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DARK COMEDY AND THE GROTESQUE IN *THE LOVED ONE* BY EVELYN WAUGH

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Abstract: This research paper is a descriptive study of dark comedy and the grotesque in The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy written by Evelyn (Arthur St. John) Waugh (1903-1966). The analysis draws on theoretical perspectives developed by J. M.A. Ventola, Justine Edwards & Rune Graulund and Esti Sheinberg on dark comedy and the grotesque. The study highlights how dark comedy is developed and supported in the novel through characters who embody suicidal paragons and those making use of cruelty or sadism. At the same time, it underlines the grotesque, which goes through the juxtaposition of incongruities or ambiguities and the use of hyperbolic images referring to death, cruelty and the killing of human beings. The overarching aim is to emphasize the novelist's rejection of modernity and his critique of a society which has no more guidelines and fails to admit the significance of God in everyday life.

Keywords: Dark comedy, the Grotesque, Ambiguity, Juxtaposition, Cruel Character

LA COMEDIE NOIRE ET LE GROTESQUE DANS THE LOVED ONE D'EVELYN WAUGH

Résumé : Le présent article traite de la comédie noire et du grotesque dans *The Loved One : An Anglo-American Tragedy* d'Evelyn (Arthur St. John) Waugh (1903-1966). Il est fondé sur les enseignements théoriques de J. M.A. Ventola, Justine Edwards & Rune Graulund et d'Esti Steinberg sur la comédie noire et le grotesque. L'article met l'accent sur le fait que la comédie noire est développée et appuyée par des personnages suicidaires et ceux faisant preuve de cruauté ou de sadisme. En même temps, l'étude met également l'accent sur le grotesque, lequel procède par la juxtaposition d'incongruités ou d'ambiguïtés et par l'usage d'images hyperboliques faisant référence à la mort, à la

violence et au massacre d'êtres humains. Le but du tout étant de mettre l'emphase sur le rejet de la modernité par le romancier, ainsi que son hostilité contre une société n'ayant plus de repères et refusant d'admettre l'importance de Dieu dans la vie quotidienne.

Mots-clefs : Comédie noire, le Grotesque, Ambiguïté, Juxtaposition, Personnage cruel

Introduction

Evelyn (Arthur St. John) Waugh's *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy (1948)* relates the story of Dennis Barlow, a young British who has travelled to the United States to find salvation and continue his career as a poet. After spending some time there, he lands a job in a pet embalming industry, which does not coincide with the policy of the British colony led by Sir Ambrose Abercrombie, who esteems that "there are jobs that an Englishman just doesn't take" (E. Waugh, 1948, p.5). As far as our study is concerned, we come to grips with the issue of dark comedy and the grotesque in the novel. In other words, we describe how both genres are structured throughout the narrative to support the decline in the mores of the United States through the lenses of Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966). Moreover, our objective in achieving this research is to underline the novelist's rejection of modernity, which is typified by the banality of death and life; and the profanation of the sacred, including the eradication of God by means of materialism (M. Alexander, 2000, p.349). Building on this, we suggest that dark comedy is supported in the novel through suicide and other situations related to death. We also assume that the grotesque goes through ambiguities, exaggerated images and the juxtapositions of contradictions. That is why E. Sheinberg (2000, p.212) posits that the grotesque is principally illustrated by the exaggeration of things or situations, and the use of hyperbole to achieve its objectives. More explicitly, "being based on accumulation, the grotesque's imports are always exaggerated. The grotesque therefore conveys a distorted reality of a hyperbolic nature" (E. Sheinberg, 2000, p.209). Furthermore, this study emphasizes the need to return to conservative values, adopting moderation in a modern society without ever refusing the need for the divine in human life. Lastly, we will, first and foremost, address our theoretical and methodological frameworks, and then we will deal with dark comedy before we consider the grotesque element in the narrative.

Theoretical Framework of the Research

Our research is a descriptive study of dark comedy and the grotesque in *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy* by Evelyn (Arthur St. John) Waugh, who used to saying that "my problem has been to distill comedy and tragedy from the knockout farce of people's outward behaviour" (D. Wykes, 2000, p.4). In this regard, dark or black comedy should be reckoned as a genre marked by despair, the macabre, death, misfortune, and their corollaries. It cannot be assimilated to the common understanding of comedy, humour or farce. It should be acknowledged differently because it is "the opposite of joviality, wit, or sarcasm…it is a partly macabre, partly ironic, often absurd turn spirit

that constitutes the mortal enemy of sentimentality, and beyond that a superior revolt of the mind" (A. Breton, 2009, p.12). Said differently, dark comedy violates the standards of traditional comedy or humour in the sense that it enhances bizarre matters such as suicide, killings, murders and horror at times. That is why J. M.A. Ventola, in an analysis of horror satire in relation to black comedy, states that,

> In both subgenres, black comedy and horror satire, audiences are presented with contexts, symbols, characters, and actions that are simultaneously pleasurable and frightening…In the case of realistic black comedy, the monsters are usually people, qualified as such due to their disobediences against fundamental prohibitions. We feel fear because we have witnessed the transgression of a taboo that is ultimately society's foundation (2019, pp.1-2).

As for the grotesque, it appears to be encapsulated in illogicalities, ambiguities and contradictions which put forward the distortion of physical bodies and the juxtapositions of contraries. In compliance with this, are J. Edwards and R. Graulund (2013), who point out exaggeration and extravagance as two main features of the genre (chap 5). According to their view, "to exaggerate is to present something as bigger, greater, better or worse that it really is. Exaggeration might enlarge or alter something beyond its normal or due proportions and, as such, it expands upon that which is already present" (Ibid.). Put in specific terms,

> The grotesque, then, is a particular case of existential irony that accepts all contradictions and is based on the hybrid of the ridiculous and the horrifying…The grotesque is therefore the result of the irrational and impulsive reaction to the same paradoxical reality that, when stimulating rational reaction, was the source of general irony (E. Sheinberg, 2000, p.209).

Then, we point out what a descriptive study consists of. According to C. Bless et al. (2006), such a research's objective is to describe something, a phenomenon or anything that interests a researcher or a community (p.47). In clear terms, we are going to describe the features of dark comedy in the work, including the particulars of the grotesque.

Methodology

We have decided to carry out a descriptive study of black comedy and the grotesque in the novel, following the theoretical assumptions outlined previously. To begin with, we will deal with the issue of black comedy and its descriptive agency in the work. And then, we will come to grips with the grotesque. Finally, we will give our findings and position on the motives of the narrator to deal with the genres in the work under study.

1. The Expression of Black Comedy in the Novel

This part of the research is devoted to the descriptive analysis of black comedy in the novel. In this respect, its components are described in the lines below.

1.1. Suicidal Characters in the Novel

As has been noted in the theoretical framework, one of the components of black comedy is the manifestation of death through characters committing suicide in *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy*. All through the story, a sample of suicidal characters embody despair and the depreciation of life in a modern United States. The first type of self-murder character is Sir Leo, whose life is toned down to eclipse his impact on the American society. In point of fact, his life is briefly referred to through the mind activity of Sir Francis Kinsley who "remembered poor Leo who had fallen from great heights to die with his bill unpaid in the Garden of Allah Hotel" (p.13). From that piece of information, one understands that late Leo commits suicide since the Sanhedrin of the Megalopolitan Studios of Hollywood makes him redundant (Ibid.). At the same time, the reference to the phrase "the Garden of Allah Hotel" implies the fact that God is absent to save those in need when necessary. In any event, the life of any human being depends on themselves, excluding a divine intervention that might shape their future. The example of the deceased is illustrative of the case insofar as he commits suicide when rejected by society.

In like manner, the other suicidal paragon is Sir Francis Kinsley. To be sure, Sir Francis Kinsley, who formerly was known as "the only knight in Hollywood, the doyen of English society, Chief script-writer in Megalopolitan Pictures" (p.4), commits suicide once made redundant by the same board of directors of the film industry. In fact, the search of his directional construction in the novel proves that he has become "just another has-been" (p.11) for "the director of Personality" who accepts the proposal of "the director of publicity" who states "there's a cousin of my wife's just arrived" (ibid.) to replace the old man. Consequently, "things were not well with Sir Francis. The old man was losing his equanimity. He fidgeted with his food and shuffled sleeplessly in the veranda in the silent hour of dawn" (p.10). Unable to bear up this phase of decline in the glory that he was accustomed to in "prime middle-age" (p.4), Sir Francis Kinsley finally hangs himself with braces (p.22).

The last sample of the suicidal character is Aimée Thanatogenos. All through the story, several data contribute to reveal her image, which emphasizes irresponsibility, loss of personality, and her alienation to those who are her fiancés, namely Mr Joyboy and Dennis Barlow. In any event, she works with the former at Whispering Glades, which is an embalming industry. Closer to this Mr Joyboy—greatest mortician in southern California—who is "debonair in all his professional actions" (p.37), Aimée Thanatogenos plays the role of a cosmetician insofar as her job activity consists in manicuring and pedicuring several dead bodies (p.35). Even more, their means of communication are dead bodies. To exemplify this, certain facts highlight the intensity of their love through cadavers which Mr Joyboy sends to her for manicure and pedicure. Accordingly, at the sight of the dead body, she expresses her excitement and says to her lover: "Oh, Mr Joyboy, he's beautiful…All the Loved ones that come from you have the most beautiful smiles" (p.26). In reply to her comment, Mr Joyboy states:

> Lovely, Miss Thanatogenos……I always trust you to carry out my intention….Excellent. I never have to tell you anything. We work in unison. When I send a loved one in to you, Miss Thanatogenos, I feel as though I were speaking to you through him. Do you ever feel that at all yourself? (E. Waugh, 1948, p.26).

As for her rapport with her second lover Dennis Barlow, poetry is their sole means of communication. It is thanks to plagiarised verses taken from the "Oxford Book of English Verse" (p.39) that Dennis Barlow brings "a further perplexity to her conscious" (p.38) to the point of leading her to make up her mind to marry him. Even more, she cannot help reading these verses several times as illustrated in the following: "five miles away in the cosmetic room Aimée paused in her work to re-read the poem she had received that morning from Dennis" (p.45). To tell the truth, Aimée Thanatogenos' dependency on poetry brings out her modernist perspective of happiness, love and purpose of life, which is limited to aesthetics and physical pleasures. This attitude unveils the fact that she reflects "the Dark Lady and the Sexual Cult" whose relationship with her clients consists of "complex interrelations of shame, song……madness, intoxication, bewitchment, and infatuation" (F. Moten, 2003, p.118).

Notwithstanding, Aimée Thanatogenos' suicidal lifestyle is entrapped in an illusory triangle of love affairs, based on the artistic competences of her fiancés. Thus, since "Art has always been an illusion" (L. Hutcheon, 1980, p.17), she finally figures out the truth concerning Dennis Barlow the pet mortician and Mr Joyboy the embalmer. Both of them violate the standards that principle the vision of a modern woman seen as "the standard product" that "a man could leave…in a delicatessen shop in New York….and find her again in the cigar stall in San Francisco" (p.21). She pinpoints her dissatisfaction by identifying Dennis Barlow as a liar, a fake poet, and a man working in a pet embalming industry, which "seems kinda blasphemous" (p.36), following her apprehension. On top of that, she states to the latter that "All those poems you sent and pretended you've written for me……I never felt so mortified as when I found out" (p.52). In addition, she singles out Mr Joyboy as an infant ill-treated and dominated over by his hysterical mother, Mrs Joyboy. As a matter of fact, lady Mrs Joyboy behaves nastily and menacing to Aimée Thanatogenos (p.43). To find salvation, she turns to "the Guru Brahmin" (p.44) to appease her sufferings. In response, the guru tells her the following: "I'll tell what to do. Just take the elevator to the top floor. Find a nice window and jump out. That's what you can do" (p.55); and she acquiesces "thank you" (ibid.). Consequently, she commits suicide in the office of Mr Joyboy at night (p.56).

The commission of self-murder, as illustrated through these characters, can be seen as "a sign of weakness or madness" (L. Hutcheon & M. Hutcheon, 2004, p.124) by some people because suicide appears as an abnormal practice. At the same time, "it could also be seen as a rational response to life" (Ibid.), which Leo, Sir Francis Kinsley and Aimée Thanatogenos choose for their personal redemption.

1.2. Illustration of Cruelty in the Story

Adjacent to what precedes, cruelty is highlighted in the story through a handful of characters. To start with, the first type of the cruel personage appears to be Sir Ambrose Abercrombie, the newly doyen of the British colony in the United States (p.4). Intolerant, autocratic and sadistic, Sir Ambrose Abercrombie is for the death of those who fail to follow the policy set by the "Cricket Club". In line with this, he states to young Barlow: "there are jobs that an Englishman just doesn't take" (p.5), including being a mortician at a pet embalming industry (p.7). To belabour his point, he emphasizes his cruel philosophy as follows:

> We had an unfortunate case some years ago of a very decent young fellow who came out as a scene designer. Clever chap but went completely native—wore ready-made shoes, and a belt instead of braces, went out without a tie, ate at drug-stores…He left the studio and opened a restaurant with an Italian partner…The next thing he was behind a bar shaking cocktails…That man did irreparable harm, Barlow. He was nothing less than a deserter. Luckily the war came. He went home then all right and got himself killed in Norway. He atoned, but I always think how much better not to have anything to atone for, eh? (E. Waugh, 1948, p.5).

From the words of Sir Ambrose Abercrombie, cruelty is set and underpinned. His intolerance is such that the death of the deserter contributes to the atonement of the irreparable harm caused to the Cricket Club. That is why Sir Francis Kinsley warns Barlow against the pressure to come in the following: "If exclusion from British Society can be counted as martyrdom, prepare for the palm and the halo" (p.6). Consequently, after the death of Sir Francis Kinsley by strangulation, Sir Ambrose Abercrombie attributes the misfortune to the behaviour of Dennis Barlow, the nephew of the deceased because he works at a pet embalming industry (p.14). Because "the Club was the symbol of their Englishry" (p.13), Sir Ambrose Abercrombie states in the presence of the English colony:

> In Africa, if a white man is disgracing himself and letting down his people, the authority pack him off home. We haven't any such right here, unfortunately. The trouble is we all suffer for the folly of one. Do you suppose Megalo would have sacked poor Franck in other circumstances? But when they saw him sharing a house with a fellow who worked in the pets' cemetery…They have their standards—that's all. Who's to blame 'em? In a world of competition people are taken at their face value. (E. Waugh, 1948, p.14).

The second case of the cruel character is Dennis Barlow himself. At the very start of the story, he is emphasized as "a young man of sensibility rather than of sentiment" (p.1) to point out his ruthlessness and opportunistic deportment. In this regard, he is accustomed to cremating dead pets at the Happier Hunting Ground. Therefore, several dead pets are illustrated and placed into an oven for cremation. He watches over "six dogs, a cat and a Barbary goat" (Ibid.). Then, "the cat and the dogs were twenty-minute

jobs" and in the sequel "Dennis raked the ashes out while they were still glowering and put them in labelled buckets to cool" (Ibid.). What is more, "the goat took nearly an hour. Dennis looked at it from time to time through the pre-glass and finally crushed the horned skull with a poker. Then he turned out the gas, left the oven doors open and prepared the containers" (p.39). Similarly, he carries out the combustion of Aimée Thanatogenos's dead body. To tell the truth, the latter commits suicide in the office of Mr Joyboy, after she finds both of her lovers unfit to her expectations. To solve the problem, Mr Joyboy comes to Dennis Barlow at the Happier Hunting Ground. The latter says to him: "You have two problems, Joyboy, and let me emphasize that they are yours. You are in possession of the corpse of your fiancée and your career is threatened. You have two problems to dispose of the body and to explain the disappearance" (p.61). Consequently, he orders Mr Joyboy to withdraw all his savings and to hand them to him to put a standstill to the care. In clear parlance, he overtly states: "I wish to leave the United States in the same style as I came" (Ibid.). Thus, in unison, "they drove to the Happier Hunting Ground where things were more makeshift, but between them without great difficulty they man-handled their load to the crematorium, and stowed it in the oven" (p.62). Before he sends a postcard to Mr Joyboy who is sitting "at the side entrance of the mortuary" and the content of which is "your little Aimée is wagging her tail in heaven" (Ibid.), the following takes place: "Dennis turned on the gas and lit it. Flame shot from all sides of the brick-work. He closed the iron door…The fire roared in the brick oven" (Ibid.). To better achieve the disappearance, he starts to "rake out the glowing ashes, pound up the skull and pelvis…and disperse the fragments" (p.62).

The last case of cruelty is Mr Schultz, the owner of the Happier Hunting Ground. Jealous of the prestige of Whispering Glades of Dr Kentworthy, Mr Schultz proceeds to the killing of several pets to get many revenues for his company. In fact, the chronological development of the character highlights the fact since "there was an outbreak of food poisoning in Pasadena" (p.23). Consequently, "more motor-cars were coming off the assembly-lines, more drivers appearing on the roads and more pets in the mortuary" so that "the ice-box was packed and the crematorium fires blazed early and late" (p.23). Furthermore, Mr Schultz's hatred for Whispering Glades is so exacerbated that Dennis Barlow poses him the question: "Mr Schultz, you're jealous of Whispering Glades" (p.24). In response to the question, the latter says: "Look, Mr Barlow…Do we get people to pay 5,000 dollars for a pet's funeral? How many pay 500? Not two in a month" (p.24). Then a little farther, "What do most of our clients say? Burn him cheap…Folks pretend to love their pets, talk to them like they was children" (p.24).

2. The Expression of the Grotesque in the Novel

This section is devoted to the descriptive analysis of the grotesque in the narrative. In this regard, it is supported by the elements developed in the following lines.

2.1. Juxtaposition of Ambiguities in the Story

In compliance with our theoretical framework, the grotesque consists of "distortion or striking incongruities in appearance, shape, fantastic…bizarre" (J. Edwards & R. Graulund, 2000, p.193). In other words, it goes through ambiguities and hyperbolic comparisons to emphasize contradictions in the behaviour, social status and professional skills of the paragons in the novel. By the way, Dennis Barlow and Mr Joyboy, the fiancés of Miss Aimée Thanatogenos, embody ambiguities and contradictions throughout the narrative. To start with, a rapprochement of their professional skills is underlined to highlight incongruity and to point out the strangeness between the protagonists. On the one hand, Dennis Barlow, chief embalmer of dead pets at the Happier Hunting Ground, appears to be "a missionary priest making his first pilgrimage to the Vatican as a paramount Chief of Equatorial Africa" because "he came of a generation which enjoys a vicarious intimacy with death" (p.15). On the other, Mr Joyboy is described "as debonair in all his professional actions" (p.37) all the more so because he is "the sole sun of the mortuary" (p.42). Even those who, benefit from his light at Whispering Glades, cannot help using hyperbole to acknowledge his adroitness as chief embalmer. In any event, he is admittedly recognised so by a mortuary hostess speaking with Dennis Barlow who comes for the funerals of late Francis Kinsley; for her, "he is a true artist" (p.22) because "he had only to be seen with a corpse to be respected" (p.26). Further, "Mr Joyboy was the perfection of high manners" (p.25). However skilled he seems to be, Dennis Barlow proves to be superior because he cashes the latter's savings to protect his reputation and professional career (pp.61-62) by cremating Aimée Thanatogenos. Then, their juxtaposition also takes place at the level of physical appearance. Dennis Barlow's physical attractiveness is camouflaged in his ability to master poetry, which is admittedly acknowledged by Sir Ambrose Abercrombie when stating to the man: "you're a man of reputation in your own line, Barlow" (p.5).Thus, Aimée Thanatogenos is drawn to him when she finds that he is a professional poet. Whereas the situation is not identical with Mr Joyboy. Insofar as he has never been chief script-writer at Megalopolitan Studios like his rival (p.5), it is enhanced the fact that he "was not a handsome man by the standards of Motion-Picture Studios" (p.25). Again:

> He was tall but unathletic. There was lack of shape in his head and body, a lack of colour; he had scant eyebrows and invisible eyelashes; the eyes behind his pince-nez were pinkish-grey; his hair, thought neat and scented, was sparse; his hands were fleshy; his best feature was perhaps his teeth and they though white and regular seemed rather too large for him; he was a trifle flat-footed and more than a trifle paunchy (E. Waugh, 1948, pp.25-26).

In a last resort, their juxtaposition is located at the moral level. Even though Mr Joyboy's physical appearance tones down his attractiveness, his moral standards are described as superior to those of his rival Dennis Barlow. Throughout the story, his attitudes and manners prove to be so and his submission to his mother Mrs Joyboy

confirms the fact. To exemplify the effectiveness of his submission to her, it is disclosed in the following: "But these physical defects were nugatory when set against his moral earnestness and the compelling charm of his voice". On the contrary, Dennis Barlow's moral standards are problematic. Even in the sequel of the narrative, his unofficial fiancée Aimée Thanatogenos notices the fact and refers to the "The Wisdom of the Guru Brahmin" (p.38) for advice on her possible official future husband. In her letter to the Guru, she writes the following: "He is British and therefore in many ways quite Un-American. I do not mean just his accent and the way he eats but he is cynical at things which should be Sacred" (p.38). Furthermore, "He is very sweet and loving and then suddenly becomes unethical and makes me feel unethical too" (p.39). Finally, Aimée Thanatogenos finds out that her second fiancé is a liar and social climber, who is anxious to benefit from her social position to improve his own living standards. To illustrate his bad faith, he says to the latter: "My dear, you as an American girl should be the least to despise a man for starting at the bottom of the ladder" (p.52). In addition, "I can't claim to be as high in the mortuary world as your Joyboy, but I am younger, very much better-looking" (Ibid.). Equally important, Sir Francis Kinsley and Sir Ambrose Abercrombie are put side by side to reinforce an antagonism between the past and the future, the elderly and the youth. In compliance with this, Sir Francis Kinsley's image contributes to highlight the fall of an old man. In the timeline of the plot, his eyes are used to draw attention to this decline in prestige and the replacement of the old generation by the new one. In fact, through his eyes, is highlighted his ramshackle mansion surrounded by "weeds" and whose "the veranda and the dry water-hole lost their extreme shabbiness" (p.3), including the fact that "his swimming-pool which had once flashed like an aquarium with the limbs of long-departed beauties was empty now and cracked and over-grown with weed" (p.4).

At the same time, nothing is told about that of Sir Ambrose Abercrombie. Then, several qualifiers are attributed to the old man to introduce Sir Ambrose Abercrombie beautifully and exaggeratedly. In this regard, it is "twenty years ago or more" that the old man was "chief script-writer and President of the Cricket Club"; and "the seven-league boots of failure had carried the old and ageing man far apart (p.4). While the description of Sir Francis Kinsley is a depreciative and declining one, that of his rival is an ameliorative one since he is now the President of the Cricket Club, "the Symbol of their Englishry" (p.13). Furthermore, he is less and less respectful of the old man inasmuch as "the young, or youngish Ambrose……had been known to speak slightingly of Sir Francis as a Llyod George creation" (p.4). In this new mighty position, "Sir Ambrose had refrained from listening" (p.4) to what his former president is accustomed to stating. This domination of the new over the old is also illustrated by his dressing code (p.3) to the point of seeing his wish becoming true as "he now aspired to the honours of age. It was his latest quite vain wish that people should say of him: Grand Old Boy" (p.3). Thus, he comes to his new subalterns in "dark grey flannels, an Eton Ramble tie, an I Zingari ribbon on his boater hat" (p.3).

To put a standstill to the matter, we refer to other cases illustrating the grotesque through the juxtaposition of ambiguities in the narrative. To start with, the Happier Hunting Ground is foregrounded to disclose how dead pets are cared for. As the story goes by, Dennis Barlow, the pet-embalmer and great poet, is called by the Heinkels to take their dead dog and to care for its corpse. Then, he transports the corpse at the headquarters of the business. Once "at the administrative building, he carried the dead dog to the refrigerator" (p.9). Through his eyes, the following is unveiled: "It was a capacious chamber, already occupied by two or three small cadavers" (Ibid.). Similarly, Whispering Glades dramatizes how dead corpses, specifically those of human beings, are treated and kept in different compartments. Once he who organises the funerary is at the reception room, he is shown the catalogue or menue of the practices administered to the "Loved Ones". That is why the mortuary hostess tells Dennis Barlow who comes for the funerals of late Francis Kinsley the following: "our crematory is on scientific principles". What is more, she belabours the point in these words: "normal disposal is by inhumement, entombment, inurnment or immurement, but many people just lately prefer incarcophagus" (Ibid.). To conclude her presentation to the client, she states: "the casket is placed inside a sealed sarcophagus, marble or bronze, and rests permanently above ground in a niche in the mausoleum, with or without a personal stained-glass window above" (Ibid.).

The ambiguity of funeral practices at the Happier Hunting Ground and Whispering Glades is seen through orations organised either in memory of dead pets or in those of human cadavers. A little further, is reported the fact that at the Happier Hunting Ground "there was a funeral with full honours that morning, the first for a month" (p.46). Further, it is enhanced "in the presence of a dozen mourners" where "the coffin of an Alsatian was lowered into the flower-lined tomb" (Ibid.). Finally, "The Reverend Errol Bartholomew read the service" in these words: "Dog that is born of bitch hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay" (p.46). In like manner, a funeral is organized at Whispering Glades in memory of late Francis Kinsley. Through the eyes of Dennis Barlow, the room in which the corpse was, is dramatized in these terms; "Dennis saw that the centre of the room was filled with a great cumulus of flowers" (p.29). Once again, the décor is dramatized: "there was no catafalque. The coffin stood a few inches from the carpet on a base that was hidden in floral enrichment. Half the lid was open. Sir Francis was visible from the waist up" (p.30).

At last, Dennis Barlow is again revelatory of the grotesque regarding his perception of the American female. Through his eyes, the American female is underlined just as "the standard product" (p.21) since "a man could leave such a girl in a delicatessen shop in New York, fly three thousand miles and find her again in the cigar stall at San Francisco" (p.21). All this emphasizes the fact that these females are encapsulated in a kind of uniformity or homogeneity, which proves that cosmetic practices are what typify these women. In other words, artificiality denatures the female in the United States and is the criterion of beauty and attractiveness. To support this, the narrator comments on the

fact, enclosing this sample in the person of Juanita Del Pablo and that of the mortuary hostess at the Happier Hunting Ground. Even more, Juanita Del Palo, the only sample on which we have limited our scrutiny, is the best exaggerated form of character deteriorated by cosmetic products and the need to fit the requirements of the film industry. In the novel, Sir Francis Kinsley is responding to the question of Sir Ambrose Abercrombie in relation to the activities of Megalopolitan Studios. By the way, Sir Francis Kinsley says in reply: "Miss Del Pablo has been a particular protégée of mine from the first". Then, he stresses the fact that she was bought "for her eyes" and in the sequel "she was called Baby Aaronson then" (p.4). In this respect, the grotesque and exaggerated distortion of that character is belaboured: "Leo made her Spanish. He had her nose cut off and sent her to Mexico for six weeks to learn Flamenco singing" (Ibid.). Even more, the film industry requires Sir Francis Kinsley to amplify the distortion of Juanita Del Pablo. To exemplify the fact, these words of Sir Francis Kinsley are really telling: "I've spent three days trying to find a name to please her (…). Maureen—there are two here already; Deirdre—no one could pronounce it; Oonagh—sounds Chinese; Bridget—too common. The truth is she's in a thoroughly nasty temper" (Ibid.). Consequently, Juanita Del Pablo "was taking unkindly to her translation and, powerless to strike the great" purpose because she is "the now nameless actress" (p.10).

2.2. *Hyperbolic Constructions*

Once the grotesque is searched throughout the novel, several components of the genre emerge here and there. One of its manifestations is the use of hyperbolic images of cadavers. Either the skills of a professional embalmer are hyperbolically presented or corpses are highlighted. Dennis Barlow is conversing with a mortuary hostess at Whispering Glades for the funerals of late Sir Francis Kinsley. During this conversation, the mortuary hostess let him know that "we had a Love one last month who was found drowned. He had been in the ocean a month and they only identified him by his wrist-watch. They fixed the stuff…..so he looked like it was his wedding day" (p.18). She attributes this to the adroitness of the embalmers and cosmeticians who work together for the benefits of the corporation. In this sense, she highlights the fact in this manner: "The boys up there surely know their job. Why, if he'd sat on an atom bomb, they'd make him presentable" (Ibid.). Besides, their hyperbolic working skills to make the dead presentable are emphasized to the point of giving the impression of life in the corpse. In compliance with this cosmetic tactic, the cadaver of late Sir Francis Kinsley is put in a casket, exposed and exaggeratedly filled with cosmetic products as shown below:

> The shroud had been made to fit admirably. There was a fresh gardenia in the buttonhole and another between the fingers. The hair was snow-white and parted in a straight line from brow to crown revealing the scalp below, colourless and smooth as though the skin had rolled away and the enduring skull already lay exposed. The gold rim of the monocle framed a delicately tinted eyelid (E. Waugh, 1948, p.29).

Through the eyes of Dennis Barlow, who is in the room where the body is exposed, the dead body shows the signs of strangeness. The eyes of the protagonist reflect the following: "the complete stillness was more startling than any violent action" because "the body looked altogether smaller than life-size now that it was, as it were, stripped of the thick pelt of mobility and intelligence" (p.29).

The other hyperbolic images concern the contiguous parkland of Whispering Glades. This parkland consists of several compartments and the most important one is "the Lake Island" (p.31). This part of the land is hyperbolically described to pinpoint its majestic prestige and its connection with death. Despite the fact that it is the exclusively reserved people of grandeur, it is surrounded by "paths of mown grass" (Ibid.) and by "wicker hives" so that "the sound of bees was like a dynamo" (p.32). Especially, the eyes of Dennis Barlow contribute to disclose the disposition of the zone: "the graves nearest to the apiary were the most costly of all but no more conspicuous than those elsewhere in the park; simple bronze plaques, flush with the turf, bore the most august names in the commercial life of Los Angeles" (p.32). Into the bargain, Dennis Barlow discovers the tomb of a former writer in the place close to "the apiary" and "peace came dropping rather more quickly" (Ibid). In other words, "no breeze stirred the evergreens; peace came dropping slow, too slow for Dennis" (Ibid), who finally gets his inspiration to write a poem in memory of late Francis Kinsley (p.33). The tomb is entitled "Kaiser's Stoneless Peaches".

Finally, the grotesque goes through the emphasis given to the phenomenon of death by the mortuary hostess at Whispering Glades. Through her words, death and psychology are exaggeratedly described and an adaptation to both is shown as relevant to help people live a modern life. Thus, the moment when Dennis Barlow arrives at the company for the obsequies of late Francis Kinsley, he meets the mortuary hostess who lets him discover the philosophy of modernity in the United States. To begin with, she says to the man: Mr Barlow, a husband and wife were here consulting us before Need Provision. They were prominent citizens in the prime of life with daughters just budding into womanhood" (p.20). Despite their coming to the mortuary business, they do not even book arrangements for the future death. Unfortunately, only next day those two "passed on…in an automobile accident and instead of them there came two orphans to ask what arrangements their parents had made" (Ibid.). The failure to be death-minded has complicated their obsequies.

Afterward, the mortuary hostess proves to her interlocutor that psychology is what a modern citizen has to apply to himself. She introduces the fact as follows: "It is a natural instinct, Mr Barlow, to shrink from the unknown. But if you discuss it openly and frankly you remove morbid reflections" (p.21). In reality, it is worth living one's life focused on death and not on life. In other words, "that is one the things the psychologists have taught us. Bring your dark fears into the light of the common day of the common man" (Ibid.). Consequently, one's acclimatization to death on behalf of the standards of psychology is profitable inasmuch as "the benefits of the plan are twofold (…) financial and psychological" (p.20). In a word, psychology remedies all that tears down the life of the

modern Citizen, who does not need to follow the traditional paths leading to a supposedly God. Additionally, the latter can be replaced with a "Guru Brahmin, a love adviser skilled with psychological techniques to help "a home-loving, home-making American girl (…) find nothing to complain of the treatment" (p.44) of the life she needs.

At last, the grotesque is incarnated in the love adviser of late Aimée Thanatogenos. This character is too bizarre a guru to be listened to. Instead of searching for salvation in religion, she tries in "art" and in "psychology" and finally she goes to Guru Brahmin, and particularly to a "gloomy" man whose name is "Mr Slump". He usually "had the smaller pile of" letters, "for most of the Guru Brahmins correspondents liked to have their difficulties exposed to the public". In fact, "it gave them a sense of greater importance and also on occasions let to correspondence with other readers" (p.44). By doing so, the guru contributes to connect these malady carriers to kill themselves. Next, their professional adviser, Mr Slump, "suffered and the young secretary suffered with him, hideously. For the first hours of everyday he was possessed by a cough which rose from tartarean depths and was relieved only with whisky" (Ibid.). In the sequel of the story, this man is expelled from the Guru Brahmin and spends his nights in night clubs, drinking heavily. Therefore, when Aimée telephones him to get some advice to face the abandonment of her two lovers, he tells her to commit suicide. The lost American female commits suicide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper set out to explore how dark comedy and the grotesque are developed in *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy* by Evelyn Waugh. The findings reveal that dark comedy is underpinned by characters who resort to suicide, paragons that commit suicide as a form of salvation in a materialistic society, embodied by Aimée Thanatogenos, Sir Leo, and Sir Francis Kinsley. It is also supported by figures marked by cruelty, such as Dennis Barlow, Mr Joyboy, the embalmer, and Mr Schultz, the proprietor of the Happier Hunting Ground. The grotesque is foregrounded in the study through the juxtaposition of ambiguities throughout the story, through the use of hyperbolic images or phenomena.

This analysis situates Evelyn Waugh within a larger literary tradition. As A. Bennett (2017, pp.165-177) notes, British authors from James Joyce to David Foster Wallace have also dealt with dark comedy including suicide as a thematic element. One of the observations we make is that the fictional world of Evelyn (Arthur St. John) Waugh does not allow the intervention of the supernatural. Modernity or modernism eclipses all that refers to God, which leads us to A. Poole's argument that "the supernatural does not always materialize" (2005, p.35). Only is he manipulating his creatures (R. Macaulay, 1946, pp.1-2) to show the wrongness of modernity and the bad consequences of a world rejecting his God, the catholic God.

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