

'In the Advance Guard': Evelyn Waugh as a Reviewer

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ABSTRACT:

Evelyn Waugh was an indefatigable reviewer, but his reviews fail to receive the critical attention they deserve. The novelist's reviews of his contemporaries' works, both fiction and nonfiction, provide insight into his own writing; they also illuminate his, and his generation of writers', complex relationship with high modernism.

Henry Green's *Living* (1929) was considered by Waugh in his review entitled 'A Neglected Masterpiece' as 'modern in the real sense of the word'.¹ Notably, Green experimented with 'the "novel of conversation"', or what I prefer to call 'talk fiction', which, for Waugh, was pioneered by Ronald Firbank.² Waugh's exteriority parallels what Wyndham Lewis in *Satire and Fiction* (1930) termed the outside method of fiction, as opposed to the inside method of Woolf and Joyce. Waugh reviewed Lewis's book and found the discussion about the two methods particularly interesting.³ Reviewing Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), Waugh claimed that '[n]ow it is the cinema which has taught a new habit of narrative'.⁴ Cinema was essential to Waugh, as part of his outside method, and Greene because they were the first generation of writers – to borrow a term from David Trotter – 'in the First Media Age'.⁵

Examining Waugh's reviews of Green, Lewis, and Greene, I explore how Waugh, with a strong generational sense and 'in the advance guard',⁶ understood the idea of being modern as privileging exteriority over interiority, particularly talk over thought. I argue that Waugh, with some writers of his generation, departed from high modernism and made it new by what I call 'exterior modernism'. Waugh's reviews not only helped him crystallise his own version of modernism but also contributed to its promotion.

¹ Evelyn Waugh, 'A Neglected Masterpiece', in *The Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Donat Gallagher (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 80–82 (p. 82). Henceforth *EAR*.

² Waugh, 'Ronald Firbank', in *EAR*, pp. 56–59 (p. 58).

³ Waugh, 'Satire and Fiction', in *EAR*, p. 102.

⁴ Waugh, 'Felix Culpa?', in *EAR*, pp. 360–65 (p. 362).

⁵ David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain Between the Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Henceforth *First Media Age*.

⁶ Waugh, 'Felix Culpa?', in *EAR*, p. 360.

Evelyn Waugh was an indefatigable reviewer throughout his writing career, but, despite Donat Gallagher's 1983 collection of Waugh's journalism, the novelist's reviews fail to receive the critical attention they deserve. Reviewing Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) in 'Felix Culpa?', Waugh observes that '[t]he artist, however aloof he holds himself, is always and specially the creature of the *Zeitgeist*; however formally antique his tastes, he is in spite of himself in the advance guard.'⁷ Waugh's reviews of his contemporaries' works, non-fiction as well as fiction, provide insight into his own writing; they also illuminate his, and his generation of writers', complex relationship with high modernism.

Waugh reviewed widely but seemed to have eschewed the canon of high modernism: he made a few (favourable) references to Eliot, fewer (unflattering) to Joyce, and none to Woolf.⁸ Henry Green's *Living* (1929) is considered by Waugh in his review entitled 'A Neglected Masterpiece' as 'modern in the real sense of the word'.⁹ Through reviewing, engaging in a debate with, and critiquing the aesthetics of high modernism, the *Zeitgeist* of his formative years as a novelist, Waugh crystallized and advanced his own version of modernism. Engaging closely with the debate surrounding the so-called void between modernism and postmodernism – Tyrus Miller's 'late modernism' (1999), Kristin Bluemel's 'intermodernism' (2009), Jessica Burstein's 'cold modernism' (2012), and Beci Carver's 'Granular Modernism' (2014), just to name a few¹⁰ – I argue for an exterior modernism, which is Waugh's generation's direct response to the high modernists engrossed in the 'dark places of psychology'.¹¹ Waugh remarked of his work later in his life: 'I regard writing not as investigation of character but as an exercise in the use of language, and with this I am obsessed. I have no technical psychological interest. It is drama, speech and events that interest me.'¹² Waugh's exteriority parallels

⁷ Waugh, 'Felix Culpa?', p. 360.

⁸ Though Woolf makes appearances in Waugh's fiction. For example, while imprisoned, Paul Pennyfeather in Waugh's first novel *Decline and Fall* (1928) receives a newly published novel by Woolf.

⁹ Waugh, 'A Neglected Masterpiece', in *EAR*, p. 82.

¹⁰ Miller's seminal study *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999) has opened up modernist studies by examining modernism from its ending and taking into consideration previously marginalized or neglected writers who can be seen as the second generation of modernists. Waugh fits into late modernism, but the term, which suggests periodization more than style, fails to characterize the style which Waugh and many writers of his generation share. According to the definition given by Bluemel in her introduction to the collected essays which constitute *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), Waugh, unlike George Orwell, cannot be regarded as an intermodernist. Both Burstein's *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) (Waugh as a satirist can be said to be 'cold') and Carver's *Granular Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) can be seen as efforts to reread modernism by pluralising it and drawing attention to its less-known facets rather than specifically theorize the gap between modernism and postmodernism. What is also pertinent here is recent scholarship of the mid-century novel, particularly *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century*, ed. by Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 6-12 (p. 11).

¹² The passage is quoted on the introductory page of almost all Penguin editions of Waugh's novels and is aptly omitted from the 2000 Penguin Modern Classics edition of *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), a mid-career lapse into high modernism. Discussing nostalgia and the legacies of high modernism, Randall Stevenson considers *Brideshead Revisited* as offering 'good examples of these continuities

what Wyndham Lewis in *Satire and Fiction* (1930) terms the ‘outside method’ of fiction, as opposed to the inside method of Woolf and Joyce. Waugh reviewed Lewis’s book and found the discussion about the two methods particularly interesting.¹³ With a strong generational sense – the bright young novelist of *Vile Bodies* (1930) was regarded as the spokesperson of ‘the younger generation’¹⁴ – Waugh, in the advance guard, thought in terms of *after* what was to become high modernism, and experimented concurrently with Woolf but decidedly in a new direction opened up by the challenge of the new art of cinema.¹⁵ In ‘Felix Culpa?’, Waugh claimed that ‘[n]ow it is the cinema which has taught a new habit of narrative.’¹⁶ Cinema was essential to Waugh and Greene because they were the first generation of writers – to borrow a term from David Trotter – ‘in the First Media Age’.¹⁷

Examining Waugh’s reviews of Green, Lewis, and Greene, I explore how Waugh understood the idea of being modern as privileging exteriority over interiority, particularly talk over thought. David Lodge observes that the foregrounding of dialogue in the fiction of ‘the novelists of the 1930s’ marks them distinct from ‘a particular daunting set of precursors’:

The stream of consciousness gives way to a stream of talk, but it is talk without the reassuring gloss of the classic novel’s authorial voice, without a privileged access to the thoughts and motivations of characters, so that the ‘modern’ note of disillusion, fragmentation and solipsism persists.¹⁸

The late twenties and early thirties saw the emergence of what I call the ‘talk fiction’ of the younger generation: Green’s *Living*, Waugh’s *Vile Bodies*, Anthony Powell’s *Afternoon Men* (1931), and Christopher Isherwood’s *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939, but written in the early thirties) among many others. Having rejected high modernism and its inner method, Waugh made it new by creating exterior modernism, which was sustained by the three pillars of his distancing methods: comedy, satire, and cinema.

Waugh was preoccupied with the discussion about generation: in his school journalism ‘The Youngest Generation’ (1921) and two 1929 articles, ‘Too Young at Forty’ and ‘The War and the Younger Generation’, Waugh differentiated his generation, ‘the young men of 1922’, not only from his father’s generation but also from his brother’s generation, namely the ‘young men of 1912’ who

and modifications.’ Randall Stevenson, ‘Not What It Used To Be: Nostalgia and the Legacies of Modernism’, in *The Legacies of Modernism: Historicising Postwar and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by David James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 23-39 (p. 27). *Brideshead Revisited*, however, can still be considered as a talk novel due to its dependence on dialogue, but it is less concerned with exteriority than Waugh’s exterior modernist fiction, both novels and short stories.

¹³ Waugh, ‘Satire and Fiction’, in *EAR*, p. 102.

¹⁴ Waugh, ‘The War and the Younger Generation’, in *EAR*, pp. 61-63 (p. 61).

¹⁵ While Virginia Woolf gave an ambiguous account in her essay ‘The Cinema’ (1926), Waugh had already finished the cinematic ‘The Balance’ (written in 1925, published in 1926).

¹⁶ *EAR*, p. 362.

¹⁷ Trotter, *First Media Age*.

¹⁸ David Lodge, ‘Dialogue in the Modern Novel’, in *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 75-86 (p. 81).

had fought in the First World War.¹⁹ In terms of literary style, the high modernists belonged, for Waugh, to an older generation and were certainly not modern.²⁰ Ronald Firbank, Ernest Hemingway, and Green are pertinent here in the understanding of Waugh's perception of modern literature; all three writers are modern, according to Waugh, mainly due to their experimentation with dialogue: their novels are a variety of talk fiction.

Praising Firbank's 'literary method', Waugh claimed in his 1929 article on the writer that he, only a few years younger than Woolf and Joyce, 'is the first quite modern writer to solve for himself, quite unobtrusively and probably more or less unconsciously, the aesthetic interrelation of subject and form'.²¹ Waugh attributed Firbank's major achievement to the 'novel of conversation': 'In his dialogue there is no exchange of opinion. His art is purely selective. From the fashionable chatter of his period, vapid and interminable, he has plucked, like tiny brilliant feathers from the breast of a bird, the particles of his design'.²² Regarding Hemingway as Firbank's successor 'developing [the latter's] technical discoveries',²³ Waugh admired Hemingway's dialogue in *Fiesta*, also known as *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), which was expressed in his diary entry on 15 July 1961: 'Hemingway's suicide has made me reread *Fiesta*. It was a revelation to me when it first came out – the drunk conversations rather than the fishing and bullfighting. Rereading I was still impressed by the writing'.²⁴ Waugh's own hyphenated drunken conversation in his most experimental novel *Vile Bodies* may have been inspired by that of Hemingway:

'Bet-you-can't-do-this.'
[...]
'Chap-in-the-train showed me,' he said.
[...]
'Just-you-try. Bet-you-anything-you-like you can't do it.'²⁵

Vile Bodies is also marked by its telephone conversation, an innovation of which Waugh was proud, writing in the 1965 Preface: 'I think I can claim that this was the first English novel in which dialogue

¹⁹ Waugh, 'The Youngest Generation', in *EAR*, p. 11.

²⁰ Woolf also considered Waugh's as a different generation to her own and gave the younger writers an uncomplimentary label as the 'leaning-tower' generation. Virginia Woolf, 'The Leaning Tower', in *The Moment and Other Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1948), pp. 128-154.

²¹ Waugh, 'Ronald Firbank', in *EAR*, pp. 56-59 (p. 57).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁴ Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Michael Davie (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 822.

²⁵ Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 35. Henceforth *VB*.

on the telephone plays a large part.²⁶ Chapter Eleven, only two-page long, consists entirely of two Bright Young People talking on the telephone; their exchanges are quick and monosyllabic:

‘Darling, I’ve been so happy about your telegram. Is it really true?’
‘No, I’m afraid not.’
‘The Major is bogus?’
‘Yes.’
‘You haven’t got the money?’
‘No.’
‘We aren’t going to be married to-day?’
‘No.’
‘I see.’
‘Well?’
‘I said, I see.’
‘Is that all?’
‘Yes, that’s all, Adam.’
‘I’m sorry.’
‘I’m sorry, too. Good-bye.’
‘Good-bye, Nina.’²⁷

Writing the ‘novel of conversation’, Waugh himself can be seen as a literary descendant of Firbank; so is Green, although he is not listed alongside Hemingway, Harold Acton, and William Gerhardie in Waugh’s article. While Hemingway, old enough to have fought in the war, belongs to the brother generation, Green, two years Waugh’s junior, is undoubtedly one of ‘the young men of 1922’. Expressing how much he liked his friend’s debut novel *Blindness* (1926), Waugh wrote to Green: ‘It is extraordinary to me that anyone of our generation could have written so fine a book – and at Oxford of all places.’²⁸ And Green is modern. In his 1930 *Graphic* review, Waugh acknowledged Green’s daring, if not violent, linguistic experimentation:

Technically, *Living* is without exception the most interesting book I have read. Those who are troubled with school-ma’am minds will be continually shocked by the diction and construction. In a great number of instances, Mr Green omits the definite article where we expect to find it; he does worse to our feelings by such sentences as ‘this was only but nervousness because her he was taking in was so pretty,’ and ‘he still had some of his Friday’s money which he had not been able to drink away all of it.’

There are the very opposite of slovenly writing. The effects which Mr Green wishes to make and the information he wishes to give are so accurately and subtly conceived that it becomes necessary to take language one step further than its grammatical limits allow.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

²⁸ Waugh, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. by Mark Amory (London: Phoenix, 2009), p. 33. Henceforth *Letters*.

²⁹ EAR, pp. 81-82.

Waugh greatly admired the style of *Living* and, in a letter to Green at the time of the novel's publication in 1929, described it as

like those aluminium ribbons one stamps out in railway stations on penny in the slot machines. The absence of all that awful thing they call 'word pictures', the way in which no appearances are described. The telegraphic narrative which might have been all wrong if you had used a present sense and is so perfectly right in the past.³⁰

It is unclear what Waugh exactly meant by 'word pictures', but his brief explanation – 'no appearances are described' – implies that he perhaps had in mind the stream of consciousness, the iconic technique synonymous with high modernism which he found particularly problematic. Waugh denounced the vivid description of immanent minutiae, or the fluctuating mind, and extolled Green's 'telegraphic narrative', which immediately recalls the journalistic style of Hemingway, another modern writer according to Waugh. The 'violence' done to the English grammar enables Green to experiment freely:

Indeed I don't see how else you could have made a framework for the dialogue which is magnificent. You seem to have invented an entire new language, doing for Birmingham born people what Singe [sic] did with Irish – making an artistic form out of a dialect so that every word is startling.³¹

Waugh's enthusiasm for Green's mastery of vernacular speech and his way of making it an art is shared by others. As Robert Byron observes, Green, the artist with an interest in anthropology, 'seeks beauty and discovers it', in the most unlikely places, not least in his father's Birmingham foundry.³² V. S. Pritchett finds in Green's 'muddled sentences [...] a clue to the inner life and a kind of sad lyrical poetry.'³³

Generally acknowledged as a stylist himself, Waugh is particularly 'in the advance guard' observant of literary styles. Green's biographer Jeremy Treglown states that 'since the death of Virginia Woolf [in 1941], there had been no one to challenge Green as the leading experimental novelist in Britain, and one of the foremost novelists of all serious kinds.'³⁴ Waugh's keen promotion of Green's new style as he chose to understand it, however, reveals his hidden agenda: by promoting the works of his generation, Waugh not only promoted himself but, more significantly, fashioned a new modernism with a focus on exteriority against the grain, or *Zeitgeist*, of high modernism.

³⁰ *Letters*, pp. 44-45.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³² Robert Byron quoted in Jeremy Treglown, *Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green* (New York: Random House, 2000), p. 97.

³³ V. S. Pritchett, 'Back from the War', *The New York Times* (1 October 1950), p. 28.

³⁴ Treglown, p. 178.

Deeming *Living* a ‘masterpiece’, Waugh naturally compared it with the works of Joyce: ‘Modern novelists taught by Mr James Joyce are at last realizing the importance of re-echoing and remodifying the same themes. Note, for instance, the repeated metaphor of “pigeons” in *Living*.³⁵ So, for Waugh, a modern novelist is the student of the high modernists but at the same time better than his or her mentors. Green’s second novel is considered by Waugh as ‘modern in the real sense of the word’ because it is talk fiction. But Waugh is selective – as he is with Lewis and Greene in his reviews – for his own purposes, he emphasizes only the exterior aspect of Green’s fiction and eschews the intensely psychological: Green’s style can be best described as oscillating between Waugh’s exteriority and Woolf’s interiority, and pushing both to their limits.³⁶

A few months after the review of Green, which, if not as illuminating as his letter to the writer, showed his understanding of being modern, Waugh reviewed Lewis’s *Satire and Fiction*. It is Lewis’s response to the criticism of and his defence of *The Apes of God* (1930), an ‘opulently conceived novel’.³⁷ In the author of a satire on high modernism and Bloomsbury, Waugh quickly found a natural ally. Lewis, however, complicates Waugh’s generational system: the painter who reinvented himself as a writer and even philosopher in the late 1920s was born in the same year as Woolf and Joyce and fought in the First World War; but as a writer, Lewis certainly belongs to the ‘younger generation’. The fate of Lewis prophesied by Waugh – ‘I do not think that he will enjoy many posthumous honours’ – is realized and, sadly, shared by many of this generation writing under the shadows of Joyce and Woolf and refusing to (or simply do not) fit into the one strand of modernism on its way to become Modernism.³⁸ Green also suffers from neglect and obscurity; Waugh is often read (particularly *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), further popularized by the epic 1981 Granada TV adaptation), but his life seems to be scrutinized more than his works studied.³⁹ However, as the debate about modernism is being opened up by new scholarship, the beginning of the twenty-first century is seeing a revival of and surge in the interest in the writers who have been previously marginalized, particularly exterior modernists such as Waugh, Green, and Lewis. Comparing Lewis to Samuel Butler, Waugh draws attention to Lewis’s importance: ‘he has the finest controversial style of any living writer. He is able to write genuine prose satire without sacrificing modernity of diction – a very

³⁵ *EAR*, p. 82.

³⁶ Since his third novel, *Party Going* (1939), Green had been published by the Hogarth Press.

³⁷ *EAR*, p. 102.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ There has been a sustained interest in Waugh’s life, evident in the biographies of the author by David Pryce-Jones (1973), Christopher Sykes (1975), Martin Stannard (1986 and 1992), Humphrey Carpenter (1989), Selina Hastings (1994), Douglas Lane Patey (1998), John Howard Wilson (2001), Paula Byrne (2009), and Donat Gallagher and Carlos Villar Flor (2014).

rare feat. He also is unique in taking modern literature very seriously. Second-rate highbrow work stirs him to real fury.⁴⁰

More significantly, Lewis demonstrates that more than language and dialogue, evident in the talk fiction, exteriority, which is deemed modern by Waugh, can be systematic: the ‘Outside method’ as Lewis names it.

The third and most important section is a series of notes in Mr Lewis’s inimitable manner upon the nature of Satire and Fiction. The whole of this part is immensely interesting particularly the observations about the ‘Outside and Inside’ method of fiction. No novelist and very few intelligent novel readers can afford to neglect this essay.⁴¹

Since Waugh does not expound on the opposing methods of fiction in his short review, it is necessary to return to Lewis’s essay. Lewis labels ‘the *Inside*-method’ inept. In his opinion, ‘many books written during the last few years [i.e. the Twenties] have been peculiarly inept’;⁴² he denies that *The Apes of God* is an example of ‘that *inner* method at all’ and points out ‘the dark WITHIN of the Unconscious’ by criticising Joyce’s *Ulysses* and D. H. Lawrence. Lewis’s contempt of the inner method – ‘The ossature is my favourite part of a living animal organism, not its intestines’⁴³ – has a resonance with Hemingway’s ‘Prose is architecture, not interior decoration’.⁴⁴

Brought to the foreground by the reviewer, the brief discussion of the inside and outer methods in *Satire and Fiction* may not be central to its writer, yet, as the title suggests, satire most certainly is. Satire is valued and employed by Waugh as part of his outside method; so is comedy, or more specifically laughter, the subject of an earlier book by Lewis, *The Wild Body* (1927) – laughter is ‘the emotion of tragic delight’, ‘the sudden handshake of mystic violence and the anarchist’, ‘the mind sneezing’, and more.⁴⁵ In his *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel* (2011), with two chapters on Waugh, Jonathan Greenberg contends that ‘[a] full account of modernist satire must recognize the prominence in modernism of the reaction against sentimentality’ because, for him, ‘modernism – or, more loosely, being modern – involves codes of sophistication, codes which imply how we might respond emotionally both to the fact of human suffering and to the aesthetic forms of representations of such suffering must assume.’⁴⁶ This resonates with Jessica Burstein’s *Cold Modernism* (2012), the premise of which is that ‘there is a world in which the mind does not exist, let alone matter’, in clear contrast

⁴⁰ *EAR*, p. 102.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Wyndham Lewis, *Satire and Fiction* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Library Editions, 1970), p. 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p. 164.

⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Wild Body* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928), p. 238.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 11, xiii.

to the ‘hot’, interior modernism, against which both Waugh and Lewis fiercely protest.⁴⁷ Waugh’s generation, including Green, Lewis, and Greene, seems to compete for being unsentimental, cold, and, in Hemingway’s word, ‘hard-boiled’. Waugh found Lewis’s ‘observations’ about the methods particularly worth mentioning because he had had a similar debate with himself. His first short story, ‘The Balance’ (written in 1925, published in 1926), is stylistically unstable, wavering between the exterior and the interior. This marked oscillation is not dissimilar to that of Green, but unlike his fellow novelist’s conscious choice to juxtapose both, Waugh was unsure of which style to adopt as his own. So ‘The Balance’ first narrates by describing a film as it is being screened, peppered with comments from the audience, and then psychoanalyses – in spite of the jokes on Freud – the phenomenon, to make sense of the essence as the protagonist left alone contemplates his failed suicide attempt in a stream of consciousness. By the time of the review of Lewis, however, Waugh had already published *Vile Bodies*, his most exterior (and experimental) novel which was still being composed when *Living* came out. He had discovered his voice through the satisfactory incorporation of cinematic technique into fiction in order to achieve a defamiliarising exteriority that is no longer in need of a deconstructively pitched alternative interiority to achieve its effects.

In addition to satire and comedy, cinema contributes enormously to the construction of Waugh’s exterior modernism. The importance of cinema to Waugh and his generation of writers cannot be overemphasized. Not only cinema, this generation was aware of the power of mass media in general and consciously took advantage of it, which prompts David Trotter to write:

Communications technology is an attitude before it is a machine or a set of codes. It is an idea about the prosthetic enhancement of our capacity to communicate. The writers who first woke up to this fact were not postwar, postmodern, or post-anything else. Some of the best of them lived and wrote in the British Isles in the period between the world wars. [...] One reason to conceive of the period between the world wars as the first media age is the evolution at that time of a widespread awareness of the multiple coexistence of mass media.⁴⁸

Focusing specifically on cinema, itself a mass medium, Andrew Shail examines its influence on literature and considers the emergence of cinema as one of the ‘the major, first-order, historical causes of the emergence of literary modernism’.⁴⁹ If cinema gives birth to modernism – Shail refers to high modernism – it gives birth to various modernisms, more so in the case of exterior modernism. Not only were Waugh, Green, Greene, and many other writers of their generation avid, if not addicted, cinemagoers, all of them were under the influence and spell of cinema. All borrowed cinema as a set

⁴⁷ Jessica Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Trotter, *First Media Age*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Andrew Shail, *The Cinema and the Origins of Literary Modernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), p. 3.

of techniques and cited it as a cultural reference as important as the novels of Woolf and Joyce. Some wrote for cinema; a few, in turn, exerted their influence on cinema: Greene, in collaboration with director Carol Reed, shaped British film noir. ‘Felix Culpa?’ predates Greene’s noir films such as *The Fallen Idol* (1948, based on Greene’s 1935 short story ‘The Basement Room’) and *The Third Man* (1949) but follows the success of the film *Brighton Rock* (1947). Waugh’s long review of Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter* is, however, more illuminating and memorable for the reviewer’s opinions of the artist’s position in relation to the zeitgeist – one of Waugh’s rare talents as a writer is his ability to always remain ‘in spite of himself in the advance guard’ – and of the significance of cinema to literature than for the actual review of the novel. Notably, Greene is a different case from Green or Lewis; he fits only obliquely, if at all, with exterior modernism in that, however cinematic his writing is, he does not seem to adopt the outside method. His fiction can instead be intensely interior (the noir stories and films are psychological thrillers). Waugh does not think highly of Greene’s style. In his first review of Greene’s novel, namely *The Name of Action* (1930), a work which Greene later repudiated, Waugh found ‘many features of his style a little repugnant. It is all metaphor and simile, which often fails in its reason for existing by obscuring rather than illuminating the description. [...] I wish he would write more freely and directly.’⁵⁰ The writer who strips ‘all metaphor and simile’, avoids adjective and adverb, and writes ‘freely and directly’ is Hemingway, whose style Waugh admired. Nearly two decades later, Waugh still deemed Greene’s writing style ‘grim’: ‘It is not a specifically literary style at all. The words are functional, devoid of sensuous attraction, of ancestry and of independent life. [...] The words are simply mathematical signs for his thought.’⁵¹

Waugh, however, admits that Green is ‘a story-teller of genius’, who tells his story in a ‘modern’ way through cinema:

It is as though out of an infinite length of film, sequences had been cut which, assembled, comprise an experience which is the reader’s alone, without any correspondence to the experience of the protagonists. The writer has become director and producer. Indeed, the affinity to the film is everywhere apparent. It is the camera’s eye which moves from the hotel balcony to the street below, picks out the policeman, follows him to his office, moves about the room from the handcuffs on the wall to the broken rosary in the drawer, recording significant detail. It is the modern way of telling a story. [...] Now it is the cinema which has taught a new habit of narrative. Perhaps it is the only contribution the cinema is destined to make to the arts.⁵²

⁵⁰ Waugh, ‘The Name of Action’, in *EAR*, pp. 101-02 (p. 101).

⁵¹ *EAR*, pp. 361-62.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 362.

For Waugh's generation, cinema is no longer merely a recording medium which accentuates the cinema eye – the ‘cinema of attractions’ as Tom Gunning has it – as it is for the high modernists, which Trotter argues in his *Cinema and Modernism* (2007).⁵³ With editing – ‘sequences had been cut which, assembled, comprise an experience’ – cinema, from a new way of seeing to a new way of narrating, is not simply representational; its narrativity thus enables the transition from ‘film as medium’ to ‘film as art’.⁵⁴ Working as a screenwriter adapting his own fiction as well as others’ into films, Greene understands the medium of cinema better than Waugh and open-mindedly encourages a dialogue between the source text and the target text, evident in the prefaces to the published story of *The Third Man* (1950) and ‘The Basement Room’.⁵⁵ That cinema lends itself to narrative becomes all the more significant, as Walter Benjamin laments in ‘The Storyteller’ (1936) the loss of the art of storytelling, which he understands as ‘the ability to exchange experiences’.⁵⁶ But cinema cannot solve the problem of the incommunicability of experience in the modern world raised by Benjamin; it is perhaps only a trick, taking stock of the (often traumatic) experiences, not least those of the trenches and the concentration camps, in a way which does not attempt to understand their meaning because the meaning, if there is any such, escapes human understanding.

Waugh selected Greene’s novel to review and yet branched out into a discussion of the significance of cinema to his generation. Waugh reviewed the works of Green, Lewis, Greene, and more, to reflect upon his own art of fiction; shedding less light on the individual works than on their times, the reviews reveal Waugh’s own agenda to promote his writing and his particular vision of modernism, which, quite the opposite to high modernism, focuses on exteriority. The ‘stream of talk’, comedy, satire, and the treatment of cinema not merely as a toolkit but, more significantly, as a fresh way of storytelling which innovates the narration of the novel and as a cultural reference, constitute Waugh’s ‘outside method’. Like a camera, Waugh’s exterior modernism records the experience without showing the meaning; the mood is Waste Landish.⁵⁷ Reviewing *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), Waugh returns to an earlier novel which bears ‘a strong affinity’:

⁵³ *Literature of the First Media Age* can be seen as a sequel to *Cinema and Modernism*.

⁵⁴ David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 4.

⁵⁵ See David Lodge, ‘Did the Butler Do It?’, *The Guardian* (4 November 2006), last accessed 14 January 2016, <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/nov/04/film>>.

⁵⁶ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller’, in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt and trans. by Harry Zorn, (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 83-107 (p. 83).

⁵⁷ The title of Waugh’s 1934 novel, *A Handful of Dust*, derives from *The Waste Land*. For Eliot’s influence on Waugh’s early novels, see Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and His Writing* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp. 88-89 and William Myers, *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 5. See also David Lodge, ‘Evelyn Waugh’s Comic Waste Land’, *The New York Review of Books* (15 July 1999) <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1999/07/15/waugh-comic-waste-land/>> [accessed 6 December 2015]

it was not only the inventions in technique that impressed us in *Fiesta*. It was the mood. [...] Mr Hemingway has melancholy, a sense of doom. His men and women are as sad as those huge, soulless apes that huddle in their cages at the zoo. And that mood is still with us.⁵⁸

More than anyone else, including Firbank, who was one of the first to write the ‘novel of conversation’, Hemingway exerted enormous influence upon Waugh and his fellow exterior modernists both stylistically and thematically. Like Hemingway, Waugh also successfully captured the mood of his generation and its times in his fiction, particularly the Twenties in *Vile Bodies*, which is generally acknowledged as his most experimental novel and which, I argue, serves as a prime example of his exterior modernism.

⁵⁸ Waugh, ‘Winner Take Nothing’, in *EAR*, pp. 391-93 (p. 392).