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IN EVELYN WAUGH'S A HANDFUL OF DUST

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A LATOURIAN CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY IN EVELYN WAUGH'S A HANDFUL OF DUST

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ABSTRACT

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Bruno Latour, in We Have Never Been Modern, argues that modernity is characterized by two separate practices: 1.) the work of translation in which "hybrids of nature and culture" are created; 2.) the work of purification in which nature and culture are separated into two distinct ontological zones. Once the relation between nature and culture is comprehended (despite the work of purification) the modern project grinds to a halt. It becomes difficult to act in the world when one's work with nature is seen to so clearly affect culture. It is only through a certain tunnel vision that the West can think of what it does as successful. I argue that Evelyn Waugh's A Handful of Dust presents the reader with a staggering series of grotesque hybrids of nature and culture. Through the depiction of such dangerous hybridization, Dust calls into question the modern project. Indeed, by foregrounding the reckless manner in which hybrids are formed Waugh deals a blow to both modernity and colonialism, signaling a return to a premodern world in which nature or culture is not dominated or emancipated at the expense of others. Waugh's text implies a return to a world in which hybrids of nature and culture are created both more slowly and carefully.

To Dawn

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eyal Amiran was with me from the beginning. It was through Eyal that I first read Evelyn Waugh and Bruno Latour and it was in his modern literature seminar that this essay originated. Just a few years later, the debt I owe Eyal is more than this meager essay can reveal. Apart from Waugh and Latour, I readily trace my interest in mechanicity, Flann O'Brien, and postmodernism to my time with him. As my scholarly interests evolve, I anticipate that his influence will run much deeper. Thank you.

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> Then when the war was over the politicians did what they could to keep us all wired in; but I escaped regularly. Nowadays, I suppose, if such things were still required, I could get a doctor to certify that I needed to go abroad for my health. I begin to stiffen early in December. Stooping, turning, kneeling, climbing in and out of modern motor-cars, which are constructed solely for contortionists, becomes increasingly painful. By Christmas I look out on the bare trees with something near melancholia. (Waugh A Tourist in Africa 6)

Intriguing on its own with such mechanical metaphors as "wired in," the above passage and Waugh's need for "retreat" seem to speak to England's sense of lack during the first half of the century—a lack originating in part from its identification with the industrial age, and the concomitant conception of itself as too staid, mechanical, plain. As Declan Kiberd has noted, this unglamorous self-concept spurred on an evolution in thought toward the unrepentant colony on the neighboring island (Kiberd 20, 30). The "savage" Irish stereotype no longer simply supplied a premise for invasion and colonization; the Irish became a means by which this mechanical ethos was staved off. This concept of the relationship was, as is well known, not entirely shared. Irish recalcitrance undoubtedly led to an increased shifting to other areas of the empire who were perhaps less in tune with Britain's tactics and therefore more amenable to such parasitism. Simultaneously, within the literary and philosophical community theoretical movements like the Leavisites and the New Critics

implicitly or explicitly devoted themselves to the rediscovery of a place for "sensuous particularity," an organic society, or golden age (Eagleton 36, 46). Henri Bergson, with his emphasis on intuition, "appealed to those looking for an animalistic relation to the world to satisfy their longing for a sense of the mystical wholeness that had gone out of their lives" (McCartney 148). It is out of this environment that A Handful of Dust sprung.

Bruno Latour's We Have Never Been Modern provides a means for understanding these roughly congruent movements. Latour argues that to be modern is to simultaneously engage in two practices: 1.) the work of translation in which "hybrids of nature and culture" are created; 2.) the work of purification in which nature and culture are separated into two distinct ontological zones (10):

> So long as we consider these two practices of translation and purification separately, we are truly modern—that is, we willingly subscribe to the critical project . . . As soon as we direct our attention [to both practices] . . . we become retrospectively aware that the two sets of practices have always already been at work . . . (11)

Modernity's "critical project" is encapsulated in the dual pursuit of culture's emancipation and nature's exploitation (9). Once modernity comprehends the inextricable connection between nature and culture as premoderns do, its various pursuits come to a standstill: "Should we *not* have tried to put an end to man's exploitation of man? Should we *not* have tried to become nature's

masters and owners?" (original's emphasis). Once accepted, the comprehension of these relations between nature and culture forces the modern to relinquish the dangerous pursuits in which so many hybrids have been recklessly created, in effect ending modernity. For Latour, the contemporary world is one in which the process of purification cannot go on. There are too many hybrids of nature and culture to assimilate, or purify: "If reading the daily paper is modern man's form of prayer, then it is a very strange man indeed who is doing the praying today while reading about these mixed-up affairs. All of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day" (2). The above epigraph speaks directly to this through Waugh's implicit criticism of an automobile (nature) which has been so divorced from culture, though made for it, that the human body does not fit within it; or, similarly, of a culture which uses science to construct nets ("wired-in") for its citizens, rather than bridges. Waugh implies a premodern world in which hybrids of nature and culture are recognized and formed both more slowly and carefully.

Waugh's interest in the "exotic" African experience is of a different order than one might first suppose (Tourist 7). The exotic becomes that site beyond the "waste" of "politics" and modernity's hybridization. It is a privileged site beyond mere stereotype. Asking whether the specific movements above mitigate or assist modernity's project is beyond the scope of the present study. Clearly the focus on the exotic (in the common sense) and sites of "sensuous particularity" could be read as assisting in the modern colonial project. We must ask whether these movements are trying to avoid facing the reckless

hybridization all about them, becoming instrumental in assisting the modern project, or whether they offer critiques of modernity? My argument restricts itself to Waugh: A Handful of Dust puts forward a series of grotesque, nature-culture hybrids, forcing the reader to question modernity in the same way that Latour's newspaper reader is confronted with the explosion of hybrids. As with A Tourist in Africa, most of his examples of hybridity tend to be of machines (nature) poorly attuned to humans. At other points, animal-human hybrids do much the same work. With these hybrids, Waugh demonstrates the dangers of the modern preoccupation with seeing nature and culture as distinct, leading as it does to headstrong hybridization.

There are two contrary movements in the text: a motion away from (Tony), or toward hybridity (Brenda). Brenda is the exemplary modern. Tony, cuckold, is given a small measure of sympathy by the similarly rejected Waugh, but he essentially acts no differently than his spouse. As the central image of the novel, Hetton Abbey serves as a barometer of Tony and Brenda's position vis-à-vis hybridity. The fact that Hetton is a "fake," as one critic has termed it, due to its mid-century reconstruction in the Gothic vein works only to intensify the wonder at the owners' divergent opinions on its grotesque architecture (Hastings 309; Waugh 13; Waugh references refer to Dust from this point on). Thematically, the great horror of hybridity is constantly foregrounded through images of machines, industry, animals. Thus, we are already alerted to Hetton's always already tainted state in the first dozen pages when we read of the clock tower "disturb[ing]" sleepers in a way akin to Waugh's "modern motor-

cars" (14). The difference in the way in which they view Hetton has to do, ultimately, on which practice, the work of translation or purification, that they engage in. Hetton epitomizes Latourian purity for Brenda—a purity that frees her to recklessly create more hybrid relations with Beaver (via translation). Tony's relation to Hetton is restricted to purification. Only when the project of purification is overburdened by hybridity does Tony leave in search of another space of potential purity. Brenda's infidelity brings into sharp relief the lie that is Hetton, that is, its own always already hybrid state. Early on, however, Tony revisits his plans for repairing the ceiling in "Morgan le Fay," or of "reviv[ing]" the practice of lighting a fire in the church (Waugh 35). Indeed, "he had many small improvements in mind, which would be put into effect as soon as the death duties were paid off" (13). The undertaking offers the promise of engagement, filling Tony with happiness while "[a]ll over England people were waking up, queasy and despondent" (16). Tony is oblivious to Hetton's monstrous architectural hybridity as he seeks to purify it. His inattention speaks to the ability of modernity to purify the world into sweet smelling ontological zones.

Brenda sleeps in the aptly-named Guinevere; a room described as housing a tomb-like fireplace (Waugh 14). Her (and the rest of her London cohort's) dislike of Hetton is exemplified in the attempted installation of "white chromium plating" in Hetton's morning room, a plan engineered by Mrs. Beaver against Tony's will (106). This is the most visible sign of Hetton's hybridity and the way in which the London and the mechanical world are beginning to overrun Tony's clearly defined world. Brenda's desire for change is no more

apparent than in her choice of lover. Where Tony stands for traditional concepts of fidelity, John Beaver represents little more than a social leech. He has no objects of devotion save Mrs. Beaver and his only interest resides in meeting others of a certain social stratum; he is the epitome of the "restive" (modern) searcher for the new who, when not at a party, is inseparable from his phone (2, 8, 238). "Beaver" is feminine and "cold as a fish" while Tony—to follow the binarial tendency of the novel—represents a masculine tradition (66, Hastings 307). One might with some exaggeration echo Hamlet: Tony is Hyperion to Beaver's satyr (1-2, 140). Waugh also pointedly compares Beaver to a circus performer, a woman "who looked like a fish" (56). These eruptions of the mechanical—the phone, the plating—and the animal images—fish, beaver—proliferate madly in the text like the nature-culture hybrids they signal.

Next to the stolid, unsurprising Tony, Beaver, though "pathetic," looks refreshing and engaging. Brenda's friends are also surprised by her interest in Beaver: "He must have something we didn't know about" (Waugh 67). Trapped as Brenda's sister Marjorie and friends are in the social circles of London, Beaver, also a resident of that city, is distinguishable only for his dullness and penury. For Brenda, recently escaped from the purity of Hetton, he and adultery are novel adventures. Brenda flees Hetton Abbey in part for the classical lacanian reasons: the illusory purity of Hetton Abbey creates a lack and consequently a desire for the other, that is, hybridity (Zizek 8). (For Tony, desire works in the opposite fashion. It is hybridity that creates a desire in him for a return to purity. Desire intrudes here as well as Tony's search becomes a

search for what he now lacks: a modern world in which the hybrids are not so numerous that they cannot be assimilated.) In light of their mutual cat attributes, the sensuous and conveniently barren Princess Jenny Abdul Akbar provides a useful comparison: Despite "scars" from her "black" husband, a Moulay from Morocco, she persists in an "uncanny fascination" with the East (113-117). Brenda, similarly, has no reason to desire Beaver—a fact that she realizes—except for the false veneer that she puts on him, inscribing him as Other. An integral part of Beaver's allure is that Brenda feels needed as a teacher, "[Beaver has] got to be taught a whole lot of things" (66). Beaver's disinterest in her except as an means to society must also be attractive to Brenda who must now reverse positions and act as the instigator in contrast to her more passive role in courtship with Tony (65, Hastings 308).

Combined with her economics course (designed to mask her infidelity), Brenda's mission to teach and need to be loved by her subject echo colonial concerns (83). If Brenda is indeed "going native," then in Robert Young's words, it should be no surprise that "economic and sexual exchange [a]re intimately bound up, coupled with each other from the first" (181-182). The fact that a train, a symbol of both commerce and the phallus, links her to Beaver and mechanicity is doubly telling in this context (Lundmark 58). According to Latour, there are two parts to the modern project: the emancipation of humanity and the control of nature (9). Early in the novel, Tony concerns himself with controlling nature in the form of Hetton Abbey. Tony's flight to the Amazon combines both of these projects as a microcosm of colonialism. Brenda is

confined, by contrast, to the emancipation of the colonized in the form of Beaver as we have seen above. Hetton and England operate as centers from which colonial activity sets out to the margin, in this case, London and Brazil.

It is, finally, John Andrew's death that prompts the disclosure of hybridity at Hetton Abbey. Tony is not the "Last" of his tradition until John Andrew dies. John Andrew is even more enthralled with Hetton, hence his enthusiasm for hunting, an activity his father neglects to some shame from his neighbors (Waugh 25). John Andrew acts as a site of a common purpose for Brenda and Tony. In view of his biological debt to his parents, one might also see him as equally a part of both of the spaces, Hetton or London, that they occupy. John could just as well mature into his father's image as into Beaver's image with whom he shares a name and an overt fascination with women, whether they be conventionally exotic, Polly Cockpurse, or simply exotic, Jenny Abdul Akbar. Tony is immune to such attractions. Finally, John Andrew is perhaps the scene for one of the few specific agreements between Brenda and Tony: At one point, they "anxious[ly]" urge on John Andrew's interest in hunting (21).

John Andrew solidifies Hetton's hybrid relationship, but then in a situation that parallels his hybrid being and the marriage he constitutes synecdochally, the world of Hetton shreds as machine, animal, and human meet. Two motor-driven vehicles, a bus and "motor bicycle," and a horse converge on a bend. The bicycle which "had been running gently in neutral gear" back-fires, causing Miss Ripon's skittish horse to collide with John's pony, leading to his fall, and then tragedy as a hoof connects with the young

boy's head (Waugh 142). Nature and culture collide in the first fatal hybrid of the novel. The passengers of the bus are "amused" apparently by what must always be a strange sight—humanity's oldest conveyance meeting its newest on equal terms. But they are safe, enclosed within the bus's mechanical womb. Knowing that John Andrew's death results from his first participation in a fox hunt underlines the problems of Brenda and Tony. Their agreement even on such a minor issue as fox hunting is only a temporary illusion obfuscating intense differences.

Tony leaves Hetton because it has been tainted by Brenda's admission of infidelity following their son's death of which the chromium plating is the most obvious reminder. Hetton's hybrid status emerges as modernity fails to adequately purify one of its hybrid situations, revealing the danger of mixing the machine with culture. For Tony, who above all admires tradition as embodied in Hetton, any perversion of a part is a perversion of the whole. He will not take Brenda back despite Reggie St. Cloud's intervention, "No, I just couldn't feel the same about her again" (Waugh 203). Nor does Brenda react sympathetically to Tony's earlier overtures regarding a vacation from Hetton. She soon leaves him to stay with a friend in London (169). Tony rationalizes her betrayal through the human need to escape from reminders of the tragedy, and then states to Jock Grant-Menzies that "I can't tell you what she was like here . . . quite *mechanical*" (my emphasis, 171). Neither death, the mechanical, nor adultery are defining characteristics of Hetton for Tony, but are traits seen as belonging to London. Hetton, Brenda, and England have become "poisoned," sites that must be

escaped and cleansed (217). Tony's escape to South America, mirroring Brenda's to London, allows for the quiet renovation of the morning room in which the chromium plating has been partially installed (275).

Tony's expedition in search of the City of "radiant sanctuary" is just as much an attempt to leave something behind as it is a focused attempt at finding a new world. For moderns, "hybrids present the horror that must be avoided at all costs by ceaseless, even maniacal purification" (Latour 112; Waugh 222). Danger lies ahead in Brazil, but nothing is more sinister than that which once known, or thought known, becomes unknown. An expedition might have been a good avenue of escape if it were not a typically modern gesture and perhaps the exemplary way of evading local hybrids. Shortly into the journey, Tony discovers from a fellow traveler how original his escape is: "Well I daresay it's more interesting than it sounds . . . else people wouldn't do it so much" (221). In his search for a new place that will not overwhelm him with hybrids, Tony's actions indicate that he has fallen into the grossest form of center/margin thought which exoticizes the "margin" as a place of retreat as his own world becomes too much to bear. The irony is that formerly Tony despised traveling (215-216). By fleeing to Brazil and dismissing knowledge of hybridity, Tony only exacerbates the problems of hybridization in another location and ends up in the hands of a character driven mad by hybridity.

As Paul Carter argues in The Road to Botany Bay, the pastime of European exploration is a paradoxical avocation at best (174). If exploring is the act of discovery, often the explorer finds what has never been lost. Even in

1934, the Brazilian rain forests were not lost, nor their indigenous inhabitants, nor the mythical city that Tony and Messinger are ostentatiously searching for. There is no "virgin" land where they walk, the Pie-Wie, or Macushi, or others long ago explored it:

> But spatial history does not advance. Or, better, it only advances by reflection, by going back and looking again at already trodden ground. The ground is not virgin: it already has a history. It is not a question of interpretation, of correcting what is already there, of replacing it with a better route. It is a question of interpretation, of attempting to recapture and evoke more fully 'the world of the text' . . . . If this process is not to become a tyranny, effacing what it attempts to describe, if it is to avoid the positivist fallacy of supposing its own account of events decisively replaces the original one, then it is essential that it respect the difference of the historical texts it deals with. (Carter 174)

Despite the aid of the most sophisticated equipment, it is the explorers who are lost, both literally and, for Tony, metaphorically (Waugh 249). The rote motivation of the expedition and the explorers' reliance on mechanical implements are menacing clues signaling reckless hybridization. Exploration's "primary object is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate" (Carter xvi). One might best understand the search for the "City" as the act of starting over again. Tony loses Hetton, his son, and his wife for a time, yet there are other worlds, untainted and pure, spaces that might be reconstructed in their image,

or as he would imagine them. Only by erasing the past in Latour's terms does he lose the lesson of his own history, the lesson of hybridity. While Carter was concerned with how Australia was spatially constructed in history, Tony's exploration may be viewed as an attempt to "replace the original" past and start clean, a dangerous process in which he must make the above "positivist fallacy." The successful reconstruction of Tony's own vision of the city which is directly paralleled with Gothic Hetton and idealized as the "radiant sanctuary," would legitimate Tony (Waugh 222, 282-283). Like the other colonial margin that Brenda inhabits (with Beaver as her object), Brazil represents a new frontier that is malleable on the basis of its inferiority, the rote justification for imperialism. For Tony, Brazil metaphorically symbolizes a new Hetton, one in which he is needed, once again, to engage his purifying powers. His and colonialism's mistakes flow from the separation nature and culture. If this separation was not made, the act of mapping would be seen as what it is, the oppressive reconstruction of a people. If this division had not occurred, Brenda would not have flown to London, nor Tony to Brazil.

Tony's escape is fated for failure. His journey is grimly foreshadowed by Reggie St. Cloud's archeological activities described, unsubtly, as the "desecration" of tombs (Waugh 200). With Reggie as Brenda's brother, Waugh further points to how Tony has moved toward the extreme modernity embodied in Brenda. Tony and Messinger are searching for a *city*, even though it might not be the London of Beaver and Brenda. At their first meeting at the Greville Club, Dr. Messinger begins their conversation anecdotally with the theft of his

machine guns "by a Nicaraguan calling himself alternately Ponsonby and Fitz Clarence" (218). Messinger's name bears a resemblance to the German word for knife, *das Messer*, a suspiciously metallic instrument. If one notes the opening four letters, the name also alludes to hybridity and the danger it represents: "mess" points to both a mixture and confusion. Later, during Tony's sickness we learn that Messinger is "in love" with John Beaver. Waugh writes them into the same mechanical universe (287). Regardless of his intestinal frailty, Messinger's proficiency in telling the time during the night by the "succession of sounds" attests to his experience (235). Their failure lies in the denial of nature's connection to culture. For example, while Messinger makes a "compass traverse" of their route, the journey begins to become unreal, "mythical," as the rivers and streams begin flowing north and south simultaneously: "A discovery of genuine scientific value," Messinger remarks (250). Messinger's science and mechanical implements cannot provide the answers to such fantastic occurrences though the scientist's arrogant remarks are in complete keeping with the established Latourian separation: The division amounts to kind of blindness. Messinger is for this reason unable to fully realize the uncertain position that they are in, and because of this, they forge ahead in modern fashion, heedless of the hybridic consequences of their reckless drive forward. Waugh's point is clear when, despite protective netting designed to prevent such an occurrence, a vampire bat bites Messinger's "great toe" (237).

This drawback is dramatized through their interaction with the Macushi

tribe. A number of men and women from this tribe are paid to lead Messinger and Tony toward Pie-Wie country whose inhabitants will then (it is hoped) lead them to the City. At the front of this crew is cigarette-obsessed Rosa who speaks English due to two years with a "black man," Mr. Forbes. Rosa and the rest present the perfect picture of ambivalence and mimicry. Rosa obsesses after cigarettes, carries a broken umbrella, and wears a calico dress like the other women (Waugh 245). Ultimately, these "Indians" who bear the tortuous cabouri fly like cows and find humor in the accidental knifing of one of their own, do not comply to Messinger's conception of them (Waugh 254, 256). The group wavers on the edge of Pie-Wie territory where Rosa, whose face has now grown "blank" in contrast to her earlier loquaciousness, states that the Macushi must return to dig cassava (257, 261). Messinger believes they are stalling for more goods and begins by offering cigarettes to Rosa, then "bottles of scent and pills, bright celluloid combs set with glass jewels, mirrors . . . brass cartridge cases and flat, red flasks of gunpowder" (261-262). Faced with this treasure, the Macushi are unresponsive. Finally, Messinger: "It's a pity. But they'll fall for the mice, you see. I *know* the Indian mind" (original emphasis) At first, it appears that he does "know" the "Indian mind:"

> They were of German manufacture; the size of large rats but conspicuously painted in spots of green and white; they had large glass eyes, stiff whiskers, and green and white ringed tails; they ran on hidden wheels, and inside them were little bells that jingled as they moved. Dr. Messinger took one out of the box,

> unwrapped the tissue paper and held it up to general scrutiny. There was no doubt that he had captured his audience's interest. Then he wound it up. The Indians stirred apprehensively at the sound . . . The effect exceeded anything he had expected. There was a loud intake of breath, a series of horrified small grunts, a high wail of terror from the women, and a sudden stampede. (262-263)

Messinger expects the Macushi will return to the camp they had so quickly left and, excited as they are by the mechanical mouse, greedily take up Tony and Messinger on their offer. They do return, but only in the middle of the night, and only to retrieve their possessions and leave. The "explorers" are stranded.

One cannot easily argue the view that Rosa and the others fled simply from ignorance. Telling signs point to Rosa's inherent shrewdness: Her early verbosity turns to reticence when Messinger's requests become repetitive and demanding (262). In her own way, Rosa is menacing. Like Caliban whose master provided him with the tools to curse, Rosa may also curse, but she has an added tool, the imperialist's assumption of superiority, an assumption that equates to over-confidence. Tony and Messinger are also hampered by the inevitable objectification that colonialism and the nature-culture division create. When a society is made an object, said society is expected to behave calmly and according to the rules by which machines operate. In this episode the Macushi "assert[. . .] themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the

imperial centre" (Ashcroft et al. 2). Ironically, this definition of post-colonial literatures by the authors of The Empire Writes Back signals the dispossession that Waugh feels within his native country.

Waugh's portrayal of the Macushi's response is intriguing. Familiar and accepting as they are with rifles which are both mechanical and deadly, it is unlikely that they are frightened in the conventional sense by a rat-like mouse or even the sound of Messinger winding the mouse. They do, finally, return for their possessions. Rather, they realize that this mechanical device, masquerading as a living entity, is perverse. In a response to a letter of criticism by Henry Yorke in 1934, Waugh writes that they were "impelled by the mechanical simply to go home" (Amory 88). Had he inserted "mice" the point would have been clearer. However, the indication of people who "couldn't do two things at once" bolsters the argument that they saw the inconsistency inherent in fleeing from the mice only to return to steal. To do so, would be to negate the menace of the mice. More generally, this interaction highlights how different, how hybrid the colonial relationship is with the Macushi's pursuit of food and Tony and Messinger's pursuit of an un-lost city. The mice with their whiteness, connoting the English (culture), and the green, connoting nature (object-culture), are a concretization of the relationship.

While the Macushi appear preternaturally aware of the mouse's hybrid being and are frightened accordingly, Tony, too caught up in the project of modernity and hybridization, is worried that it may fall over on the ground and prove uninteresting to the Macushi.

> Moderns do differ from premoderns by this single trait: they refuse to conceptualize quasi-objects as such. In their eyes, hybrids present that horror that must be avoided at all costs by a ceaseless and, even maniacal purification. (Latour 112)

The Macushi's premodern comprehension of the possibly perverse quality of hybrids of nature-culture that I am arguing for (and that Messinger and Tony are oblivious to) is also apparent in the way the Macushi return to the camp. Previously, certain goods were stolen. During their nocturnal return—at which the women dispose of their clothes for stealth—no objects are stolen (Waugh 266). They desire no more of explorers and mechanical mice. Their stubborn dismissal of mechanical gifts makes them doubly menacing as their actions cannot be understood in light of the modern division, or the modern's own propensity for the new. Rosa and her people do not comply with the subject-object distinction that enables colonialism, but force the separation once again in a staggering and deadly reversal of expectations.

In Waugh's diary entry for March 28, 1933, a paragraph which begins with a description of "Indians," assumedly Macushi, and their predilection for pets ends with, "[w]rist-watch attracts attentions. Indian craze for any new thing" (Davie 382). In his letter, Yorke writes, "[t]o tell you the truth I was furious that the natives did not steal all the stores. I can't and won't believe that natives are honest, it's too much" (Amory 88-89). As Waugh's work is directed toward the English, the rejection of the experience above is understandable. The implication is that the English are those who possess a "craze for any new

thing," a point the novel supports in particular through Brenda's movement of desire and impatience with boredom. As Hetton serves as a foil for London, so the Macushi do for those in England. Waugh's idealization of the Macushi assists his thematic needs: England's faulty reliance on stereotypes, the dangers inherent in an attraction to machines, and the cold and ruthless human-machine hybrids that result.

During his hallucinatory fever in the jungle, Tony begins confusing "Green Line Buses" which cannot "turn the corner safely at Hetton Cross" with mice (Waugh 280). Soon, the hybrid mice reappear in Tony's mind as "green line rats" or "mechanical green rats" which frighten villagers and Reggie St. Cloud out of their homes. These are all parallel images of culture's citizens recognizing hybridity and the dangers of reckless hybridity and following Tony's example by fleeing. The foremost extension of the mice is the appearance of the "mechanical green fox" in Bruton Wood (Waugh 281). Like the mice, this fox has "a bell inside him," and frightens the person who sees him. Nor is it a surprise when we learn that Brenda would not have been frightened by a mechanical mouse; she is already lost to the side which valorizes reckless mechanical hybridization (269).

Interspersed through Tony's hallucinations are memories of a card game with "that Shameless Blonde." The card game, "animal snap," requires the players to imitate animals at times. Mrs. Rattery chooses a hen for Tony and a dog for herself, linking her both to the mechanical fox and to "green line rats" through her name. This card game occurs immediately following John

Andrew's death and prefigures the life Tony will soon live. Waugh ostentatiously makes Rattery's obsession with cards into a parody of the role of chance: "under her hands order grew out of chaos; she established sequence and precedence" (Waugh 150). Rattery, being unemotional, disinterested, unthinking—"Don't you ever take a rest from thinking?" she asks Tony—is the embodiment of modernity. She, pointedly, will not think about the nature-culture collision that just resulted in the death of John Andrew. With her airplane, Rattery embodies the end result of culture's obsession with the nature in the form of the machine that begins with the pursuit of the new (in society, cinema, planes) and ends with a disconnected home life, apathy, and lack of love. This last trait is illustrated in her ignorance of her two sons whereabouts: "They're at school somewhere. I took them to the cinema last summer" (158). Rattery is no less menacing than a mechanical mouse. Nevertheless, Tony chooses to link himself to a machine-human hybrid in the guise of Mrs. Rattery while his son lies only a few hours dead (147).

All of these images of the fox culminate in James Todd whose surname has traditionally been affixed to foxes due to their assumed cleverness. Following the disappearance of Messinger, Tony breaks off on his own, feverish, to make his way out of the forest. Todd discovers and nurses Tony back to health. Todd, whose mother was "Indian" and father a Barbadian or English missionary, more fully than Rosa exists in that in-between state of English and not-English (Waugh 289). He speaks English but cannot read and his favorite author is the quintessentially English Dickens, a strategic

appropriation. He rules over the local population, many of whom are also his sons or daughters, like a monarch with a rifle, invoking another common trope of imperialism. As with Rosa, Tony is hoodwinked. Three Englishmen searching for Tony venture into the region, but Tony has been drugged by flattery—"It is almost as though my father were here again"—his own conceit, and finally by an actual drug slipped into a drink during a local celebration (292). Todd's lies assist Tony's faith in colonialism, yet inevitably indicate how faulty, hybrid, and dangerous that relationship is. Todd is finally a reflection of Tony's own duplicity, of how Britain's imperialism mirrors the actions of Dickens who parades as a conscientious liberal while bedding a servant. Perhaps the most subtle yet striking irony of the novel is that Tony begins the novel rejecting the fox hunt, an "emblem of the disorder and dislocation of upper class England," only to go on a hunt himself of another variety, ending up as the prey of the fox (Heath 111).

Desperate to keep his eloquent reader with him, Todd presents a search party with Tony's watch and shows them a cross erected over a previous captive's grave to end their search for Tony. Of course, Todd is not truly "native," and certainly less so than Rosa. Rosa's own westernized traits had not affected her premodern ability to recognize dangerous hybrids and reject Tony and Messinger. Todd, by contrast, has become so deeply influenced by the modern world that he has lost his discriminatory ability. His use of nature—the gun, watch, cross—work rather to harm Tony than to emancipate him. Todd's pious mimicry of Dickensian sentimentalism mixed

with the cunning use of the watch as decoy point to exactly the horror articulated in the mechanical mice. Waugh gives Dickens another face, a grotesque visage not easily ignored. Edmund Wilson's observation of the "pervasive sense of terror" in A Handful of Dust is profoundly related to the "unblinking" queue of hybrids which find their fullest articulation in Todd (Carens 85). The horror comes from Tony's inability to sidestep hybrids through his flight from Hetton. Todd, finally, is the ultimate image of the inescapability of hybridization. Faced with this abundance, the modern project comes to a screeching halt. In "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," Jorge Luis Borges relates a saying by an Uqbarian heresiarch that "Mirrors and copulation are abominable, for they multiply the number of mankind" (68). As the similarity of their names should indicate, Todd of course is a mirror image of Tony. Mirrors are an affront to human mortality through their eternal, unblinking projection. They mock us with our own image and imply the void within us. Todd reveals Tony's own inevitable hybridity, his inability to purify modernity's glut of hybrids, and ultimately his own finitude. Todd's name contains within it this hint of finitude: *der Tod* means death in German. In the person of Todd, Tony comes face to face with the consequences of reckless hybridization, death, and that there is no utopian escape from it.

Todd, as a composite of the mechanical and culture, is a mess of contradictions. Todd gives away Tony's watch while retaining his own gun, yet one more dose of death imagery. More importantly, Todd retains Tony, who for him, represents a mechanical infusion into his already racially hybrid existence.

Tony's identity cannot be separated from his duties which are finally the "mechanical[. . .]," repetitious, and exhaustive reading of Dickens (299, 302). He becomes for all intents a time-keeping device as each novel or page signals an end and a new beginning, a process that hauntingly mimics Rattery's own obsessive, mechanical card playing. Jeffrey Heath has seen Todd as "boredom itself" (118). But Todd is no less bored than Rattery. Todd is, like Rattery, an exemplary, if twisted, modern. Tony, in flight from hybridity, has instead found himself finally in a position in which he can flee no longer from the failure of the modern project. Todd's actions indicate an extreme ability to confuse a person (culture) for a machine (nature). As the foremost image of colonialism, through Todd it becomes clear how modernity and colonialism are intimately related. If the general view of the colony is as "retreat," as Waugh termed his vacations from industrialized England, then Todd's final appropriation of the modern practices of translation and purification signals a final moment of menace as the realization that sites of retreat have also been polluted.

Todd has become deranged because he lives simultaneously in the world of the Amazon and of Dickens. His confusion of Tony as a human watch when Waugh's experience demands the possession of the watch and dismissal of the human speaks to his modern status. Todd has lost his ability to make value judgments of the suitability of hybrids while being tainted by the modern. Both the world of Rattery and that of Todd esteem the new in the modern manner I have been outlining. The difference is that in the less

hybridized world of England where no premodern world is presented, Rattery may remain sane while risking her human qualities. In a colonialism in which two dissimilar worlds mix, Todd's attempt to be modern in a premodern society leads to his own madness. As both sire and dictator over the local population, the tension between treating them alternately as subject (culture) and object (nature) is too much to bear. With the inconsistent addition of his own hybrid heredity—an indigenous mother and failed missionary as father—he is led to insanity.

Tony has fallen into an extreme version of modernity to the point of suggesting, deliriously, that Todd buy a motor bicycle, "much faster and noisier" (287). Like Todd before him, he has become ill being modern in a premodern world. Tony and Todd become an image of the earlier Tony and Brenda with some difference: The relationship is not voluntary and they do not hold an object, like a son, in common. Their union is built on threat. The colonial situation has been inverted as Tony becomes the nature-object to be exploited. Todd, who must stand in for the colonized to this degree, becomes more English than the English, utilizing Latour's dangerous division.

Waugh's biographer, Selina Hastings, places the blame for Tony's fate on "immaturit[y]" and lack of religion. Tony never did light that fire in the church and religion was the furthest thing from his mind when John Andrew dies. "[A]fter all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion," he says to Rattery (Hastings 308; Waugh 35, 158). Hastings' remarks refer only to the specific marital problems in which Tony finds himself. However, from a

Latourian perspective the same analysis could be made. "No one is truly modern who does not agree to keep God from interfering with Natural Law as well as with the laws of the republic," writes Latour (33). Such a God is present but "crossed-out," unavailable and too distant to interfere with society or nature. According to Latour, the concept of God has evolved so that the modern project may commence despite the original Christian conception of a premodern God. As Tony's mechanical ritual of church going shows, his God is not a personal God to whom he could address his grievances and look for healing (35). It has all the artificiality of the modern division behind it. This also provides a response to the charge of Christian complicity with colonialism: It is not the inherent fault of the religion; instead, Christianity has been subverted to aid the modern project. Had both Tony and Todd's father not faced a "crossed-out" God, they might have remained at home and dealt directly with their problems rather than using Others to de-face their problems.

As the clairvoyance of illness reveals, Tony was lost long before James Todd:

> I will tell you what I have learned in the forest, where time is different. There is no City. Mrs. Beaver has covered it with chromium plating and converted it into flats. Three guineas a week with a separate bathroom. Very suitable for base love. And Polly will be there. She and Mrs. Beaver under the fallen battlements . . . (Waugh 288)

There is no possibility of returning and remaking Hetton, or finding that

legendary City. Mrs. Beaver, London's societal pimp, has tainted both projects with her chromium plating and her son, another sort of metallic plating. A return to Hetton would only find Polly Cockpurse and Mrs. Beaver nearby, threatening the already ruined project. Tony has come to the realization that drives the novel: There is no site free from reckless hybridization; nor can he evade his complicity in modernity. Unfortunately, this appears to be an occasion where humankind cannot bear too much reality as Todd's insanity and Tony's failure to escape indicate. For Tony, we see how he is finally paralyzed into non-action through his confrontation with hybridity. Todd, by contrast, is the extreme example of what could happen to someone dedicated to the modern project. If he is not insane, he is certainly a man devoid of human feeling, mechanical in a way similar to Brenda and Rattery.

Waugh's novel operates as a "conceit" as he terms it in one of his letters (Amory 88). If a conceit is a "complex, startling, and highly intellectual analog[y]," then the question must address what exactly is being compared in the novel in such a fashion (Holman 283). Waugh tells us that he intends the character of Tony to be juxtaposed against the savages in the novel, like Mrs. Beaver, the "real" savages, and the savages represented by one of the last images in the novel, the fox farm. Also, the "civilized," e.g. Mrs. Beaver, and "savage" are juxtaposed, with the "civilized" ultimately found wanting as the idealized, premodern actions of the Macushi indicate. Waugh's letter simply lumps all three together, while judging from the actions within the novel, the British take home the prize for savagery. On the first page, when Beaver asks "Mumsey" if

anyone was hurt in a house fire she says, "No one, I am thankful to say . . . except two housemaids" (3). Mrs. Beaver readily treats servants as if they were objects. Such a comparison strongly casts suspicion on the civilized nature of the colonizer and questions the moral basis of colonization.

According to Elleke Boehmer, despite his jabs at imperialism's "civilizing mission" and "the white man's self-discovery," Waugh fails to separate himself from the imperialistic center (165-167). "British superiority" continues to act as a basic assumption about the world and "Waugh's devices do not mask the underlying social and political structures of his world." Satire is the attempt to get at the truth behind our presumptions—the ignorance behind the ostentatious show of intelligence, the meanness of the elite and the "barbarism" of the "civilized." To the extent that Waugh writes for an English audience and that his satire—the most subtle didacticism—is aimed at this audience, Boehmer is correct. Clearly, her case is overstated in relation to A Handful of Dust. Waugh's argument against colonialism has less to do with the Other than it has to do with England's own particular social obsessions which may tear apart a family with its borders, while outside they prompt insanity and death, not it should be noted through the fault of the premodern world. Tony, Messinger, and Todd's destines are decided by the modern division of nature-culture. The juxtaposition of the two "savage" worlds equalizes the two. It is not simply that Waugh pictures the Empire in decline, as Boehmer argues, but the entire modern and colonial enterprise which bases itself on reckless hybridization is questioned. The decline is simply, as Latour

would argue, the result of a modernity which had been too successful: The modern world has been so profligate in its hybrids that evidence of them, both good and bad, can no longer be hidden, and once this happens, modernity and its pursuits are in danger.

The mechanical imagery within the novel does not exist alone, assisting in further delineating where this illness comes from. Instead it is allied with animal imagery, as with Beaver, Cockpurse (a monkey), Jenny (a cat), Rattery, Todd, Brenda (a cat) (55, 17). The mechanical exacerbates animal qualities. At the end of chapter three, Tony describes Brenda as "mechanical." As the central chapter, "English Gothic II," begins two pages later, Brenda informs Cockpurse that Tony's anger has her feeling like a "beast" (171-173). She repeats this again in similar fashion shortly after Tony rejects Reggie St. Cloud's proposition of £2,000 as alimony for his sister (206-209). Creating evidence of his infidelity at Brighton, Tony is described as an "*Unnatural* beast" by onlookers when he asks if his adulterer's daughter may swim. Apparently, he does not realize how unsafe the sea happens to be at that moment (original emphasis, 198-199). All three incidents involve infidelity, either marital or with tradition as exemplified in Hetton. They involve a movement away from Hetton. What is particularly important to note is that here, for once, Waugh's characters are forced to evaluate their actions. The fact that they have stopped using people as people but have confused nature and culture, gives at least Brenda pause.

Tendril, the vicar at Hetton since returning from his military post,

continues, uncomprehendingly, to give unmodified and repetitive sermons to his parishioners from his military days, placing them among tigers and camels on a "barren continent" (79, 39). Returning home from the "subjugat[ion]" of natives, he is unable to make the switch from object to subject. His sermons have no relation to his parishioners who are not surprised since "few of the things said in church seemed to have any relevance to themselves." Tendril's niece also rode the fatal motor bicycle. The religious are further implicated through Todd's father who as a failed missionary leaves his white wife for gold only to take up with an indigenous woman (289). Todd's possession of a gun and his racial hybridity irrevocably changes the relation between him, the surrounding indigenous population, and Tony. The latter become subjects to be controlled and hence objects as I argued above. Of course, Todd has his counterparts in England. To those who lead a mechanical life, unconscious of the nature-culture division, feeling like an animal is only just for they, like animals and the machines they mimic, are unconscious of their effect on the world around them.

Jenny Abdul Akbar's "truly Eastern disregard for the right property of things" may indicate Waugh's feelings regarding the origin of the confusion between culture and nature (156). Movement away from home, though not necessarily to the East, does signal a detachment which aids in the use of nature and people as "things." The characterization of Jenny would seem to indicate that the origin of England's confusion and division originates in the East. However, Jenny's "uncanny fascination" with the East is not that of the

native; the indigenous seldom profess a "fascination" with their own home—happiness or satisfaction perhaps, but seldom more. She is most likely a transported Jew who has bought into the contemporary zeitgeit. Waugh implicates then, the othering process which exoticizes that which does not fit the category of the normative, the technology that has enabled commerce and travel between the East and West, and the increasing dissociation that technology prompts. Each of these catalysts uphold and are diffused through one another.

Tony, in contrast, rarely goes abroad and has no interest in the East as we learn from his conversation with Jenny and his rejection of her as a replacement for Brenda (214, 114). The first Macushi that Messinger and Tony meet is, like Rosa, also dressed in a calico dress, and though she comes forward in greetings, she is "devoid of comprehension and curiousity." Her lack of English would explain the former, but not the latter. She is not addicted to the new, unlike Rosa who has clearly been influenced (241). While the first Macushi politely serves cassiri, she serves no purpose in the narrative other than to indicate how much she prefers her own world over that of England. Boredom and desire are a constant theme for Brenda and the "restive" Beaver (238). The cult of the new that is so intertwined and dependent on mechanical production and advertising compels us to be less than human and more animalistic; less human because we move on from lover to lover, or expedition to expedition, destroying lives and artifacts, moving forward only through forgetfulness. Tony's work at Hetton is part of this movement to the new. Hetton

is engaging and new to him in its calm hybridity and excites him more than Brenda whom he takes for granted. Modernity makes us see things as objects alone, separating the social factor from the equation, enabling Brenda or colonialism to work its work of destruction. The search for the new is aided by the tension at home which forces a closer alignment of nature and culture by virtue of their proximity, while overseas or over the telephone, isolation works its magic. The pursuits of the modern may be free of all protest with the effects out of sight and this would explain why Waugh so strongly implicates the East and colonialism.

But this is not the end of the complications for the modern."[T]ime is different" in the "forest" Tony reminds us several times (288). Time, for the modern, only appears "when we bind together the cohort of elements that make up our day-to-day universe" and then replace that "cohort" with another in a "subsequent period" (Latour 72-73). The fabric of time is strained whenever the impression of order is dispelled by the "mixing up [of] different periods, ontologies or genres." Obviously, many hybrid juxtapositions within the novel work to disrupt this order. When Messinger disappears, that, in combination with Tony's illness, is enough to disturb time for the protagonist. Messinger's death by drowning is ironic because in Latour's terms it is precisely the conception of a "turbulent flow of whirlpools and rapids" that will upset time. As Lennart Lundmark and Latour both argue, once time is disturbed, modernity is wrecked. How can "progress" continue when events are spread out all over the "calendar?" Previously, the modern had with an emphatic gesture wiped out the

past, seeing itself as cut off from it by virtue of time and their own arrogance (Latour 68-69). The effect is decisive. In part it is the divisive separation of time that enables the work of purification: Valid scholarship regarding hybrids cannot be accomplished if the past is suppressed because with the past one must also lose part of the complexity that modernity seems intent on erasing (70). The past, which has always been there, in the face of a modernity overburdened with hybrids may now return.

Todd's symbolic abrogation of the watch has an even more potent meaning for Waugh. As Tony is attempting to figure the time in England versus Brazil, he muses that the sun "came to them at second hand and slightly soiled after Polly Cockpurse and Mrs. Beaver and Princess Akbar had finished with it" (Waugh 237). The colonial mission, like Brenda's mission, exists to dispel that ubiquitous boredom of a purified realm in the "craze for the new" hybridic relation. Along the way, this finely honed reflex dissolves families, traditions, and cultures. Todd's gift of the watch is symptomatic of this "soil[ing]" as Tony is torn away from his home through this ultimate symbol of progress. The three searchers will return to collect a reward with the watch as evidence; Tony's heir will, ironically, join the commercial class, by instigating a "silver fox" farm (308). Progress continues at Hetton, but with menacing reminders of the past, a motor bicycle, a broken clock to be repaired once the death duties are paid off, and Richard and Teddy Last's resumption of fox hunting. Nowhere in the novel is there an attempt to demonstrate a non-hybridized world, or the possibility of one. Even at the early stage when Tony and Brenda urge on John Andrew's

entrance into fox hunting, they foreshadow the hybridity of James Todd who combines in himself both nature in the machine and the culture of the colonizer and colonized (21).

The final and most successful of all the hybrids I have discussed is the novel itself. Yorke also wrote by way of criticism, "I feel the end is so fantastic that it throws the rest out of proportion. Aren't you mixing two things together? The first part is convincing, a real picture of people one has met and may at any moment meet again" (Amory 88). If the mark of a successful artistic hybrid of two worlds is the radical sharing of an intermediary, the novel's "John Andrew" is the series of hybrids that begin appearing in the early portion of the novel and continue through the "fantastic" end. With such a consistently applied trope, there can be no disproportion between the realism and the "fantastic" portion of the novel. When Yorke will not consider the fantastic and realistic form of the novel together, he allows such hybrids and the work of modernity to progress. Waugh's novel acts as an ostentatious linking of the practices of hybridization and purification, dealing a blow to the project of modernity. Closely allied with modernity, colonialism likewise depends on the strict division of nature and culture. Yorke further criticizes the Brazil episode as "seem[ing] manufactured and not real" (Hastings 314). Rather, what are "manufactured" are Yorke's modern sensibilities which are incapable of viewing the world as a whole or people as subjects who also perform the function of objects. The Machushi's failure to steal and Yorke's disbelief of this fact signal his entrapment in the modern discourse that separates civilized and uncivilized, colonizer and

colonized, and center and margin by an illusory while substantial chasm.

All the movement within the novel on the part of Tony and Brenda clearly illustrates the importance of desire to modernity. Brenda flees Hetton for the promise of hybridity. Disturbed in his project of purification, Tony flees Hetton for a less ostentatious site of hybridity. Brenda returns to Tony in Jock Grant-Menzies—Tony's only friend—while Tony attempts a return to Hetton in the City. Tony and his heir Teddy are likewise trapped in their rote glorification of a past that never was (Wasson 137, Waugh 308). Tony rejects the ostentatious hybridity of Hetton following Brenda's infidelity, but then becomes trapped in that which he would escape. The hybrids proliferate. Like the Leavisites, those who flee must theorize a better world, a totally different world, implicitly denying that every world is a mental construct that depends on a prior world for its being. Indeed, such a world arises out of a self that now, tainted by hybridity, cannot leave behind this past. In other words, Tony's flight is impossible because he is constituted by that from which he flees. But the flight continues by an ontological division which allows the subject to evade hybridity and imagine an illusory realm of purity. In fleeing the once repressed hybridity of Hetton, Tony, on a more practical level, simply creates yet one more reckless hybrid. There is no escape from hybridity, nor from the boredom and desire that is a result of the successful purification of nature and culture into two separate zones. Realizing this fact is to face the interdependence of culture and nature, and one's own non-modern status. Each engagement within the novel, marriage, infidelity, exploration, or home maintenance holds within itself some

relation to nature and the mechanical world. These engagements suffer equally from the problem of desire. As such activities become repetitive they tend to produce a desire for the other, leading to yet more hybridization as in Brenda's case. This repetition need not entail a closed door, but rather, if pursued consciously, an opportunity to live more imaginatively in that same space with the added benefit of fewer faulty hybrids. To accept that a place, person, or time is always a hybrid of nature and culture is to face the fact of hybridization and to return to a premodern state. It is also to entertain an automobile which fits the needs of society, or a family that remains "whole." To reject reckless hybridization is to jeopardize the pursuits of modernity and colonialism.

Faced with the social and psychological effects of the machine age and modernity, Waugh's answer to how we can stop exploiting ourselves and others is only partial and, at last, inadequate: stay close to home, accept the fact of hybridity, recognize the short-sightedness of desire, and form new hybrids more carefully. Sadly, for the populace of Waugh's novel, this knowledge and the need to live creatively—that is its corollary—comes much too late.

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