



The Bright Young Generation: Rebellious Tendencies in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*

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Abstract:

This paper examines Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* as a satirical exploration of the Bright Young Generation's rebellious tendencies in interwar British society. Set against the backdrop of post-World War 1 disillusionment and the looming threat of renewed conflict, the novel depicts a society suffering from moral exhaustion, social inertia, and a profound lack of direction. While critical attention has often focused on Waugh's treatment of decadence and modernity, this study argues that the reckless sociability and apparent frivolity of the Bright Young People function as a symbolic response to a deeply destabilised social order rather than as mere manifestations of youthful excess. The Bright Young Generation's hedonistic and chaotic behaviour constitutes a satirical yet self-destructive form of rebellion against a hollow and hypocritical post-war establishment. Through elaborate parties, treasure hunts, absurd public intrusions, and a persistent refusal to engage in meaningful work, these characters challenge conventional values of productivity, authority and moral seriousness. However, this rebellion remains fundamentally compromised, as it neither dismantles existing power structures nor offers viable alternatives. Instead, Waugh exposes the limits of rebellion within a society still governed by entrenched privilege and cultural inequality. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, the paper further demonstrates how access to social distinction enables the Bright Young People to swing between transgression and protection, allowing their excesses to be both visible and tolerated. This framework illuminates the polarised nature of interwar British society, in which cultural privilege insulates certain social blocs from consequence while simultaneously reinforcing collective stagnation. To end *Vile Bodies* presents the Bright Young Generation's rebellion as both a symptom of post-war trauma and a prophetic critique of a society incapable of reversing its own decline, foreshadowing an even bleaker historical and moral future.

Original Research

Keywords: The Bright Young Generation, Rebellious Tendencies.

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INTRODUCTION

Vile Bodies centres on the extravagant social lives of the Bright Young People, whose reckless behaviour is frequently accompanied by frivolous and superficial discourse. Formed in the aftermath of the First World War, this generation seeks escape from collective trauma through the adoption of a new mode of living characterised by excess distraction and an apparent indifference to purpose. Rather than embracing the conventional expectation that youth should contribute to social continuity and renewal,

Waugh's characters suspend themselves in a perpetual present, detached from both responsibility and long-term vision. Youth, traditionally regarded as a driving force of innovation and historical continuity, is here rendered inert, its potential dissipated through compulsive amusement.

Within the novel, this moral and social vacuum is highlighted by moments of ironic contrast, such as Colonel Blount's invocation of John Wesley's life as a model for the younger generation. The reference exposes the

gulf between inherited ideals of discipline, vocation and social duty, and the Bright Young People's embrace of pleasure as the organising principle of existence. Absorbed in the planning of ever more elaborate entertainments, most notably the infamous airship party, the characters convert leisure into an all-consuming occupation. Waugh's satire thus reveals how wealth, fame and social visibility, when detached from productive labour or ethical commitment, become empty signifiers that hasten personal and collective decline in post-war England.

Evelyn Waugh wrote *Vile Bodies* during a period when the traumas of the First World War were revisited through the publication of memoirs, collections of poetry, novels, and plays. The reaction of writers to the Great War, according to Anderson, "took two forms: an initial reaction to the horrors of total warfare and a later attempt to describe the social consequences of the conflict" (4). The first category of writers, who reacted during the war through literary write-ups, are mostly those who actually participated in it and, in the course of or after, they describe their atrocious experiences in written form. They wrote especially poetry and are generally referred to as "war poets". The long list includes Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Rupert Brooke. The second category is those who wrote on the effects of the war on society as they witnessed and experienced it when the war ended. It is in this second category that Waugh, Graham Greene, Ronald Firbank, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, Eliot, Fitzgerald and Hemingway fall. It is for this same reason that Wilson notes that works of Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh and Robertson Davies did not actually write about the war, but about the manner in which "the experience of the war, both for individual characters and the society's collective memory, permeates each novel" (6). This extract helps to better understand Waugh's ideology of the consequences of war, but he criticises Britain's modern perversion of Christianity and the destruction of the stately homes of England.

Like Waugh, Graham Greene's *The Destroyers* also emphasises the young British rebellious tendency in a short story on post-war destruction, whereby a group of teenage boys, who call themselves the 'Wormsley Common gang', destroy the house of an innocent old architect (symbolising the past) because he refuses them access to his land and his outdoor bathroom. This house is the only beauty left in a devastated land after the war. They selfishly destroy this house so that everyone should be affected by the war and get rid of the last vestige of traditional beauty in the war-torn landscape. Greene highlights a society where no one escapes the atrocities of war. Man does justice himself if he cannot enjoy the little comfort left and owned by the privileged.

What are you going to do? Share them? / We aren't thieves, T. said. Nobody's going to steal anything from this house. I kept these for you and me — a celebration. He knelt down on the floor and counted them out — there were seventy in all. We'll burn them, he said, one by one and taking it in turns they held a note upward and lit the corner, so that the flame burnt slowly toward their fingers. The gray ash floated above them and fell on their heads like age. I'd like to see Old Misery's face when we are through, T. said. (Greene, 9)

Contrasted to Waugh's world, where the "have" enjoy their wealth alone and the "have not" accept their condition but receives aid from the former from time to time. Instead of confronting their social responsibilities, the Bright Young People withdraw into a constant round of party-going, creating new experiences and avenues of partying. These youths get the appellation bright because of their popularity and wealth. Waugh's moral and satiric novel of the emptiness of riches and fame has clear lessons for contemporary culture's obsession with celebrity. Waugh and Greene focus on the young set to show that the lifestyle which characterised their era was a common phenomenon. The fact that youths make up the

majority of a nation seems to be a threat to the future of a nation because they are brought up at a time when values are trivial, hence triviality will be passed on rather than earnestness.

This work uses Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to analyse the novel *Vile Bodies*. Cultural capital, developed in the 1960s, describes the form of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has that give them a higher status in society. To better understand the concept of cultural capital, a definition of culture will be necessary to grasp the notion behind cultural studies and the importance of cultural continuity. Culture is the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious or social group (Merriam–Webster). The society and parents provide children with such capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system. All value is contingent, and to behave as if it were not so is to exercise over others a power unjustly derived from privilege and status. This theory then helps in the analysis of the text under study by paying attention to the parent-child relationship to see how this form of capital has been transmitted and also to evaluate its outcome.

John Goldthorpe in “Cultural Capital: Some Critical Observations” says Bourdieu's sociology of educational attainment of the dominant class is due to the fact that children from wealthy families are crucially advantaged over children of subordinate classes because they enter the educational system already well prepared to succeed within it. In their case, a clear continuity exists between the culture of the home and that of the school. These children will share a common mode of speech, style of social interaction and aesthetic orientation with their teachers, and neither the content of what they are taught (syllabus), nor the manner in which they are taught (pedagogy) is likely to appear strange to them. In contrast, for children from other class backgrounds and especially those of working-class or peasant origins, the school will represent an alien and indeed a hostile environment. They face a social and cultural world set apart from that of their families and communities, so they feel out of place. The dominant class benefits from a positive interplay between the influences of home and school, while the less privileged find difficulties with adjustment. These latter students then fail to reach higher levels of the educational system,

either because they are excluded due to inadequate performance or because they exclude themselves.

Bourdieu's powerful analysis of the school as a conservative force argues that students' success at school is a function of their possession of “cultural capital” and “habitus” (which are dispositions, attitudes and motivations to learning, parental support for education, social advantage, ease in dealing with authority figures, linguistic ability and high culture). It is believed that education has been developed by the bourgeoisie and that the working class has never been able to find any form of ownership in the education system they are confronted with. It is this possession of dominant culture that Bourdieu calls cultural capital. This cultural dominance in the text is one of partying, the motor business and idleness. The novel portrays two styles of family life: that of the Bright young people and their parents, and a working-class group. Nevertheless, in a conversation between two women made aware through Adam, we get to know what these children do and how their parents are proud of them:

And it's a very good position, too, for a boy of that age, and I've told him, and his father told him. You ought to think yourself lucky, I've said, to get a good position like that in these days, particularly when it's so hard to get a position at all of any kind or sort. Mrs. Hemingway with her son next door who left school eighteen months ago, and there he is kicking his heels about the house all day and doing nothing, and taking a correspondence course in civil engineering. It's a very good position, I told him, and, of course, you can't expect work to be interesting, though no doubt after a time you get used to it just as your father's done, and would probably miss it if you hadn't it to do, you know how Alfred gets on his holidays, doesn't know what to do with himself half the time, just looks at the sea and says, well, this is a change, and then starts wondering how things are at the office. Well, I told Bob that, but it's no good, and all he wants to do is go into the motor business; well, as I said to him, the motor business is all right for them that have influence... (61).

Here we notice a change of role in terms of education whereby it is the lower class or working class that performs brilliantly in schools and have the chance to occupy professions that makes their parents proud of them. We equally notice the total parental control, a form of cultural privilege which siblings of the classless benefit. This contrasts with the lifestyle adopted by the bright young people who refuse to work for a life of partying and gambling. The most popular party attended by all is Lady Metroland's party, where no one wants to miss Mrs Ape and her angels' performance. The ceremony is announced with a lot of enthusiasm, as presented below:

They were all having supper together in what was still called the schoolroom in Lady Metroland's house. From the window they could see the guests arriving for the party. In spite of the rain quite a large crowd had collected on either side of the awning to criticize the cloaks with appreciative "oohs" and "ahs" or contemptuous sniffs. Cars and taxis drove up in close succession. Lady Circumference splashed up the street in galoshes, wearing a high fender of diamonds under a tartan umbrella. The Bright Young People came popping all together, out of someone's electric brougham like a litter of pigs, and ran squealing up the steps. Some "gate-crashers" who had made the mistake of coming in Victorian fancy dress were detected and repulsed. They hurry home to change for a second assault. No one wanted to miss Mrs. Ape's début. (41)

The above shows a juxtaposition of lives between the 'have' and the 'have not', where the poor want to be like children with rich parents but face restriction from their mothers who encourage them to labour hard as their fathers, and they will come to love their pains from its harvest. The less privileged still dress in Victorian items and consider it an outing cloth because the queen was a model even in her dressing habits.

Parents are equally privileged; thus, cultural capital is hereditary, although the rise of the middle class also means that children from previously peripheral families could eventually benefit from cultural capital. Hereditary here is different from inherited privileges and instead relates to exposure to and awareness of advantages embedded in cultural evolution. It is absurd that those endowed with the advantages of cultural capital misuse it and end up not fulfilled. Miss Mouse, the daughter of the Prime Minister, misuses her cultural privilege by organising a party at the Brown residence at midnight. The next day, it is the top title of the news, and this threatens her father's position. If one does not use cultural facts well, they end up in trouble, especially the high class.

The title *Vile Bodies* understudy is based on a verse from Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians, which is part of the funeral service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayers. Waugh's vision here is misanthropic, attacking the emptiness and amorality of pre-war life. It is also a literal translation from the Latin phrase "Corpora Vilia", plural of "Corpus Vile", meaning a person or thing fit only to be the object of experimentation, just as the characters do with their experiments at parties. Without any purpose for life, the "Bright Young Things" and their tutors become focused on the physical, material and mundane, and fail to escape their vile bodies, instead being doomed to self-destruction. They neglect the working sector with the creation of short-term enterprises. The Mayor makes a comment on an example of a true company to show the different of time and infrastructure:

The National and Provincial Union Bank of England, Limited. A perfectly sound and upright company. I'd trust them with more than that if I had it. I'd trust them with a million, old boy, honest I would. One of those fine old companies, you know. They don't make companies like that now. I'd trust that bank with my wife and kiddies... You mustn't think I'd put your money into anything that wasn't straight, old boy. (80)

The Leisured class

The leisured class takes up sport and love-making to fill up the vacuum of their existence. The mayor, a man of force and order, is busy having sex on the battlefield in the presence of Adam with a supposed religious character. Waugh wrote this book while he was going through emotional trauma, yet he reveals the immoral state of England in the 1930s without fate, order and rule to overcome a downfall and labour hard for a better tomorrow. Waugh, in an essay entitled "Why Glorify Youth?" says this of his school days "I hardly remember a single speech or sermon made to us at school which did not touch on this topic. "You are the men of tomorrow, they used to say to us. You are succeeding in the leadership of a broken and shaken world. The cure is in your hands" (Essays on Articles and Reviews, 126), but these youths played deaf to ethical principles on how to handle matters of society for better conditions for all. The Post-war atmosphere depicts a world in which play, accident and random chance rule. Albert Camus, an existentialist philosopher, observed Man's situation during this period and declared; "Human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe to conceive the world as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning to represent human life in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning as he comes from nothing and ends in nothing".

Camus tries to define the "new world" after the experience of war to explain how man feels or how he accepts his situation, especially those who lived in both periods (before and after the war). His observation is made evident in the novel from the way Adam's fictive column profanes religious writing when the Dean declares he wrote the Ten Commandments. Camus explains man's condition, while Waugh shows the extreme of man in his loss of faith. The Prime Minister condemns the juvenile and irresponsible behaviour of the younger generation. In his view, the youth should help to rebuild the society they have inherited rather than escape from their duty. His speech is ironic because

he is not in touch with current affairs and does not set any reforms for progress. He cuckolds all foreign diplomats and learns of state affairs through a character named Father Rothschild that another war is looming. These children are born in wealth and have never known suffering or hard times that should push them to labour for revenue despite the economy bankruptcy; they still spend and enjoy as if nothing happened. Waugh's fiction exposes the disillusionment underlying the childish attitudes of his socialites, as he implies that their juvenile behaviour is a response to their troubled post-war environment. The young characters think there is no sense in idealism and do not envisage any ambition in life because, at any moment, human nature is capable of plunging them into another bloodthirsty massacre.

The post-war young man could hardly be blamed for his cynicism. The younger generation saw no point in rebuilding the broken society that promised nothing but further instability, which explains why the socialites of that era preferred to regress into childish roles. Simon manipulates gas as if he were a child who did not know the consequences of this liquid. Though Simon acts childishly, he makes his death seem trivial so that society will remember him. Another character who behaves childishly is Adam, when the latter decides to sell his love for Nina to Ginger in order to settle his bill at Shepherd's hotel. He settled in this hotel on his arrival in Dover after losing his book, he got money from betting but gave it away to an unknown Mayor. An attempt to get a loan from his future father-in-law is fruitless, left without any issue he sells off his love as illustrated below to highlight their triviality:

... What you've been trying to say all this time is that you're not sure of Nina? / Oh, rot, my dear fellow, absolute bilge. Damn it, I'd trust Nina anywhere, of course I would. After all, damn it, what does being in love means if you can't trust a person? / ... Now, Ginger, tell the truth. What's Nina worth to you? / Good lord, why what

an extraordinary thing to ask; everything in the world, of course. I'd go through fire and water for that girl. / Well, I'll sell her to you. No, why, look here, good God, damn it, I mean... / I'll sell you my share in her for a hundred pounds. / You pretend to be fond of Nina and you talk about her like that... Besides, a hundred pounds is the deuce of a lot. I mean, getting married is a damned expensive business, don't you know. And I'm just getting a couple of polo ponies over from Ireland. That's going to cost a hell of a lot. / A hundred down, and I leave Nina to you. I think it's cheap. / Fifty. / A hundred. / Seventy-five. / A hundred. / I'm damned if I'll pay more than seventy-five. / I'll take seventy-eight pounds sixteen and two pen. (88-89)

Ginger persuades Adam to make him abandon his love for Nina, but the latter wishes his bill is settled before he agrees to such a proposal. Ginger does not see Adam as an equal when it comes to wooing the same girl, so he makes use of his financial superiority to buy Adam's conscious. This act is similar to Gatsby's plight and downfall in *The Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald. Gatsby labours hard to be somebody in society and regains his lost love, Daisy Buchanans, married to a wealthy pony and tennis player, Buchanans (also known as Ginger). He succeeds in winning her love because of their difference in wealth. Adam and Nina are in love but cannot function together because of his handicap in wealth. Ginger also remarks lots of youths are jobless without any source of revenue. As a figure of hope for a better tomorrow, Adam further shows proof of childishness and acts foolishly. He is an orphan without an issue but does nothing to remedy his situation. To marry Nina, he arranges to go and meet Nina's father in her absence. He has not met the Colonel before but goes to him for a loan. With his bad memory their introduction is not easy:

Who the devil are you? said the host. / Adam Symes, said Adam. / Never heard of you. How did you get in? Who gave you tea? What do you want? / You asked me to luncheon, said Adam. I came about being married to Nina. / My dear boy, of course. How absurd of me. I've such a bad memory for names. It comes of seeing so few people. How are you? So, you're the young man who's engaged to Nina, said the Colonel, eyeing him for the first time in the way prospective sons-in-law are supposed to be eyed... Are you rich? / No, not at present, I'm afraid, that's rather what I wanted to talk about. / How much money have you got? / Well, sir, actually at the moment I haven't got any at all. / When did you last have any? / I had a thousand pounds last night, but I gave it all to a drunk major. ... / When will you next have some money? / When I've written some books. / How many books. / Twelve. / How much will you have then? Probably fifty pounds advance on my thirteenth book... / How could I help you? I've never written a book in my life. / No, we thought you might give us some money. / You thought that, did you? / Yes, that's what we thought... (32-33)

He confirms Ginger's words when he warned him, Blount is an ass for money. He insists on knowing how much Adam has in bank but is disappointed when he learns, he instead came for a loan. As all citizens experiencing capitalism he openly shows his love for a wealthy in-law.

Lost in the post-war, the characters have desperate desire to be ultra-fashion, which are things that occupied their minds the most than hard work. The green bowler shoes have all the characters scramble to afford one. In parties, the characters dress in fancy clothes different from the Victorian clothes that were imposed on women once the queen had put them on. During Margot's party all those who came in Victorian

dresses were sent away because of its vulgarity and considered out-moded. Agatha dressed in Hawaiian costume made her the life and soul of the evening with Miles in Red Indian costume. These dressing style are examples to follow by the other characters. Exploring fashion suggests the use of popular fashion approaches designed to add, supplement and encourage meaning, needs related to young people contextual experiences. Applying popular culture in education is a way to prepare educators, institutions, and youth groups to cross the threshold to become cool. It has a major impact and influence on the development and learning experiences of young people. It offers creativity, challenges and participation engagement (Weedon, 2015).

In every party they attend, the characters discuss the appearance of each other to see if he/she have ameliorated since the last meeting. Fanny and Kitty are always gossiping about the lives of others as if they are better. They keep condemning the other motherly figures, yet their children are no exception to the juvenile lifestyle carried out by the bright young thing. For a good period of time, Fanny has not spoken to her children or known their whereabouts, instead of looking for a solution on how to address her children and pave the way for change. The chatterbox Simon exposes these adults and ends up being expelled because they feel comfortable when exposed.

Hardship in England

Labour is a productive work done, especially physical toil for wages, though not all labour demands a reward, but its accomplishment brings or leads to progress and knowledge. Youths are the working age group who take over from the aged persons, characterised by a drop in mental and physical composition of the body, yet they remain a key pillar of societies. They are custodians of our culture and tradition, and so hold the place of models in our community and need to be treated as part of society. When of a certain age, we expect the young age group to take over and continue the train of affairs, duties or projects. The complex situation with most educational centres is that they are general practitioners rather than professionals to train people from a

tender age. “As Mr Issacs says, the best kind of training is practical work” (VB, 66).

Workers are oppressed with excessive labour of the most senseless kind, which arouses our indignation and pity. In the world, there is a high level of youth unemployment that frustrates and affects the psychology, making them act as if they are mentally ill. Despite the high tuition, so that one can get quality education, youths do not have the opportunity to get jobs, or even when they get one, their remuneration is not equal to their category and status. Adam spends time in France doing research for his memoir, and when he returns home with the write-up, customs officers destroy it, as it is considered a possible revolutionary work. Also, war brought starvation, which pushed young Britons to the street, breaking away from their family to embrace the chaotic world in search of better living conditions. Faced with the realities and challenges of war, some of them invented solutions so that changes are made, and their future is assured in this harsh world.

Relating the above to our text under study, labour is at the level of the aged and political characters who instead amass wealth for their children to exploit to the detriment of the lower classes. On his second visit to Doubting, Adam relates to the reader a worker's trouble; “They got out at Berkhamsted, and a man got in who wore a bright brown suit and spend his time doing sums, which never seemed to come right, in a little note-book with a stylographic pen. “Has he given all to his daughters?” thought Adam. (62) This man seems to be unable to balance his personal account, and Adam thinks he has given it to his daughter as is the case with Miss Mouse declaration “It was too thrilling to see all that dull money her father had amassed...” (22) Maybe this man is asked to produce financial account of the structure where he works but cannot make up to the deposited amount so Adam let us know he might have given some money to his daughters to enjoy as Mouse's father does. She calls it dull money because her father has embezzled a lot of money and does not know what to do with it, which is why she frequently offers and sponsors parties. Most of the female characters are unemployed and

dependent on their fathers and husbands. They do not have any skills nor are they willing to learn. Nina's attempt to replace Adam while he is away ends him being sacked. These girls live in comfort, do not know suffering or hard times, which should encourage them to labour for revenue. They conduct elaborate love affairs, make love at a great rate, like all free women, to earn their daily bread. Referring back to *Decline and Fall*, Lady Metroland is a high-class prostitute for a living. Her work requires both energy and leisure, which the few real workers lack, to relax from time to time.

Also, we come across old workers still in service at Lottie's hotel and at Blount's residence, as well as old furniture. The few young workers are poorly treated because their ways of doing things are not appreciated by the old Victorian characters. In the Lottie hotel, the elderly Italian is constantly rebuked by his mistress despite his efforts to be neat and well-looking. The young generation seeks new items because they crave a stimulus that contrasts with the dread and despair of their everyday lives. The servants, like the furniture, are old and have seen aristocratic service:

Doge, the head waiter, who is hard of hearing, partially blind and tortured with gout, was once a Rothschild's butler. He has in fact on more than one occasion in Father Rothschild's youth, dandled him on his knee, when he came with his father (at one time the fifteenth richest man in the world) to visit his still richer cousins, but it would be unlike him to pretend that he ever really liked the embryo Jesuit who was "too clever by half," given to asking extraordinary questions, and endowed with a penetrating acumen in the detection of falsehood and exaggeration. Besides Doge, there are innumerable old housemaids always trotting about with cans of hot water and clean towels. There is also a young Italian who does most of the work and gets horribly insulted by Lottie, who once caught him powdering his nose, and will not let him forget it... (15)

These workers are old and handicapped, yet will not take their leave. Retirement age is fixed at 60 years, but countries keep shifting it. Other countries, such as France, moved from 37.5 to 40 years, the United States rose to 67 years, and Germany recently raised hers from 63 to 65 and wishes to increase it to 67 by 2011-2023 (Assaf and Efram). Lottie demoralises the Italian, a victim of modernism, as men now do make-up. He is only trying to be presentable in front of clients, the reason why he powders his face.

Some of the characters exercise as Journalists and have many social opportunities in their field of work. They make use of the most sophisticated gadgets to exercise in this profession. The innovation of the telegram made it possible for information to be spread in a second across the world. "Chatterbox" is the pseudonym that these media men use; they have cultural privileges, though it is limited. To make the characters popular and bright, they get access to parties, restaurants, and nightclubs for free, provided they report all that the young generation does, what they wear, and where they live. Agatha suggests that Vanburgh should lose his job because of the following incident made public in newspapers:

Suddenly light came flooding in on Miss Runcible's mind as once when, in her debutante days, she had gone behind the scenes at a charity matinee, and returning had stepped through the wrong door and found herself in a blaze of flood-lights on the stage in the middle of the last act of Otello. "Oh, my God" she said, looking round the Brown breakfast table. Isn't that just too bad of Vanburgh. He's always doing that kind of thing. It really would serve him the right if we complained and he lost his job, don't you think so, Sir James... or ... don't you?" (26)

Agatha, like all other youth, loves popularity and being put in journals as head topic but this information of hers is not well received. Archie Schwert is new in town, wealthy and humanitarian; he constantly finances the young set in difficulty, especially

Adam during their revel at the November race, but ends up in jail as an undesirable alien. Adam is conditioned on how to work and what to say to favour the upper class and attract them to read his paper, for they are those who pay the most for his business. Monomark warns Adam not to talk of Espinosa in his column again because they made out his bill wrong last night. This is not an advantage for the new and fresh employee who has much to propose in order to innovate the system. Moreover, these Journalists are constantly warned when they do not act as the proprietor demands. Though Lord Monomark congratulates Adam for innovating his press, he rebukes him on the publication of green-bowlers and Count Cincinnati wearing a bowler. Adam is absent from duty and asks Nina to fill the column for the day. Ignorantly, she publishes about the Count Cincinnati going into Espinosa's in a green bowler in the paper once more. Adam has been previously warned about this unknown figure by the Italian ambassador and the Almanak de Gotha, thus he is sacked as the second chatterbox for a third occupant, Miles. Cultural privilege is not shared by all the characters, and it pushes most of the youths to abandon work as their needs are not shared among the upper class that dictates to them what to do.

Waugh's generation was merely lazy if one has to compare them to the young set in the *Great Gatsby* written during the same period as Waugh moved events of the 1920s to the 1930s. James Gatz' parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, long Island springs from his platonic conception of himself. He is a son of God, a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that, and he must be about his Father's Business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty. So, he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby day a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he is faithful to the end. He luckily worked with Dan Cody, a fifty-year-old merchant, a product of the Nevada silver field

of the Yukon. He was in a rush for metal, and his transaction in Montana Copper made him a millionaire with a physically robust figure, but on the verge of soft-mindedness. At the sides of Cody, Gatsby works as a steward, mate, skipper, secretary and even jailor. When he died, he inherited twenty-five thousand dollars of his heritage, and the rest went to Ella Kaye, a journalist and lover of Cody. In his bedroom, Gatsby hung Cody's portrait (*Great Gatsby*, 105-107). Gatsby works hard to overcome his misery (though he deals in drugs and oil), but he, however, finds a barrier from the old rich who refuse to show him sympathy as characters of the same milieu. The irony in this novel is to know why his property is described with mockery; Nick describes Gats' house as "a huge incoherent failure of a house". Despite this humiliation, he sticks to the band of lively bourgeois still his death. To reduce his personality to nothing and do away with him, Tom Buchanan accuses him of murder, whereas it is his wife, Daisy, who commits this atrocity. In *Vile Bodies*, Adam completely abandons his dream and livelihood to become dependent on others. He searches for a cheap supply market, as made evident in his conversation with Nina at the Café de la Paix, where they shall be having lunch once married.

Government action was not the sole cause of man's downfall; individuals also played a role through discriminate actions that frustrated certain people to the point of viewing suicide as a solution. Adam is pessimistic in his reflection and had things made easy for him on his arrival at Dover with customs officers destroying his past efforts and possible source of wealth. He and other victims surrender to the current free style in which their parents have been in as made evident in Lottie's Hotel and the extravagant mode they add to it on the other side. These youths faced repression on all sides in their labour, first by the government and later by their parents or employers which pushes them to become rebels because of the lack of appreciation on both sides to boost their efforts.

The Socialites' Excesses and their consequences

Socialites are well-known individuals who live fabled lives, famous for their extravagance and multitude of entertainment. They are objects of fascination and resentment by the public and press. The word means rich, play without work, in what is essentially a puritanical society. These youths are babies of the late Victorian epoch, who have time and money and mingle with theatre people and movie stars who ape their style, adding dash and glamour to it. Some have their status as socialites determined by their marriages and affairs. The 1930s generation of England is characterised by this attitude because of the types of parties they organise and the reports of journalists to the audience.

Waugh implicitly criticises his post-war society by suggesting that it should return to classical principles with his rejection of modern values. The failure of capitalism that led to World War 1 can be advanced as part of the society's failure to guide its citizens on how to build a nation. Reeve Tucker states that the "retreat from avant-gardism to the conservative value of order, authority and tradition" is a defining feature of most conceptualisations of post-war classicism. Before the war, the avant-garde comprised numerous groups that competed and clashed as they promoted their distinct aesthetics. In general, the groups represent a collection drive "to be ahead of one's time" to break with conventions and forge new styles in arts.

Modernism accordingly is associated with anti-traditional values and with humanist belief in man's and art's potential for re-ordering society in the modern era. However, after the First World War and the stock market crash of 1929, followed by the great depression, the young generation's tremendous energy was not affected, nor their nightlife. Waugh's depiction of a semi-robotic figure in the person of Agatha correlates with Tyrus Miller's argument that later modernists will portray characters that have a bit of the mechanism in them. Like Agatha, these late

modernist characters often fail to complete this mechanisation of the body through its end and consequently represent the comical inability of humans to consummate the man-machine. He expresses his concern about the detrimental effects of Europe's technological advances in his portrayal of Agatha, whose robotic behaviour typifies the late modernists' anxiety about how the distinction between the vital and the mechanical had become less sharp in the interwar years. Even her utterance is composed only of speedy terms.

Later, hospitalised in her disintegrating mental state, the racing circuit becomes merged with her social circuit. Her condition deteriorates dramatically, and she becomes detrimentally absorbed with the idea of going as fast as she can during the car race. Agatha wishes to experience all the steps of life in a fraction of time, but ends up mentally disturbed. In her failure to achieve this need, she urges the others to be careful not to fall. Her yearning to go faster and to continue onwards signifies her entrapment within a cycle that can never satisfy her, as there is no endpoint to her mental race track. She will never reach a still point and eventually suffers a mental breakdown and dies. Such chronic fulfilment correlates with what the novel presents as the Bright Young People's futile desire to experience the "new" by moving from one party to the next. The social circuit offers only an experience of repetition and deterioration to the point of self-destruction. Agatha's desire demonstrates the extreme excesses to enjoy life to the fullest, and more together with her companion.

The fate of English society and of civilisation in general is confirmed in the end of the novel. Set in "the biggest battlefield in the history of the world" (99). Earlier in the text, Father Rothschild concludes that "there is a radical instability in our whole order" and predicts that as a consequence of this, "soon we shall all be walking into the jaws of destruction again" (59). The folding scene of *Vile Bodies* changes in tone as the writing loses all its humorous connotations and

becomes a depressing description of a ruined landscape ravaged by war: the scene all around Adam was one of unrelieved desolation, a great expanse of mud in which every visible object was burnt or broken. Sound of firing thundered from beyond the horizon, and somewhere above the grey clouds, there were aeroplanes (99-100).

CONCLUSION

This work has examined *Vile Bodies* as a satirical representation of the Bright Young Generation's rebellious tendencies in interwar Britain, reading their reckless sociability as a response to post-First World War disillusionment and social inertia. Rather than portraying youthful excess as mere frivolity, Waugh exposes a generation caught between inherited privilege and moral exhaustion, whose pursuit of pleasure functions as a symbolic yet ultimately self-destructive form of rebellion against a society perceived as empty and directionless. The absurdity that pervades the novel reflects not only the mentality of the post-war generation but also the broader collapse of meaningful social values, particularly those associated with labour, responsibility and collective purpose.

By foregrounding leisure over work, Waugh illustrates how cultural privilege enables the upper classes to sustain their excesses while protecting them from immediate material consequences, even as social inequalities deepen and productive energies are depleted. The Bright Young People's reliance on wealth, status and visibility highlights the polarised structure of interwar society, in which rebellion remains performative rather than transformative. To conclude, *Vile Bodies* presents a bleak critique of a generation unable to convert rebellion into renewal, suggesting that without ethical commitment or social responsibility, pleasure becomes not a mode of liberation but a symptom of decline. In this sense, Waugh's satire anticipates the failure of interwar British society to arrest its own moral and cultural disintegration, reinforcing the novel's prophetic significance.

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