personal honour is to be a means of life it must be bodied forth in action, and it must indeed be personal—unaffected by external success or failure, by the understanding or misunderstanding of others, or by social distinctions (that is, it cannot exist at the expense of less fortunate human beings and still be personal honour). These are essentially the lessons seeded into the first two volumes, but in *Unconditional Surrender* they finally flower forth in Guy's own life.

Waugh admitted that for a time he did not believe himself capable of writing the final volume, and it did not appear until six years after *Officers and Gentlemen*. But "Compassion" was published in August, 1949—three years before *Men at Arms*—and it suggests that, even this early, Waugh had both the skeletal outline and the resolution of the trilogy firmly in mind. Major Gordon of "Compassion" is obviously a first version of Guy Crouchback: he at first limits his commitments strictly to his military assignment, but when he commits himself to the homeless Jews in Yugoslavia he sees them "as part of the thing he had set out hopefully to fight in the days when there had been a plain, unequivocal issue between right and wrong."<sup>30</sup> A slightly different version of this story is, of course, woven into *Unconditional Surrender* where it becomes one half of the sweeping ironic perception which resolves the whole trilogy. Its ironic parallel is Guy's remarrying Virginia—an episode which also might well be entitled 'Compassion'—and these two sequences are firmly linked:

Guy had not dismissed the Jews from his mind. The reprimand [from the partisan command] rankled but more than this he felt compassion; something less than he had felt for Virginia and her child but a similar sense that here again, in a world of hate and waste, he was being offered the chance of doing a single small act to redeem the times [*SH*, p.742].

Behind both of these episodes lie two perceptions prerequisite to Guy's commitment to either Virginia or the Jews, perceptions which—like the episodes themselves—amount ultimately to the same thing (and these do not come to Guy cheaply, for two whole years of empty soldiering intervene between the last two volumes). One version is Mr. Crouchback's advice that "quantitative judgements don't apply" in moral or spiritual actions: "*The Mystical Body doesn't strike*



*attitudes and stand on its dignity. It accepts suffering and injustice. . . . If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of 'face'"* (SH, pp.546-7). And the parallel is Guy's realization, as he prays at his father's funeral, of what really has been the matter with him:

For many years now . . . he had reported for duty saying to God: 'I don't ask anything from you. I am here if you want me. I don't suppose I can be any use, but if there is anything I can do, let me know,' and left it at that.

'I don't ask anything from you'; that was the deadly core of his apathy. . . . That emptiness had been with him for years now even in his days of enthusiasm and activity in the Halberdiers. Enthusiasm and activity were not enough. God required more than that. He had commanded all men to ask [SH, p.603].

Thus Guy now prays, "Show me what to do and help me to do it," a qualitative difference from his habitual attitude; and this prayer signals the active reopening of Guy's life. This change of attitude is as important to Guy as all that has happened to him in the first two volumes: his experiences have destroyed his illusions, but his new awareness and change of heart are the first positive gains Guy has made. The man who in *Men at Arms* too often failed "to do some small service which only he could perform" is now ready to recognize the next opportunity before it is too late. And opportunity soon comes.

The context of Guy's remarrying Virginia, like that of any marriage, is primarily social; and as such this episode is the ironic answer to the unworthy society presented in the previous volume. Guy's act essentially transplants into the twentieth century the moral reality of Sir Roger's chivalric code, for Waugh leaves no doubt about either the reference to Sir Roger or the relation of this act to *Officers and Gentlemen*. Kerstie Kilbannock says, "You poor bloody fool, you're being *chivalrous*—about *Virginia*. Can't you understand men aren't chivalrous any more? . . . Can't you see how ridiculous you will look, playing the knight errant?" Guy's quiet answer implies that he at last has become a whole man again—aware, decent, effective, wholeheartedly committed:

Knights errant . . . used to go out looking for noble deeds. I don't think I've ever in my life done a single, positively unselfish action. I certainly haven't gone out of my way to find opportunities. Here was something most unwelcome, put into my hands; something which I believe the Americans describe as "beyond the call of duty"; not the normal behaviour of an officer and a gentleman; something they'll laugh about in Bellamy's [SH, pp.698-9].

Guy is concerned with the reality of Virginia's situation, not with appearances; and such a concern, such an act, is the opposite of Ivor's desertion and Trimmer's resurrection where everyone involved is concerned with the appearance and wishes to forget the reality. Guy's selflessness is the antithesis of the selfishness everywhere rampant in *Officers and Gentlemen*. And Guy also makes proper use of his Catholic tradition, which he conspicuously failed to do in the first volume: Guy's commitment brings Trimmer's child love, security, faith, and implicitly hastens Virginia's conversion. Thus, three souls are saved: Virginia's, her child's, and in a more immediate, worldly sense, Guy's own.

Guy's commitment to the homeless Jews does not turn out so successfully, but this episode ironically resolves the ambiguities in which Guy found himself at the end of *Men at Arms*. Once again, as after the Dakar raid and Apthorpe's death, Guy has to learn that the effect of human action in this world is contingent upon externalities, and the fate of the Kanyis shows that personal commitments are as subject to this contingency as official ones are. Once again, Guy's best intentions and irreproachable conduct are misinterpreted—more or less deliberately—by those in power: the rest of the Jews escape, but the Kanyis are tried by a 'people's court' and unjustly executed for treason. In "Compassion" the ironic point of this episode is explicitly stated by the regimental chaplain—an excellent ironic perception, in no way comic or satiric, devoid of pity or sentimentality, simply the detached awareness of a truth embedded in this bitter failure. "You mustn't judge actions by their apparent success," the priest tells Major Gordon. "Everything you did was good in itself. . . . But don't you think it just possible that *they* did *you* good? No suffering need ever be wasted."<sup>31</sup> This passage, omitted from the novel, is replaced by one in which Mme Kanyi does Guy good indeed:

'Is there any place that is free from evil [she asks him]? It is too simple to say that only the Nazis wanted war. These communists wanted it too. It was the only way in which they could come to power. Many of my people wanted it, to be revenged on the Germans, to hasten the creation of the national state. It seems to me there was a will to war . . . everywhere. Even good men thought their private honour would be satisfied by war. They could assert their manhood by killing and being killed. They would accept hardships in recompense for having been selfish and lazy. Danger justified privilege. I knew Italians . . . who felt this. Were there none in England?'

'God forgive me,' said Guy. 'I was one of them' [*SH*, p.788].

In the novel, appropriately enough, the next words are "He had come to the end of the crusade to which he had devoted himself on the tomb of Sir Roger."

The priest's advice to Major Gordon—"you mustn't judge actions by their apparent success"—becomes, in the novel, Mr. Crouchback's advice that quantitative judgements don't apply, a perception important to both episodes. When Kerstie is asked to think of Virginia's child, she says, "My dear Guy, the world is full of unwanted children. Half the population of Europe are homeless—refugees and prisoners. What is one child more or less in all that misery?" (*SH*, p.699). And in Italy when Guy asks permission to inquire about the Kanyis, the camp Commandant says, "By all means, old man. But aren't you making rather heavy weather of it? What do two more or less matter?" (*SH*, p.791) Guy's reply to Kerstie would have answered the Commandant as well: "I can't do anything about all those others. This is just one case where I can help. And only I, really. . . . Don't you *see*?" But Kerstie, for all her "granite propriety", does not see, and neither would the Commandant. Guy sees. The "antithesis between the acceptance of sacrifice and the will to win" (*SH*, p.672) is an antithesis in quantitative terms only: morally, qualitatively, the acceptance of sacrifice can be in itself the means of winning one's own soul in a world of scum.

This world of hate and waste is everywhere evident in the final volume, and Guy's re-entry into life changes only one tiny corner of it. England's military organization has passed from its full flower to decadence, to the point at which Sir Ralph Brompton and his homosexual communists can safely insinuate themselves.<sup>32</sup> It is no accident that Guy's temporary office at H.O.O.H.Q. is mostly taken up by "the plaster reconstruction of a megalosaurus", or that the Ministry of Information now supports communist propaganda (Sir Ralph's *Foreign Affairs Summary*) and mere rot—*Survival*—put out by a man "who cherished no ambitions for the future, believing, despite the title of his monthly review, that the human race was destined to dissolve in chaos" (*SH*, p. 571). Thinking primarily in quantitative terms is common to both the more acceptable men of this world—perhaps Box-Bender (*SH*, p.734)—and the worst: at Begoy, "the cordiality or strict formality of [Guy's] reception [by the communists] depended on the size of the last drop" (*SH*, pp. 722-3). Innocents such as the

American General Speit, who believes that fighting lazy *domobrans* is "all the same thing" as fighting Germans, or Brigadier Cape, who thinks of Ian that "a peer and a member of Bellamy's was likely to be trustworthy", or Guy himself, chosen by Sir Ralph as a respectable front-man for operations in Yugoslavia, are manipulated by the more sophisticated. Except for Ludovic, creator of "The Death Wish" and its living embodiment, Waugh's two best means of illustrating this world of rot are the sword of Stalingrad and the sham assault on the blockhouse near Begoy.

The sword, not a weapon at all but a mere public relations device inspired in the royal mind by Trimmer's Commando dagger which he brandishes in a propaganda film (no Commando dagger was ever used in action), is obviously the antithesis of Sir Roger's sword of honour. But the specific ironies associated with it also contrast it with Guy's father's funeral. The sword, after having been sent round the kingdom at the suggestion of a gossip-columnist, finally achieves "its apotheosis, exposed for adoration hard by the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and the sacring place of the Kings of England." There it stands "upright between two candles, on a table counterfeiting an altar", and the adoring hordes, "in a mood of devotion", all fall "silent as though they were approaching a corpse lying in state" (*SH*, pp.550-52). Far from Westminster Abbey, in the crowded chapel at Broome, lies a real corpse, and the altar is not a counterfeit. Even in heraldic terms Mr. Crouchback is real, for the family's "sable and argent cross . . . was . . . something rare in English armoury—a device that had been carried into battle" (*SH*, p.600); and Broome's being held since the reign of Henry II makes the Crouchback line contemporary with Sir Roger and the manor of Waybroke. Waugh stated that Mr. Crouchback's purpose in the novel is "to keep audible a steady undertone of the decencies and true purpose of life behind the chaos of events and fantastic characters. Also to show him as a typical victim (parallel to the trainloads going to concentration camps) in the war against the modern age."<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is fitting that this man should be laid to rest as the vulgarity and unreality of the times are focussed and worshipped at Westminster. It is also fitting that Guy should receive his crucial insight as he prays at the funeral, while Ludovic—who goes to see the sword specifically to get an inspiration—receives nothing from his veneration. From this point Guy actively inherits his father's tradition, the continuance of the decencies

and true purpose of life; and Ludovic goes to his parachute training station, seclusion, "The Death Wish," and finally to full withdrawal at Santa Dulcina.

The fake assault on the blockhouse, during which Ritchie-Hook finally manages to get himself killed, parallels Operation Popgun. Both are deliberately staged publicity stunts—Begoy has been set up as a "liberal democracy" for General Speit's benefit—both feature blundering cowards in action, and in both the journalistic value of the event is shown to be at odds with the reality. Ritchie-Hook has become senile, more useless than ever, and according to Dawkins he has been searching for the sort of death he finds; but the dignity of this one bit of truth in the whole operation is spoiled by the American photographer. Afterwards, when even the actors are somewhat shaken, "Sneiffel [like Ian after Popgun] was jubilant. He had secured a scoop which would fill half a dozen pages of an illustrated weekly, the full photographic record of a unique event" (*SH*, p.778). Officially a participant in this shameful business, Guy remains aloof and commits himself only to freeing the Jews; in the same manner he stands aloof from the popular adoration of the sword of Stalingrad and commits himself only to Virginia and her child. Guy's own manhood cannot regenerate the rotting world—"The Death Wish" is a best-seller, Air Marshal Beech's memoirs are published, Elderberry loses his seat in parliament to Gilpin—but Tony Box-Bender does become a monk, and Guy does end as a man, very much involved in life, accepted, *simpatico*.

Madness, in one form or another from eccentricity and hallucination to hopeless insanity, for one purpose or another from excellent comedy to deadly seriousness, is everywhere present in all three volumes. Philosophically speaking, to ask what is sane or insane may not be the same as asking what is real or unreal, but for purposes of fiction the substitution serves admirably: in "a mad world, my masters" (quoted by Uncle Peregrine whom Guy calls "appallingly sane"), the most sane actions are least likely to be understood by this world's representative figures—Ian Kilbannock and Arthur Box-Bender, for example—and those actions which they believe are insane are apt to be the best, morally the most sane, of all. Each of the major clowns—Apthorpe, Ritchie-Hook, Fido Hound, Ludovic—is psychologically out-of-round in his own fairly obvious way. And the minor clowns could stock a

psychiatrist's casebook: most of them are not so far gone as "poor old Binkie Cavanagh" or the air force courier who was surprised by Dr. Akonanga's scorpions, but all are going, and some are well along. As DeSouza says, "In my experience the more responsible posts in the army are largely filled by certifiable lunatics. They don't cause any more trouble than the sane ones" (*SH*, p.651).

Waugh's more serious use of madness concerns the Crouchback family. Guy's father "acknowledged no monarch since James II. It was not an entirely sane conspectus but it engendered in his gentle breast two rare qualities, tolerance and humility" (*SH*, p.40)—neither of which is conspicuous in the supposedly sane characters of the trilogy. In Uncle Peregrine this strain produces "a bore of international repute whose dreaded presence could empty the room in any centre of civilization"; and to Guy "he exemplified the indefinable numbness which Guy recognized intermittently in himself; the saturnine strain which in Ivo had swollen to madness" (*SH*, p.668). The extreme form in Ivo is defined by Guy—to Tony Box-Bender who is worried about his own stability under pressure—as "an excess of melancholy": Ivo was "in every sense a most retiring man". And retirement from a mad world, of course, can signify either an acceptance of reality and excellent health—as with Mr. Crouchback's retirement from Broome, Tony Box-Bender's retirement to the contemplative life, or Guy's retirement to married life at Lesser House—or it can be a danger signal, as it is with Ludovic, or with Guy's withdrawal at the beginning and his silence in hospital after Crete. This ambiguity permits the responses of the worldlings faced with Guy's commitments in the final volume. DeSouza, after Guy has hounded him about the Jews, says: "You know, uncle, I'm beginning to doubt if you're fit to be left. You've an *idée fixe*. I hope you aren't going to become a psychiatrist's case like your predecessor here" (*SH*, p.780). Kerstie and Ian, faced with Guy's acceptance of Virginia, go even further: Kerstie says, "He must be insane," and Ian replies, "I've always thought he was. It's in the family, you know. There was that brother of his" (*SH*, p.697; see also p.699). likewise, Box-Bender when faced with his son's desire to become a monk concludes immediately that Tony is suffering from religious mania. Such reactions, ironically enough, are based ultimately upon quantitative judgements: no one other than Guy will help Virginia, no one else in Yugoslavia is concerned about suffering Jews, and



Box-Bender can think only in terms of what Tony is giving up. By the same token, those characters who are least retiring during the course of the action—perhaps Trimmer and Lieutenant Padfield—do not connote great stability, do not suggest much qualitative discernment.

One might well wonder, finally, whether Waugh's use of madness were not also a subtle nudge at the reader faced with the trilogy's resolution. The child of Trimmer—the seed of all that Waugh detested in the modern age—becomes heir to the house of Crouchback, which embodies most of what Waugh admired. The traditionless and unreal is brought within the fold and, implicitly, will be civilized through the compassion of a man who has surrendered himself unconditionally to God's purpose as he perceives it—Sir Roger's squire who has at last won his knighthood in faithful service to his real Lord. In other words, the contradictions and tensions between Paul Pennyfeather and Basil Seal have been at last resolved, and resolved believably. Guy is real, the most sane man in an insane world because he has been strong enough to surmount his own vanity and re-create, in tolerance and humility, the decencies and true purpose of life. He has found himself, in traditional Christian fashion, by giving himself wholeheartedly to that which is in every way worthy. Thus, the city is re-established within the jungle; the great house is heroically repaired in the teeth of immanent dissolution. But what faithful reader of all the preceding work would ever have expected such a resolution? What has happened to the great satirist? Surely he must have gone a bit soft. There was that Pinfold thing—written just before *Unconditional Surrender*. To suspect so, alas, is to align oneself with the Kilbannocks and Box-Benders of the mad world.

The best answer, to end as I began, would be that the faithful reader who realized he was dealing with an ironist should have anticipated such a resolution—if only the author were able to achieve it—from the very beginning, and certainly from *Work Suspended* onward. This resolution is not comic, not satiric, but neither is it achieved at the expense of technique. The superb style never deteriorates. The poised ironic detachment never wavers. The implicit relationship between ironic author and aware reader never becomes ambiguous. Yet in Guy Crouchback Waugh has successfully resolved the ironic contradictions of his own perception, and—by comparison almost a fringe benefit—has written “the one piece of English fiction about the 1939-45 War which is certain to survive”.<sup>34</sup>



## Footnotes

1. Stephen Marcus, "Evelyn Waugh and the Art of Entertainment," *Partisan Review*, XXIII (Summer, 1956), 349.
2. A. A. DeVitis, *Roman Holiday: The Catholic Novels of Evelyn Waugh* (New York, 1956), p.84.
3. As Peter Hinchcliffe argues, this is the only father-son relationship in the canon which is not in some way satiric: "Fathers and Children in the Novels of Evelyn Waugh," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXV (April, 1966), 306-9.
4. See, for example, three particularly good essays: Bernard Bergonzi, "Evelyn Waugh's Gentlemen," *Critical Quarterly*, V (Spring, 1963), 23-36; Alvin B. Kernan, "The Wall and the Jungle: The Early Novels of Evelyn Waugh," *Yale Review*, LIII (Winter, 1963), 199-220; Andrew Rutherford, "Waugh's *Sword of Honour*," *Imagined Worlds: Essays on some English Novels and Novelists in Honour of John Butt*, ed. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor (London, 1968), pp.441-460.
5. For a precise description of this sort of mind, see Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), pp.448-450.
6. Alan R. Thompson, *The Dry Mock: A Study of Irony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1948), p.133.
7. A. H. Wright, "Irony and Fiction," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XII (September, 1953), 115, 113.
8. See, for example, "Converted to Rome: Why It Has Happened to Me," *London Daily Express*, October 20, 1930, p.10.
9. "The Soldiers Speak," *Night and Day*, I (July 29, 1937), 24; cf. Calvin W. Lane, "Waugh's Book Reviews for *Night and Day*," *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter*, IV (Spring, 1970), 3.
10. Hinchcliffe, p.302, a comment on the plot of *Brideshead*.
11. DeVitis, p.79.
12. Quoted by F. J. Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* (London, 1958), p.39.
13. I have argued this aspect of Fielding's craft in "Fielding's Use of the 'Humor' Tradition," *Bucknell Review*, XVII (December, 1969), 53-63.
14. D. S. Savage, "The Innocence of Evelyn Waugh," *Focus Four*, ed. B. Rajan (London, 1947), p.39.
15. James B. Stronks, "A Modern Instance," *American Literary Realism 1870-1910*, No.4 (Fall, 1968), n.p.
16. James F. Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Seattle and London, 1966), p.53.
17. See Rutherford, pp.449-451.
18. Expertly set forth by Carens, pp.161-3.
19. Winston Churchill, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston, 1950), p.200.
20. Waugh's announced theme, quoted by Carens, p.166.
21. Captain Truslove, alas, does not appear in *Sword of Honour*. Waugh described *Men at Arms* as "a kind of uncelebration, a history of Guy Crouchback's disillusion with the army. Guy has old fashioned ideas of honour and illusions of chivalry; we see these being used up and destroyed by his encounters with the realities of army life." See Julian Jebb, "Evelyn Waugh: An Interview," *Paris Review*, VIII (Summer-Fall, 1963), 82.
22. "The New Waugh," *The Times Literary Supplement*, October 27, 1961, p.770.
23. Cf. Evelyn Waugh, "Religion in State Schools," *New Statesman and Nation*, XXVI (October 2, 1943), 251: "The real enemies of society are sitting snug behind typewriters and microphones, pursuing their work of destruction amid popular applause."
24. The Halberdiers do not make this mistake. When Guy is second in command of a training battalion he is not taken into action because he is considered too old and too inexperienced to take over the command if his colonel were to be killed (*SH*, p.543).
25. Stopp's view (pp.174-5) that "honour murdered is the meaning" of this corpse seems too narrow and too specific. Guy encounters the dead before he learns of Ivor's desertion, and his condition in hospital implies the loss of more than honour.
26. Stopp, p.171.

27. Waugh alludes to another famous execution, that of Charles I, just before Aphorpe visits his booby-trapped thunder-box: "He nothing common did or mean on their morning of departure" (*SH*, p.172). See Marvell's poem, "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland."
28. *Paris Review* interview, p.82.
29. Evelyn Waugh, "Kicking Against the Goad," *Commonweal*, XLIX (March 11, 1949), 534.
30. "Compassion," *The Month*, n.s.II (August, 1949), 89.
31. "Compassion," p.98. Cf. the healing quality of Guy's second honeymoon with Virginia (*SH*, p.747).
32. The perversion of the communists is slyly re-enforced by Cattermole's ecstatic tales of the female partisans' sexlessness (*SH*, p.714).
33. Quoted by Stopp, p.168.
34. "The New Waugh," p.770.