

**“DEADLIER THAN THE MALE”: ANTIFEMINIST SATIRE IN  
THE WORKS OF P.G. WODEHOUSE AND EVELYN WAUGH**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the short stories and novels pertaining to P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves, alongside the early novels of Evelyn Waugh, in particular *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *A Handful of Dust* (1934). Two strands run through this thesis: the argument that these works can, and should, be read as antifeminist satires, and an exploration of the reasons for, and consequences of, the relative neglect of this reading in extant scholarship on Wodehouse and Waugh. Chapter I offers a review of recent critical works pertaining to these writers, identifying the mechanisms by which their unpalatable satire is neglected or tacitly defended, while offering counter-readings which place their works in the tradition of antifeminist satire. Chapter II builds on the notion of satire as at once traditional and insidious, exploring texts through the satirical strategies of generic inhabitation and parody. Chapter III establishes, via discussion of cinematic, televisual, and textual adaptation, that such insidious censure and critical apology has allowed this troubling satire to endure and proliferate up to the present. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of such endurance in the context of satire's potential efficacy, and gestures towards the responsibilities inherent in critical engagement with troubling satire.

For Chloe, whose grace and wit has helped me through this process and offered an example I  
can only hope to emulate.

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## Introduction

The figure of the low-norm *eiron* is irony's substitute for the hero, and when he is removed from satire we can see more clearly that one of the central themes of the *mythos* is the disappearance of the heroic. This is the main reason for the predominance in fictional satire of what may be called the Omphale archetype, the man bullied or dominated by women, which has been prominent in satire all through its history, and embraces a vast area of contemporary humour, both popular and sophisticated.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the late fifties, the “contemporary humour” to which Frye refers would include the ongoing output of both P.G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh. Wodehouse’s Jeeves canon and a selection of Waugh’s early novels, in particular *Decline and Fall* (1928) and *A Handful of Dust* (1934), draw heavily upon the “Omphale archetype”, and it is on this basis that these works should be considered, at least in part, antifeminist satires. Bertie Wooster, Paul Pennyfeather, and Tony Last are variously bullied, dominated, and (as Carens has it of Waugh’s protagonists) “victimised”<sup>2</sup> by women: each suffers imprisonment, torment, and, particularly in the case of Bertie, blackmail, usually as a consequence of marriage or near-marriage in the face of an increasingly emancipated gender. This is antifeminist satire. Such a statement is at once mundane and radical: I do not consider the suggestion that either writer represents women poorly to be an astonishing feat of analysis, yet the notion of associating either of these writers with the long literary tradition of satire against women has been underexplored in the history of the scholarship surrounding each author. In describing these writers’ satiric attacks upon women as “antifeminist”, I do not mean to imply that their vitriol is limited simply to the younger women of the interwar period and later: as Roz Tuplin notes, “Wodehouse’s preoccupation with older women-- primarily the figure of the aunt-- indicates

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<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 228-9. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> James Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* (London: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 53. All further references will be to this edition.

that women in Wodehouse are not wholly representative of a ‘new’ model of femininity”.<sup>3</sup>

Various forms of femininity are attacked in the course of these texts, but most are united in their association with advances in women’s rights. Of course, the promiscuity and forthrightness of the younger generation (those described by Nicola Humble as “the hearty, golf-playing girls from whom [Bertie Wooster] flees” and “the cynical bright young things satirized by [...] Evelyn Waugh”<sup>4</sup>) are attacked by each satirist, but feminism is equally associated with Wodehouse’s aunt figure, and slightly older women such as Margot Metroland in Waugh. Satiric attacks on these figures tend to revolve around property ownership, inheritance, and other powers borne of the emancipatory litigation of the late nineteenth century: Aunt Agatha’s wealth and title, each usurped from her deceased first husband, contribute to the imperiousness and snobbery which renders her character so unpalatable, while Margot’s fortune and ability to purchase property mars the landscape with her hideous country house as she continues her (murdered) husband’s business of white slave trafficking and prostitution. As such, though male authority figures do populate Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s texts, they are often, as in the case of Lord Worplesdon’s marriage to Aunt Agatha, in thrall to their female counterparts: as Jeeves notes, “I am inclined to doubt whether the gentleman exists who could be master in a home that contained her ladyship”.<sup>5</sup> Where Waugh is concerned, critics often list the satirical targets present in *Decline and Fall*, identifying, for example, the smart set; the white slave trade; prison reform; German architecture; and so on. Yet critics have balked at the suggestion that women and feminism constitute one such target, despite the murderous and immoral Margot’s influence on Paul’s misfortune. In the image of Margot interviewing prostitutes while her soon-to-be-scapegoated

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<sup>3</sup> Roz Tuplin, “‘A Fairly Unclouded Life’: Upper-Class Masculinity in Crisis in the early Jeeves and Wooster”, in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse’s Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 199.

<sup>4</sup> Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 197. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *The Mating Season* (London: Arrow Books, 2008), p. 131. All further references will be to this edition.

lover looks on, Waugh sees “the very model of the Feminist movement”,<sup>6</sup> yet locating Waugh’s censure in the long literary tradition of antifeminist satire is not a common reading. Consequently, though this thesis will make the case for reading Wodehouse and Waugh as antifeminist satirists, it is equally concerned with the broader question of why it is that this important facet of their works has not yet been fully explored. Having discussed the various techniques and phenomena contributing to the insidiousness which envelops such antifeminist attack, this thesis will go on to consider the potential implications of a satiric attack which survives unacknowledged to the present day, and the responsibilities inherent in the critical power of unmasking it.

Per Naomi Milthorpe, satire

is a mode rather than a genre [...] a way of writing or performing that carries with it certain feelings, poses, symptomatic preoccupations, and textual strategies. It is embodied not in a particular plot structure (birth, marriage, death) but in a certain attitude towards its subjects and in the use of various rhetorical techniques (parody, polemic, caricature, exaggeration) and tropes (fools, bestiaries, masks, smut or scatological wordplay).<sup>7</sup>

A modal understanding of satire such as this, in which, per Carens, “the spirit of satire may lightly brush the surface of a novel; it may lend a pronounced colour to other significant elements; it may deeply suffuse the whole,”<sup>8</sup> is crucial in identifying the unacknowledged antifeminist attacks launched by Wodehouse and Waugh. Without the framework of an easily identifiable genre or form (as Frye notes, the notion of satire as a “specific literary form [...] hardly exists”<sup>9</sup> outside a Renaissance or neo-classical context) the attacks are more

<sup>6</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Decline and Fall* ed. David Bradshaw (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 192. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>7</sup> Naomi Milthorpe, *Evelyn Waugh's Satires: Texts and Contexts* (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), pp. 3-4. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>8</sup> James F. Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. xi. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>9</sup> Northrop Frye, “The Nature of Satire” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (October 1944) p. 75. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/article/551010/pdf>.

effectively masked: Chris Baldick observes that satire as it appears in novels is often “indirect”, necessitating that “we draw our own conclusions”,<sup>10</sup> which equally leaves the satire vulnerable to misreading or outright neglect. These attacks are characterized by various “rhetorical techniques”, as Milthorpe has it, scattered across the many texts this thesis will explore; as such, I frequently refer to a satiric “impulse” pervading the works under discussion, identifiable via the “preoccupation” they share with attacking women and feminism. This preoccupation is a subtle one: as Carens notes, the “moral standards” of the satirist can be “implicit rather than explicit”.<sup>11</sup> Such is the insidious nature of the antifeminist satiric impulse that its constituent modal characteristics are easily overlooked. The necessarily subtle manifestation of such characteristics, spread as they are over multiple texts (as Chapter I will discuss, this thesis frequently considers the Jeeves *oeuvre* and Waugh’s early satires as two collectives, in order to better chart the “open-endedness”<sup>12</sup> which Connery and Combe identify as one such facet of satirical attack) might make problematic a description of those texts as outright satires; as Knight notes, differentiation between the novelistic satire and the satiric novel is ambiguous: “the distinctions between the two are approximate and subjective”.<sup>13</sup> Identifying a satiric impulse via a plethora of modal characteristics, however, enables us to capture both the frequency and subtlety of the antifeminist attacks manifested throughout the works in question. As Chapter II will briefly discuss, the notion that a text may contain varying degrees of satire accounts for a tendency in this thesis to indulge (an appropriate term, given the sheer readerly pleasure involved) in a slight bias in favour of analysis of Wodehouse. As a writer both pre-eminently satirical and undeniably problematic, the case for Waugh as an antifeminist satirist is, perhaps, a simpler

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<sup>10</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 280.

<sup>11</sup> Carens, p. xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p. 5. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>13</sup> Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14. All further references will be to this edition.

one. However, the breadth and variety of the targets of Waugh's censure results in only sporadic and occasional adherence to the various tropes and features of specifically antifeminist satire: his works are not as preoccupied with the representation of women as the Jeeves canon. Yet while Wodehouse's antifeminist satire is of a greater magnitude, his reputation as a satirist is not. Consequently, comparison between the writers is often, though by no means exclusively, employed in order to strengthen the case for Wodehouse as a satirist. By acknowledging the shared satirical strategies and preoccupations of each writer, necessarily weighted slightly in Wodehouse's favour, the cases for Wodehouse as a satirist and Waugh as an antifeminist are strengthened respectively.

The relationship between satire and antifeminism is ancient and well traced. Felicity Nussbaum notes its prevalence in the seventeenth and eighteenth- centuries: "The context of antifeminist satires creates a myth of assumptions that resonate in the satirists' minds. Woman, as violator of the authority of her contractual bonds to the patriarchal order, dares to disdain that authority".<sup>14</sup> For Nussbaum, antifeminist satires constitute a "fiction of that rebellion", while Knight acknowledges that the woman's status as satiric victim continues up to "the present".<sup>15</sup> In the satiric worlds of Wodehouse and Waugh, women have effectively succeeded in rebelling against the patriarchal order, invoking the Omphale archetype in characters like Bertie Wooster and Paul Pennyfeather, who are doomed to be bullied and controlled by women who constitute the dominant gender in all but name. The rejection of marriage (a motif to which this thesis will frequently return) increases the subtlety of their antifeminist satiric attacks by placing male characters in the position of the rebel figure outlined by Nussbaum; Bertie Wooster and Paul Pennyfeather demonstrate "disdain" for the "contractual bonds" of marriage to a powerful woman. This is a necessary inversion: the

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<sup>14</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), p. 3. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>15</sup> Knight, p. 6.

historical forces which fuel these attacks, including suffrage; various pieces of emancipatory litigation; and an interwar period in which gender roles were in a state of flux, could not allow for the open misogyny Nussbaum traces in the Restoration era. Rather, these forces are subjected to satirical hyperbole, depicting women who have both achieved gender parity and gone beyond it, becoming an oppressive force while superficially representing women in terms of power which might appear contextually appropriate: camouflaged, as it were, among middlebrow texts which can be, as Melissa Schaub notes, read as “progressive, specifically in the area of gender ideology”.<sup>16</sup>

The notion of a subtlety of attack is crucial: as this thesis will go on to explore, the lack of recognition of Wodehouse and Waugh’s antifeminism has allowed it to survive and proliferate up to the present day. When Waugh attacks the “expensive façade”<sup>17</sup> of the school system in *Decline and Fall*, his attack is something akin to a hammer: blunt and explicit, his masters comprise a parade of fraudulent, pederastic incompetents. Waugh’s attack on the emancipation of women in the same text, however, is more akin to poison: his critique of the monied and powerful Margot is somewhat masked and tempered, enveloped as it is by the worthy satiric target of the white-slave trade, for example, alongside the aforementioned inversion of the traditional antifeminist attack. The notion of a “worthy” target brings us onto a broader mechanism through which the antifeminist satire becomes insidious:

Most theorists of satire—often themselves satirists—are at pains to draw a moral boundary around satire: satirists protect values, uphold standards, and judge wrongdoers. As theorized by Henri Bergson, satire’s laughter is corrective: whether in service of social norms or as a means to overthrow outmoded or moribund conventions. [...] Without satire, the story goes, governments would be tyrannical, civil servants corrupt, husbands abusive, wives adulterous, children ungrateful, parents ungenerous, and society would descend into chaos and violence. Satirists regulate society, protecting innocence and justice and punishing ethical

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<sup>16</sup> Melissa Schaub, *Middlebrow Feminism in Classic British Detective Fiction: The Female Gentleman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 14. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Ogborn and Peter Buckroyd, *Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 29. All further references will be to this edition.

transgressions: a satirist is at once the arresting police officer, prosecutor, jury, and judge of social and moral offenders.<sup>18</sup>

Waugh sets himself up as such a judge in *Decline and Fall*. With the judge sentencing Paul unable to see past Margot's "honoured"<sup>19</sup> name and reputation, it falls to the satirist to protect the innocence of men. As Milthorpe notes, this is a viewpoint adhered to by "most" theorists of satire. Jonathan Greenberg goes so far as to suggest that the sheer number of definitions of satire which involve a "moral aim" constitute "too many to cite"<sup>20</sup> in his *Modernism, Satire and the Novel* (2011). Though there are outliers, including the aforementioned Charles A. Knight, the issue at stake for my argument is not whether or not satire is built upon moral aims, but that readers may believe this to be so. Given the volume of criticism in support of this claim and bearing in mind the recent nature of Milthorpe's study, it is entirely plausible to state that the picture she paints remains a popular conception of the satirist: an admirable, even heroic, figure who protects "innocence and justice". Moreover, Wodehouse and Waugh do play this part to a certain extent: the latter's many worthy satiric targets in *Decline and Fall* have already been mentioned, while Wodehouse, during the course of his long career, has ridiculed such diverse topics as slum landlords in *Psmith, Journalist* (1915) and fascism in the character of Roderick Spode. Indeed, the Jeeves novels arguably satirize the upper-classes and the idle rich; although George Orwell decries this as a misreading ("Wodehouse's real sin has been to present the English upper classes as much nicer people than they are"<sup>21</sup>) what matters, as above, is the popular perception of the satirist as a good and just figure. In light of this construction of the satirist, it is hardly surprising that the satiric attacks upon the

<sup>18</sup> Milthorpe, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 216.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 3. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>21</sup> George Orwell, "In Defence of P.G. Wodehouse" in *The Complete Works of George Orwell: I Belong to the Left, 1945* ed. Peter Davison (London: Secker & Walburg, 1998), p. 58. All further references will be to this edition.

emancipated woman which features in Wodehouse and Waugh should go unacknowledged: it is simply not a moral attack. Nussbaum is able to trace antifeminist satire of the Restoration period, but in a twentieth-century context and with appropriate degrees of subtlety and inversion, the decidedly unethical satiric target of, in essence, women, cannot be readily recognized as such. Stephen Medcalf amply demonstrates Wodehouse's success in adhering to the abovementioned construction of the satirical humourist, describing Wodehouse as "a very good [...] patient, humble man" who is entirely "ethical".<sup>22</sup> Jerome Meckier's reading of the birth control pageant in *Black Mischief* (1932) illustrates this need to consider the satirist a moral figure; Meckier locates "serious moral implications" therein. For Meckier, the pageant satirizes "the sterility of modern life"<sup>23</sup>—a fine concern for the satirist who fights "the good fight",<sup>24</sup> as Robert C. Elliot has it—yet he ignores the antifeminist connotations of a pageant in which a vilified birth control is associated with women holding "typewriters, tennis rackets, motor bicycling goggles, telephones", and so on.<sup>25</sup> Waugh is not just attacking modernisation in broad terms, but the emancipatory potential of modernity, in which women may enjoy the work, leisure, and greater sexual and procreative freedoms symbolized by those objects. Milthorpe's analysis of the same passage also skirts around the notion of antifeminism, instead suggesting the items symbolizing women's careers are an attack on the "middle class"<sup>26</sup> more generally. While the phrasing of Milthorpe's earlier quotation might appear to suggest an imminent challenge to the "story" of the satirist as a just figure, instead she cements it, choosing, rather, to explore the relationship between the content of satire,

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Medcalf, "The Innocence of P.G. Wodehouse" in *The Spirit of England: Selected Essays of Stephen Medcalf* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 249.

<sup>23</sup> Jerome Meckier, "Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, and Birth Control in *Black Mischief*", *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 23, No. 2, (Winter 1999-2000), p. 288.

<sup>24</sup> Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 265. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>25</sup> Jerome Meckier, "Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, and Birth Control in *Black Mischief*", *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 23, No. 2, (Winter 1999-2000), p. 282.

<sup>26</sup> Milthorpe, p. 61.

which she describes as “ethical”, with the immoral urge to attack; a “double movement”<sup>27</sup> which takes its cues from Greenberg’s *Modernism, Satire and the Novel*. Though there are moral issues to be raised with satire, this does not, for Milthorpe and Greenberg, include the content of satire itself, thus allowing for a certain amount of unchallenged space in which the antifeminism of these writers can operate.

Putting the matter of ethical content to one side, Milthorpe’s study is, perhaps, limited by the literary context in which she places Waugh. For Milthorpe, “satire seems to reside at the heart of the modernist movement”.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, the emphasis of Milthorpe’s text lies with modernism, and discussions of Waugh’s satire serve that end. She is not alone in this: as Faye Hammill notes, Waugh is one of the “many authors who used to be thought of as middlebrow” before being embraced by ‘new modernist studies’”,<sup>29</sup> perhaps most notably in the works of George McCartney and Jonathan Greenberg. This thesis, however, is more interested in characterizing both Waugh and Wodehouse as middlebrow writers, inhabiting that liminal space between high modernism and low culture. There is precedent for this perspective: Nicola Humble, in her influential *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel* (2001), introduces her subject with the clarification that, “although the main focus is on women writers, some representative male writers (Evelyn Waugh, E.F. Benson, Angus Wilson) are considered in order to establish a distinctive identity for the feminine middlebrow”.<sup>30</sup> Waugh is clearly established here, then, as a writer in the middlebrow bracket. It is entirely legitimate to read Waugh in either context; as Hammill notes, “tastes are constantly being re-evaluated and hierarchies reorganized”.<sup>31</sup> However, in exploring that antifeminist impulse which

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<sup>27</sup> Milthorpe, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Milthorpe, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Faye Hammill, “Afterword” in *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows 1920-1960*, eds. Grover and Brown (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 4. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>31</sup> Hammill, “Afterword”, p. 231.

pervades Waugh's works, it is instructive to acknowledge their capacity for being received as middlebrow, with all the gendered and commercial connotations that category invokes.

Wodehouse, who receives a similar mention in Humble's text, has recently been cemented as a consummately middlebrow writer in the collection *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context* (2016). The significance of the middlebrow position these writers hold is, in terms of antifeminist satire, not to be disregarded. To be clear: reading Wodehouse as middlebrow, and therefore potentially concerned with "social critiques",<sup>32</sup> does not, in middlebrow criticism, throw light upon his antifeminist satire. Rea introduces her collection with the assertion that he wrote "apparently uninfluenced by the historical events around him".<sup>33</sup> Though the collection does challenge this to a degree, it does not acknowledge Wodehouse's satiric attacks upon women. The middlebrow critics' inability to succeed where other scholars, as Chapter I explores, have hitherto likewise failed in locating and acknowledging this antifeminism underpins my thesis; this, alongside the infallible perception of the satirist, constitutes the building block upon which the insidiousness and consequent proliferation of Wodehouse and Waugh's antifeminist satire continues to stand.

The fundamental assertion to which I shall return throughout this thesis is the notion that Wodehouse's and Waugh's antifeminist satire is, and thrives upon being, subtle and insidious in nature, through a mixture of satirical strategies and the various critical stances adopted towards these writers from the interwar period to the present. Though this thesis occasionally invokes later Jeeves novels, both Jeeves as a character and Waugh's early satires were born against a backdrop of literary modernism and, by extension, into an intensely stratified cultural environment often characterised by a mutual animosity between

<sup>32</sup> Janet Galligan Casey, "Middlebrow Reading and Undergraduate Teaching: The Place of the Middlebrow in the Academy" in *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows 1920-1960*, eds. Grover and Brown (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> Ann Rea, "Introduction" in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016) p. 1. All further references will be to this edition.

middlebrow and highbrow. The animosity inherent in this ‘battle of the brows’ is neatly summarized in Wyndham Lewis’s brief description of “Mr. Wodehouse’s ghastly butler”.<sup>34</sup> Critically, this time was followed by the rise of the New Critics, a group whose methods eliminate “authorial intention and context as reference points for discussions about the meaning of literary works”.<sup>35</sup> Not only was this critical environment unfavourable to middlebrow writers, who, following to some extent in the Realist tradition of their Victorian forebears, tend to have an interest in the material, in social realities, but this is equally true of satire, which likewise suffered a degree of disinterest from the academy. Connery and Combe state that satire’s relative neglect for much of the twentieth century was, in fact, due to the “reign of the New Critics”,<sup>36</sup> and, as Janet Galligani Casey notes, “The attitudes of the New Criticism linger” to this day.<sup>37</sup> By the seventies and eighties, the first stage of development in middlebrow criticism began: “critics of the middlebrow [...] did pioneering work on the largely ignored history of female middlebrow writers and readers.”<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, study of the middlebrow is rooted in its “gender aspect”,<sup>39</sup> cemented by such works as Humble’s aforementioned study of the feminine middlebrow. This focus on neglected women writers has an implicit impact, therefore, upon Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s antifeminism (particularly Wodehouse’s): as male middlebrows, there remains, during this time, a relative lack of critical interest in their works, particularly in terms of gender. More recently, Kate Macdonald’s collection on the masculine middlebrow has allowed for a shift in scholarly attention to include the masculine middlebrow. Despite its titular privileging of the masculine

<sup>34</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Biography* (Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Louis Menand and Lawrence Rainey, “Introduction” in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Vol. 7 Modernism and the New Criticism*, eds. A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand and Lawrence Rainey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.1-2. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>36</sup> Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, “Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* ed. Connery and Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995) p.5.

<sup>37</sup> Casey, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter, “Introduction: ‘...All Granite and Female Fiction’” in *Middlebrow and Gender 1890-1945*, ed. Ehland and Wächter (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Middlebrow and Gender*, p. 7.

elements of the middlebrow, however, Macdonald's collection does not concern itself with the notion of antifeminist satiric attack launched from the masculine middlebrow position. The closest it gets, perhaps, is Humble's essay "From Holmes to the Drones", which mentions the relief from "anxieties"<sup>40</sup> felt by men which makes the literary construction of bachelorhood appealing. Brown and Grover use the same term with some immediacy in the Introduction to their collection, stating that "The term 'middlebrow' itself, first used in the 1920s, is the product of powerful anxieties".<sup>41</sup> In the more recent collection *Middlebrow and Gender*, Ehland and Wächter adopt the phrase "anxiety management"<sup>42</sup> as a strategy embedded in middlebrow works for negotiating the "disturbing issues" middlebrow fiction can raise in its "disintegrative" depiction of Empire, class structures, and gender roles while offering superficially affirmative plot structures and meeting "genre requirements", an argument borne out in Ann Rea's analysis of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which she believes "allowed Lewis to assuage many wartime anxieties in himself, and in his readers".<sup>43</sup> Such "anxiety management" allows "unsettling issues to be raised while maintaining at least a superficial impression of narrative stability and security".<sup>44</sup> Certainly, this is detectable in the faux-resolution of the Jeeves texts and *Decline and Fall*, which appear to offer the closure demanded of the light comic novel while maintaining, as I shall discuss in Chapter I, the presence of threatening women constituting a "sustained, unresolved state of crisis",<sup>45</sup> a subtle adherence to satirical principles.

<sup>40</sup> Nicola Humble, "From Holmes to the Drones: Fantasies of Men without Women in the Masculine Middlebrow" in *The Masculine Middlebrow 1890-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 95.

<sup>41</sup> Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter, "Introduction: '...All Granite and Female Fiction'" in *Middlebrow and Gender 1890-1945*, eds. Ehland and Wächter (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), p. 1. All further references shall be to this edition.

<sup>42</sup> Ehland and Wächter, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ann Rea, "The Collaborator, the Tyrant and the Resistance: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in Masculine 'Middlebrow' England" in *The Masculine Middlebrow 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 178.

<sup>44</sup> Ehland and Wächter, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Seidel, "Crisis Rhetoric and Satiric Power" *New Literary History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn 1988) p. 165.

Such championing of the notion of an “anxious” middlebrow is symptomatic of a middlebrow critical culture which is alive to the problematic elements of the mode, yet consciously rejects challenging the troubling satirical components of writers like Wodehouse and Waugh. To read their satires against women as manifestations of a mere “disturbing issue” conjured by their “anxiety” is to obfuscate the satire itself, increasing its subtlety and therefore its ability to survive. This is not a universal phenomenon, of course, but a broad trend: some middlebrow criticism is prepared to tackle the more unpalatable elements of their subjects. For example, the “almost visceral contempt for women in general” Nicola Humble diagnoses in many feminine middlebrow novels is entirely compatible with my reading of Wodehouse and Waugh.<sup>46</sup> Yet a celebratory trend persists in relation to Humble’s observation via Melissa Schaub’s counter-argument that such novels “provided a model of female behaviour that can be called feminist, but which relatively few women in the novels actually achieved. One can label this totality ‘conservative’ if one wishes, or one can choose to emphasize its progressive elements”.<sup>47</sup> Schaub undertakes a deliberate decision to accentuate the positives, as it were, of the middlebrow and, by extension, obfuscate the negatives. This decision is moulded into an outright manifesto in Kate Macdonald’s understanding of the role and purpose of middlebrow criticism:

In reclaiming this term from the opprobrium it has suffered for most of the twentieth century, modern critics of British middlebrow writing have offered a way to explore these fictional and non-fictional cultural productions that were anathematized in their day, but which are now seen as victims of a critical hegemony that applied canonical value judgments to all that was printed or broadcast. Reassessing these stigmatized works, that gave enjoyment and elucidation to our parents and grandparents and the generations before them, is an act of non-judgmental respect for their taste.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 206.

<sup>47</sup> Schaub, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Kate Macdonald, “Introduction: Identifying the Middlebrow, the Masculine and Mr Miniver” in *The Masculine Middlebrow 1890-1950: What Mr Miniver Read* ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 11. All further references will be to this edition.

Though the sentiment expressed here is admirable, and though the temptation to adhere to this recuperative, sympathetic approach to a swathe of literature consigned even now to association with, per Ann Ardis, “shame and cultural embarrassment”<sup>49</sup> is great, this thesis will show that while such texts produce “enjoyment and elucidation”, there is a more troubling aspect to these terms. We “enjoy” Jeeves defeating the nefarious designs of universally monstrous women; we are “elucidated” upon the outrageous, tyrannical power women hold over men. As such, Macdonald’s manifesto, one which clearly remains prevalent in the aforementioned 2016 collection *Middlebrow and Gender 1890-1945*, is incompatible with the undertaking of this thesis. Though I am on no moral crusade, it is opprobrious in a fundamental sense to draw attention to what will generally be considered unethical satiric attack, with all the authorial intention and, potentially, malice the notion implies. It is entirely plausible to suggest that this desire to celebrate—a perfectly understandable and necessary view, given the pejorative connotations of the term ‘middlebrow’ which are still alive today—promotes terms such as men’s “anxiety” to erroneously describe sheer satirical misogyny. Chapter I of this thesis explores Roz Tuplin’s chapter of *Middlebrow Wodehouse* which features a markedly similar tone and use of terminological obfuscation, distancing itself from any outright suggestion of misogyny or antifeminism and attempting to excuse Wodehouse of any problematic tendencies via a combination of decidedly flimsy evidence and an appeal, once again, to men’s “anxiety”. “Anxiety” is the term afforded to what Macdonald refers to as the “victim”; “attack”, meanwhile, is not.

Not only is the middlebrow critic necessarily drawn to a somewhat celebratory attitude, but this term “victim” is significant. Ian Hislop recently gave the annual Orwell Lecture, in which he portrayed that consummately middlebrow satirist as something of a victim of those who draw attention to Orwell’s own lack of feminist sentiment: “at this point

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<sup>49</sup> Ann Ardis, “Making Middlebrow Literary Texts Matter”, *Modernist Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2011) p. 20.

I should say he should have said a lot of [...] things about women too. But Orwell's feminist failures and his attitude to women is another issue, and I'm very quickly going to move on and just argue that, once again, the fact that he failed in that respect does not mean that everything else he ever said about anything should be dismissed out of hand".<sup>50</sup> Here Hislop draws a distinction between Orwell's "attitude towards women" and "everything else": implicitly, his satire. This delineation is necessary to maintain the image of the satirist outlined by Milthorpe as a force for good. By extension, Hislop precludes the possibility of suggesting that Orwell's "feminist failures" may influence his satire, despite the long existence of literary satires against women. Crucially, Orwell is here depicted as a victim, in this instance of presumably some group Hislop feels is unfairly using Orwell's sexism as a justification for dismissing his broader views. As editor of *Private Eye* and a team captain on *Have I Got News For You*, Hislop demonstrates that the perpetuation of an image of the middlebrow as victim is not confined merely to academia, nor that academia alone is responsible for the ability to dismiss "feminist failings" without consideration of its wider satirical implications.

The first chapter of this thesis attempts to trace the respective critical cultures surrounding Wodehouse and Waugh. Framed by the middlebrow context and varied historical interests in each author, Chapter I explores a multitude of critical strategies which have the effect, unintentional though most undoubtedly are, of masking, minimising, or outright apologising for the antifeminist satiric attacks present in the satires under discussion. The scholarly texts in question are predominantly, though not exclusively, recent works which comment on Wodehouse's and Waugh's relationships to gender or other troubling aspects of their satire, and the chapter deals with such diverse issues as the difficulties surrounding

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<sup>50</sup> UCLTV, "The Orwell Lecture 2016: Ian Hislop," YouTube, November 15, 2016, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBG0T06jbec>.

biographical criticism in a satiric context and a pervasive notion that Wodehouse and Waugh are essentially harmless, “cosy” writers.

Having established a lack of criticism which acknowledges the antifeminist satiric impulse, the second chapter considers a selection of the mechanisms in place which render this impulse insidious. As such, Chapter II explores the notion of satire as a parasitic inhabitant of other genres. While often used in a broad sense, I attempt to localize the presence of the satiric impulse in the various middlebrow, novelistic sub-genres which Wodehouse and Waugh allude to, borrow from and, outright parody in their many texts. These include, firstly, utopia and dystopia, which I argue offer the opportunity for potent antifeminist attack by tapping into these already satiric genres, affording each writer the opportunity to criticize their societies for what they depict as a world in which women are dominant while hijacking the literary forces which led to the rise of the dystopian novel. Secondly, I trace the ubiquitous presence of romance fiction in both Wodehouse and Waugh. I note the fundamental attack each launches upon the popular romance genre by inverting the potentially reparative qualities it offers. I also establish such masculine middlebrow satire as a contributing factor in establishing romance as a culturally maligned genre even by the standards of similar middlebrow works. Finally, I address the prominent influence of detective fiction in each writer’s work, exploring its satiric inhabitation via its implicit association between women and crime, while exploiting the palliative role of the detective in restoring moral order.

The third and final chapter of the thesis considers the afterlives of Wodehouse and Waugh’s texts and, by extension, their unacknowledged antifeminism, aided by the generic manipulation and critical cultures covered in the previous chapters. Chapter III therefore turns to cinematic, televisual, and novelistic adaptation of Wodehouse and Waugh. Here, I examine these works in the context of adaptation theory championed by the likes of Linda

Hutcheon. I address the continued presence of antifeminist satire in various forms in the context of adaptation's inherent ability to criticize its source material, noting its potential to ratify or condemn. This leads to a discussion of the propagation of ideas as outlined in Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene*, drawing a parallel between this and the parasitic quality of satire and its potential, therefore, to leap from one "host" text and medium to another.

The thesis concludes with a rumination on the subject of satire's potential to genuinely produce change or cause harm, and whether the insidiousness with which this thesis has been primarily concerned alters traditional understandings of satire's efficacy or lack thereof. In light of this discussion, we turn to the implicit responsibilities of the literary critic in addressing such insidious satire, and the dangers of an excessively celebratory critical culture, especially as it pertains to the masculine middlebrow. All that remains, in terms of this introduction, is to clarify the position this thesis takes on Wodehouse and Waugh themselves. Chapter I will examine the difficulties inherent in associating a biographical understanding of the satirist with their satiric attacks; however, to attack belies intention, and it is therefore necessary to briefly discuss the views held by these figures which render their satire consistent with their attitudes towards women. According to beloved comic novelist P.G. Wodehouse, "unless you're in love with her, you can dispense with any woman,-- in other words one's real friendships are never with them".<sup>51</sup> This is a sentiment which biographer Frances Donaldson may not have found surprising: she notes that, "out of every ten Wodehouse addicts only one will be a woman",<sup>52</sup> adding, "I am not myself naturally an aficionado".<sup>53</sup> From these extracts we glean two significant suggestions: that Wodehouse was dismissive of women in general terms, and that his fiction largely found a

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<sup>51</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *A Life in Letters*, ed. Sophie Ratcliffe (London: Hutchinson, 2011), p. 89. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>52</sup> Frances Donaldson, *P.G. Wodehouse: The Authorised Biography* (London: Allison & Busby, 1992), p. 14. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>53</sup> Donaldson, p. 15.

male audience. Both details are entirely consistent with antifeminist satire. Knight notes that satire is “more-or-less a masculine genre”<sup>54</sup> due largely to its conception of women: “women as a gender were treated as an identifiable group, while men (as all men know) are merely people. Satire of men is thus satire of human nature, but satire of women is satire of a particular variety of people”.<sup>55</sup> Wodehouse’s private generalisation, combined with the near-universally negative portrayal of women in the Jeeves texts renders Wodehouse and his works consistent with the tradition of antifeminist satire as outlined by Knight and Nussbaum. The case for Waugh as an antifeminist satirist is simpler still. Chapter I discusses McDonnell’s *Waugh on Women* (1985), in which his similar (if not greater) disdain for women is made apparent. Further, Waugh has a greater reputation than Wodehouse as a satirist, and his targets are many and varied: it is not difficult to incorporate the emancipated woman among them. In his collected letters, occasional mention is made of his feelings on the matter; he notes, for example, that a protest concerning the repaving of a Boston pavement constitutes “a good side to American feminism”<sup>56</sup>, heavily implying that the “bad side” was, for Waugh, the dominant one. Waugh’s letters also offer a counter to his argument, famously featured in an essay entitled “Fan Fare”, rejecting his status as a satirist on the basis that there is no moral standard or sense of shame in the twentieth century. For critics like McCartney, Waugh’s works do not “conform” to the “conventional” satire’s appeal to moral correction.<sup>57</sup> More recently, however, Milthorpe and others have argued that Waugh’s statement should be taken as playfully satirical itself.<sup>58</sup> I tend to adopt the latter position, particularly in light of a letter written in later life, in which Waugh suggests that

<sup>54</sup> Knight, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Knight, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Mark Amory (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 292. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>57</sup> George McCartney, *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Brunswick, NJ : Transaction Publishers, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Milthorpe, p. 2.

“All literature implies moral standards and criticisms—the less explicit the better”;<sup>59</sup> thus, it is entirely appropriate that what may be dismissed as casual sexism—or, indeed, as the “anxiety” of middlebrow literature—can be considered in the moral-didactic context of a satirical tradition. In presenting us with reprehensible parodies of the New Woman, there is absolutely an implied moral standard at work and a satirical strategy by which it is bolstered. Wodehouse, too, made a public statement in an article (a piece for *Vanity Fair* entitled “The Super-Novelists: Suggestions for a League for the Restraint of Popular Authors”) criticising contemporaries such as H.G. Wells for what he saw as “tracts”, seeming to suggest that the popular author has become overly didactic. He gives the example of H.G. Wells: “to-day, if you buy a Wells, you are likely to get a treatise on a new religion or an inquiry into whether the public schools of England really educate”. In fact, Wodehouse only objects to the popular author turning to an “orgy of didactic utterance” due to a lack of subtlety: in the same article, he claims that it is acceptable for an author to voice their opinion “through the mouths of their characters”.<sup>60</sup> As with Waugh, therefore, it is entirely plausible to suggest that in these fictional works we may expect satire based upon implicit moral standards, albeit ones predicated upon an unpalatable misogyny. Moreover, these articles indicate above all a sense that such satirical judgements should be subtle and insidious, voiced only through, per Wodehouse, the “mouths of their characters” and in terms which are, per Waugh, “the less explicit the better”.

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<sup>59</sup> Amory, p. 574.

<sup>60</sup> Wodehouse, P.G., “The Super-Novelists: Suggestions for a League for the Restraint of Popular Authors”, *Vanity Fair*, June 1919.

## Chapter I

### “She had a wonderful profile, though”: The Power of Critical Obfuscation

One method of solving the uneasy relationship [between crime and comedy] is most evident in British classical detective fiction and is indicated by the epithet “cosy”. This cosiness prevents a clash between crime and comic action. It owes a great deal to the novels of P. G. Wodehouse and the early ones of Evelyn Waugh, especially as to characterization. One can be comfortable at houseparties with silly-ass young men and bubbly-headed, though titled, damsels. Murder becomes simply a lark: a game hardly more threatening than croquet on the manor lawn.<sup>61</sup>

Such is the viewpoint of Earl F. Bargainnier, cited in Thompson’s *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes* (1992). Though Bargainnier is writing in *The Gentle Art of Murder* (1980), this passage represents a distillation of several tendencies common to criticism pertaining to Wodehouse and Waugh. The power of “cosiness” is such that even murder “becomes simply a lark”: it is hardly surprising, then, that the small matter of a sustained satiric attack upon the New Woman should be disregarded. In fact, not only does this passage preclude the notion of any association between Wodehouse and an air of attack, but Bargainnier suggests that the inclusion of “bubbly-headed [...] damsels” actively contributes to the “cosy” atmosphere pervading the works of Wodehouse and early Waugh. In other words, texts in which women are depicted in the pejorative are texts which could not, therefore, possibly attack women. Robert F. Kiernan performs precisely such mental gymnastics in his claim that Bertie Wooster’s chauvinism simply “adds to the fun”.<sup>62</sup> Like many critics of Wodehouse and Waugh, Bargainnier demonstrates an inability to separate the comforting stylistic veneer of these texts and their potentially destructive antifeminism. Perhaps, as Christian Gutleben suggests, “when the comic and the satiric cohabit,

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<sup>61</sup> Kristin Thompson, *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes or Le Mot Juste* (New York: James H. Heineman, 1992), p. 108. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>62</sup> Robert F. Kiernan, *Frivolity Unbound: Six Masters of the Camp Novel* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1990), p. 108.

the former inexorably softens the latter".<sup>63</sup> David Cecil's inability to detect "harsh satire" in Wodehouse is testament to this notion,<sup>64</sup> and Chapter I constitutes, in many ways, an exploration of criticism in the wake of, or as a proponent of, such softening. The stakes of this exploration lie in the tricky question of satire's ability, or lack thereof, to successfully bring about practical or attitudinal reform, a debate to which this thesis will occasionally allude. Such a notion is all the more noteworthy in the context of antifeminist satire: such reform, were it realised or enacted, would surely be deleterious for many: as the Conclusion will discuss, the masculine middlebrow status of these works provides not only a long cultural reach, but a predominantly male audience potentially receptive to a satiric myth of oppressive womanhood which can only enhance resistance to gender parity. Ali Brox, writing on Langston Hughes, suggests that a lack of critical acknowledgement risks effacing satire's "reformative and didactic potential",<sup>65</sup> but I disagree. The possibility of reformation, such as it is, is determined by the readership and its "reaction",<sup>66</sup> as Lumley has it, to the satire. Criticism does, however, hold the power to expose the problematic elements of the satire. By extension, it equally holds the power to obfuscate, to render the satire subtler, such that it is better able to pervasively capitalise on the vast cultural impact of these two writers. Valentine Cunningham's 2007 essay is one of the few which gestures towards the antifeminist satire inherent in Wodehouse and Waugh, yet in this slight acknowledgement we may also observe—by dint, indeed, of its slightness—criticism's power of obfuscation. Cunningham alludes to a potential reading of these writers as antifeminist satirists, yet those crucial elements of their works—represented by Wodehouse's "mad aunts"<sup>67</sup> and Waugh's "deriding take" on "new

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<sup>63</sup> Christian Gutleben, "English Academic Satire from the Middle Ages to Postmodernism: Distinguishing the Comic from the Satiric" in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. Connery and Combe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 135.

<sup>64</sup> David Cecil, "Preface" in *Homage to P.G. Wodehouse* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1973), p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ali Brox, "Simple on Satire: Langston Hughes, Gender, and Satiric Double-Consciousness", *Studies in American Humour*, New Series 3, Issue 21, January 2010, p. 15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42573584>

<sup>66</sup> Frederick E. Lumley, *Means of Social Control* (New York: The Century Co., 1925), p. 254. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>67</sup> Valentine Cunningham, "Twentieth-century Fictional Satire" in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 402. All further references will be to this edition.

womanhood”<sup>68</sup>—are given as part of extensive lists. Such is the brevity of Cunningham’s gesture that the reader could, entirely feasibly, fail to recognize its significance: to understand the depiction of women in the Jeeves canon and in Waugh’s early novels not merely as old-fashioned sexism but as the product of satirical censure is a vital distinction. If, as Brox suggests, satire possesses “reformative and didactic potential”, it is, surely, unwise to gloss over (as Cunningham does), ignore, or outright apologise for its problematic elements. In many ways, these are the stakes of the thesis as a whole: if criticism does not explore such overlooked satire, it is better able to endure and proliferate.

This chapter cannot, of course, offer a comprehensive study of all criticism pertaining to Wodehouse and Waugh. Instead, I examine recent or particularly notable critical works which pertain to Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s relationship to women in the Jeeves canon and in Waugh’s early novels, often illustrated by ‘case study’ reflections on individual scholarly texts, reading them in conjunction with satire theory and close analysis of primary works of Wodehouse and Waugh. In its focus on recent and significant works, this thesis will be better situated in the current scholarly context, and therefore able to comment upon the ongoing resistance to reading these texts in terms of outright antifeminist satire. As such, this chapter comprises three core elements: a discussion of apologist criticism revolving around Bradshaw’s introduction to the 2012 edition of *Decline and Fall* in the context of a reader-response approach to satire; a foray into Tuplin’s chapter in *Middlebrow Wodehouse* pertaining to women and voyeurism in the Jeeves texts which I connect to Hight’s understanding of the monstrous woman in satires against women; and a wider exploration of the limitations of biographical criticism of Wodehouse and Waugh, widening the context of their works in order to encompass an ancient antifeminist tradition and the satirical techniques thereof. These readings will establish the premise of an insidious satire, largely (though not entirely) unchallenged by the criticism surrounding it, upon which the subsequent chapters of

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<sup>68</sup> Cunningham, p. 406.

this thesis are built. Given that the subsequent chapters discuss the masks antifeminist censure wears throughout the texts in question and the endurance of that censure respectively, it is vital that both neglectful and apologist criticism is understood as an important facilitator for those processes.

### **Voyeurism, Queerness, and “Anxiety”**

My Introduction has already touched upon the significance of the recent advances in scholarly exploration of the middlebrow in terms of understanding Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s antifeminism—and why it has gone underexplored. Due in no small part to the neglectful and pejorative attitudes towards middlebrow literary production which has dominated attitudes towards the subject since its conception, the middlebrow scholarship of today has, understandably, a desire to avoid similar mistakes. This is the basis for Macdonald’s aforementioned argument in favour of a critical culture which operates on a basis of celebration and respect. As such, while Roz Tuplin’s recent essay offers an admirable and detailed account of “masculine crisis” in the Jeeves texts, the crux of her argument betrays the danger, to which this thesis will return, of a middlebrow criticism too concerned with its celebratory impulse to fully criticize the more troubling components of its subjects. It thus allows the intrinsic antifeminist satire present in these works to escape relatively unscathed. For example, one of Tuplin’s remarks sets a slightly misleading standard: “Jeeves,” Tuplin states, “sabotages Bertie’s relationship with women, thus protecting the middle-class reader’s stake in the upper-class world—which is represented by Jeeves himself”.<sup>69</sup> This understanding of Jeeves’s actions and motives is one which I have come across in critical scholarship and anecdotally in conversation, and it is an illustrative misreading which emphasises the nuance of Wodehouse’s antifeminism with which this section is concerned. By this reading of Jeeves’s actions, the antifeminist satire is obscured by two errata: the notion

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<sup>69</sup> Tuplin, p. 205.

that Bertie, and by extension the upper class, is the primary satiric target through Jeeves's successful manipulation of him, and that Jeeves acts on purely selfish motives. In fact, when we consider the occasions on which Bertie lapses into a desire for marriage or children—which are not numerous—it quickly becomes clear that the extent of Jeeves's manipulations only go so far as to reveal to Bertie the essentially unpleasant nature of the women with whom he is enamoured. Jeeves does not bribe the children in "Bertie Changes His Mind" (1922) to heckle Bertie; he does not instruct Florence Craye to have Bertie read Nietzsche in "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916); nor does he frame the criminal Aline Hemingway in "Aunt Agatha Takes The Count" (1922). In each instance, Jeeves's only action is to *reveal* to Bertie the true and ghastly nature of women; the essential truth of these texts is far simpler than the nuanced arguments surrounding queerness and the homosocial championed by Humble and Holcomb; it is far less concerned with the balance of power and capitulation between servant and master to which Tuplin turns. To Wodehouse, the women of the twentieth century are immoral and unpleasant, and Jeeves and Bertie are, above all, instruments of an antifeminist satire which directs its censorious attack in their direction.

On Bertie's attitude towards women, Tuplin concludes as follows:

In 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy', Bertie is forced to acknowledge the emptiness of his expectations that women will be weak, helpless and silent. He visits the Palace of Beauty at the Wembley British Empire Exhibition, where beautiful women are displayed in glass cages dressed as famous women from history. The experience leaves Bertie strangely cold: 'I can't say it fascinated me to any great extent'. He admits that 'I maintain that lovely woman loses a lot of her charm if you have to stare at her in a tank. Moreover it gave me a rummy sort of feeling of having wandered into the wrong bedroom at a country house'. The sense of inappropriate voyeurism and objectification is coupled with a creeping awareness that women reduced to the status of dolls hold little fascination in comparison with even the most troublesome empowered female. Bertie is forced to acknowledge that a passive role for women in relation to men is not compatible with the reality of modern women, or modern men themselves.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Tuplin, p. 202

Though Tuplin throughout her chapter acknowledges, unlike many Wodehouse critics, the aversion to women present in the Jeeves texts, the attempt inherent in this passage to construct a more palatable interpretation of Bertie—one not grounded upon a misogynistic abuse of satire's moral policing—is a clear example of some middlebrow criticism's limitations. The celebratory impulse advocated by Macdonald and cited in my Introduction is clearly present here, and in refuting Tuplin's suggestion that Bertie disapproves of "voyeurism and objectification", we are able to place the Jeeves texts into a tradition of antifeminist satire rooted far beyond the interwar period of the twentieth century championed by criticism of the middlebrow, while implicitly acknowledging the power of obfuscation in literary-critical texts which necessarily attempt to defend it. "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy" was published in its collected form in 1925. The fifty years hence saw the publication of numerous Jeeves texts, and none bore any sign that any kind of woman-related epiphany affected Bertie's attitude towards the women he encountered subsequent to this passage. As Chapter II will explore, the Jeeves stories are predicated upon a Holmesian, cyclical structure which privileges repetition, the most notable feature of which being the consistent horror with which Bertie regards marriage. Even during the course of "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy", Bertie comments on a woman who is, to use Tuplin's descriptors, "troublesome" and "empowered" in terms of far greater disapprobation than the mere "rummy feeling" associated with the women at the exhibition. He considers Honoria Glossop "A beastly thing to have to face over the breakfast table".<sup>71</sup> Honoria is here reduced to a "thing", in spite of Bertie's apparent concerns over objectification, and his overt horror in the face of "this Glossop menace"<sup>72</sup> is far stronger than his relatively detached observations on the women at the exhibition.

Further, Bertie frequently exhibits voyeuristic behaviour towards women. The qualities women exhibit on a voyeuristic level tend to be their more positive ones, as far as Bertie is

<sup>71</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy" in *The World of Jeeves* (London: Arrow Books) p. 343. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>72</sup> "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy", p. 343.

concerned, which work to slightly mitigate the more enduring issue of their personalities. Gilbert Highet, writing on *Il Corbaccio*, notes a feature of antifeminist satire which allows us to place Bertie's attitude towards the physicality of women, and the pleasure he derives from looking voyeuristically at them: "This is one of a long series of satires on women, written by embittered men who wished to show that, although women are outwardly attractive, they are really, when known intimately, monsters of filth and horror".<sup>73</sup> It is a noteworthy aside that, on the subject of aunts Dahlia and Agatha, Frances Donaldson describes them as "monsters in inhuman shape"<sup>74</sup>: when women are stripped of their alluring power in Wodehouse, the result is a more overt monstrosity. In his descriptions of fiancées (or ex-fiancées) it is Bertie's habit to describe these women in terms of their "profiles". In "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916), the story of Bertie's first encounter with Jeeves, Bertie is engaged to Florence Craye: "If there was a flaw, so to speak, in the pure joy of being engaged to Florence, it was the fact that she rather took after her father, and one was never certain when she might erupt. She had a wonderful profile, though".<sup>75</sup> The significance of the "profile" is that in order for Bertie to see it, the woman in question must be facing side-on. Implicitly, therefore, while Bertie is looking at them, they cannot see him. This is precisely voyeurism. It is also significant, of course, that part of Florence's unpalatable nature is not only internal—thus placing Bertie's derision in the context of satire against women as outlined by Highet—but also imbued with masculine connotations: her frequent eruptions are apparently characteristic of "her father". This worrying of gendered characteristics, a feature of many middlebrow texts, will be explored more fully in the next section. While Bertie's preoccupation with the "profile" of women is a recurrent motif throughout the Jeeves canon, it is only one example of the pleasure he takes in looking voyeuristically at women. Two particularly pertinent

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<sup>73</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 204.

<sup>74</sup> Donaldson, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "Jeeves Takes Charge" in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 18.

passages of *The Mating Season* (1949) are noteworthy in this regard. The first describes Corky, a woman who does not pose a marital threat to Bertie:

This young prune is one of those lissom girls of medium height, constructed on the lines of Gertrude Lawrence, and her map has always been worth more than a passing glance. In repose, it has a sort of meditative expression, as if she were a pure white soul thinking beautiful thoughts, and, when animated, so dashed animated that it boosts the morale just to look at her.<sup>76</sup>

The second passage describes Madeline Bassett who, as always, does denote a romantic threat. Bertie is here refuting the suggestion that her outward attractiveness might cause an observer to suggest that Bertie should not have an issue with marrying her:

As far as the outer crust is concerned, there is nothing, I fully realise, to cavil at in this pre-eminent bit of bad news. The eyes are large and lustrous, the features delicately moulded, the hair, nose, teeth and ears well up to, if not above, the average standard. Judge her by the photograph alone, and you would have something that would be widely accepted as a pin-up girl. But there is a catch, and a very serious catch.<sup>77</sup>

The “catch” lies in Madeline’s interiority: Bertie acknowledges that she is “externally [...] a pippin”,<sup>78</sup> yet internally, she becomes “the sloppiest, mushiest, sentimentalest [sic] young Gawd-help-us”.<sup>79</sup> In the first passage, the term “map” constitutes objectification in the most literal sense of the term: Corky becomes an object; moreover, one which is designed to be looked at and cannot return that look. Bertie privileges looking with his phrase “worth more than a passing glance”; the implication here is that Bertie has a tendency to devote time to looking at Corky without that look being returned. That he is familiar with her expression when in “repose” is, beyond question, voyeuristic, suggesting that, in her “meditative” state, Corky is unaware of being looked at: “repose” is not a social state. The notion that she looks “as if” she is thinking “beautiful thoughts”

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<sup>76</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 42.

<sup>78</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 42-3.

<sup>79</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 43.

is significant. Bertie presents us with the possibility that he himself, by contrast, is not thinking “beautiful thoughts”: the phrase leaves open the possibility that Bertie’s own thoughts are, perhaps, earthier, particularly given the sexual connotations of voyeurism. This interpretation is borne out in a later passage, in which Bertie describes Corky as follows: “She was accompanied by Sam Goldwyn and looking, as is her wont, like a million dollars, gowned in some clinging material which accentuated her graceful outlines, if you know what I mean”.<sup>80</sup> I know precisely what Bertie means. This is a sexualised depiction of Corky; Bertie’s gaze is drawn to the “clinging” material of her dress and the “graceful outlines” to which it clings, underpinned by a money-based simile which recalls both objectification and commodification. Provided they neither pose a marital threat nor exhibit overtly masculine features or tendencies, then, Bertie—despite the non-sexual reputation of Wodehouse’s fiction—is comfortable with treating women voyeuristically. Not only does Tuplin’s resistance to this illustrate the culture of celebratory excess in middlebrow criticism but, moreover, it serves to accentuate the unpalatable contrast Wodehouse conjures with women’s personalities. Hence the inclusion of the second passage.

Like Corky, Madeline Bassett is physically attractive and, like Corky, Bertie immediately opts for voyeuristic devices in his attempt to describe her. He repeats the term “photograph” to stress that only by looking at her without a returning gaze—only when she is rendered an image and object—can Madeline be considered attractive. Not content with the repetition of Madeline considered as a photograph, Bertie also describes her as a “pin-up girl”. Not only do the same principles here apply, but the sexual connotations as discussed in the context of Corky become ever-more apparent. *The Mating Season* was published in 1949. Consequently, though the setting of the Jeeves stories constitutes a fluctuating amalgamation of fictionalised Edwardian England and outright anachronism, the publication context—bearing in mind Wodehouse did not return to Britain in his life following the events of the Second World War—suggests that Wodehouse’s best

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<sup>80</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 101.

understanding of the “pin-up girl” is to be found in the press of the 1930s. As Adrian Bingham notes, it was during the “mid-1930s that more overtly sexualized pin-up shots began to be regular features in the daily press”,<sup>81</sup> thus solidifying the relationship between the pin-up and sexualisation. Further, *The Mating Season* was published on the cusp of the 1950s wave of “Voluptuous films stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot, and Jayne Mansfield” who were, per Bingham, “presented explicitly as ‘sex symbols’”.<sup>82</sup> To refer to Madeline Bassett as a pin-up girl, then, is to sexualise her. That popular actresses had by this time become sex symbols likewise enhances the sexualisation of Corky still further; in the above passage, Bertie compares her to “Gertrude Lawrence”, and Corky is, in fact, a Hollywood actress herself. Not only, therefore, is Bertie entirely able and willing to voyeuristically objectify women but, once they become a marital threat, this impulse conforms to Hight’s understanding of satire against women, attractive only “outwardly”.

There is clear evidence, then, for a sexually-charged and satirically motivated reading of the women characters who populate the Jeeves stories. Not only does this demonstrate the obfuscating power of celebration inherent in Tuplin’s chapter, but this reading also calls into question Brian D. Holcomb’s queer reading of Jeeves’s and Bertie’s relationship. For Holcomb, the queerness of their relationship is predicated, not upon overt expressions of desire between the two characters, but on ambiguity: on not knowing whether such desire exists. Moreover, it is Bertie’s and Jeeves’s status as continually unmarried bachelors which drives the queerness Holcomb reads in their stories. Per Holcomb,

While the middlebrow has mostly been understood as a feminine position, perpetual bachelorhood has specifically queer overtones. Bachelorhood might be seen as quiescent heteronormativity, a kind of incipient hegemony, but perpetual

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<sup>81</sup> Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 201-2. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>82</sup> Bingham, p. 202.

bachelorhood is a deferral or denial of the heteronormative past the point of acceptability.<sup>83</sup>

This basis for a queer reading of Jeeves and Bertie is entirely legitimate, and might serve as an effective counter to the premise of this thesis: if, like Holcomb, we find Bertie's and Jeeves's preference for each other's company indicative of an unvoiced desire for one another, and Bertie's perpetual bachelorhood indicative of a challenge to the patriarchal, heteronormative values of his society, then the aversion to women and marriage I interpret as antifeminist satire is, to some extent, tempered by a renewed emphasis on texts which are already directed heavily towards men. As with Tuplin, however, this impulse to find a harmless reading is a consequence of celebratory middlebrow critical culture: by dismissing the censoriously anti-marriage satire inherent in these texts as a function of Jeeves's and Bertie's ambiguous desire for one another (Holcomb simply states that marriage to a woman is the one behaviour of Bertie's that Jeeves considers "prohibited"<sup>84</sup>) this text becomes a form of critical apologia. I propose that Bertie's perpetual bachelorhood, far from being "a deferral or denial of the heteronormative past the point of acceptability" is, in fact, a strategy rooted firmly in the satirical tradition, thus enhancing antifeminist censure. Per Connery and Combe, "satire tends towards open-endedness [...] Closure, in most cases, would turn a narrative satire into either comedy or tragedy and thus contradict the satirist's representation of evil as a present and continuing danger".<sup>85</sup> Superficially, the Jeeves stories do not appear to adhere to this satirical tendency: each novel and short story ends with Jeeves victorious and Bertie grateful, leaving the pair free, as Holcomb has it, to "return to whateverunnarrated activities occupy their time".<sup>86</sup> This is, however, a faux-closure, and it is for this reason that the Jeeves canon and Waugh's "Metroland"-set works are often treated throughout

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<sup>83</sup> Brian D. Holcomb, "The Queer Domesticity of Bertie and Jeeves" in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 209.

<sup>84</sup> Holcomb, p. 223.

<sup>85</sup> Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 5. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>86</sup> Holcomb, p. 215.

this thesis as two collectives, rather than individual texts. Though I occasionally refer to Jeeves texts written beyond 1950—often seen as a ‘cut-off’ point for middlebrow texts—these works can be understood as firmly rooted in a consummately middlebrow context. When considered *en masse*, the Jeeves canon offers no closure, only respite between further threats of marriage or blackmail from women. Brian D. Holcomb points out that Bertie’s bachelorhood is, by definition, an ephemeral state: he may defer marriage,<sup>87</sup> but this threat cannot be eliminated; therefore, not only do his adventures lack closure, but this lack is caused by women. Consequently, though we may absolutely read a queer quasi-desire between Bertie and Jeeves as Holcomb advocates, it is slightly misleading to privilege such a reading over the attack on women these texts constitute. “Delaying bachelorhood as an ongoing strategy”, as Holcomb has it, is precisely that: a satirical strategy designed to prevent closure. Far from countering “heteronormativity”, this strategy reinforces patriarchal values through its depiction of the powerful woman as a threat; as Connery and Combe have it, a “present and continuing danger”. In the case of Waugh’s satires, *Decline and Fall* offers a comparable satirical strategy in its depiction of Margot’s fate. While Paul’s return to life at Oxford may appear to offer resolution, the threat of powerful women continues throughout Waugh’s early *oeuvre*, as the white-slaver, Margot Metroland (who, as this thesis will discuss at some length, brings about Paul’s incarceration) becomes the cornerstone of Waugh’s satiric world, appearing or being mentioned in *Vile Bodies*, *Scoop*, *Black Mischief*, *A Handful of Dust*, *Put Out More Flags*, and the short story “Basil Seal Rides Again”. Waugh himself refers to this world as “Metroland”,<sup>88</sup> and these texts are bound by the presence of a woman who, as McDonnell notes, lacks “a moral conscience”.<sup>89</sup> Through Margot, the “evil” of emancipation remains, as Connery and Combe have it, a “present and continuing danger”. Bertie’s perpetual bachelorhood functions in precisely the same way, and, innovative though Holcomb’s queer reading is, we are faced,

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<sup>87</sup> Holcomb, p. 208.

<sup>88</sup> Amory, p. 206.

<sup>89</sup> Jacqueline McDonnell, *Waugh on Women* (London: Duckworth, 1985), p. 116. All further references will be to this edition.

again, with the notion of criticism determined to ensure that its neglected source is not portrayed in too negative a light.

Ultimately, both Tuplin's and Holcomb's chapters, while entirely legitimate and perceptive readings of the gendered issues present in the Jeeves canon, succeed in obscuring the satirical antifeminism of Wodehouse's works by subsuming them into matters at once celebratory and abstract. Holcomb's argument is predicated on an ambiguity incompatible with the aims of satire, while Tuplin's understanding of Bertie's relationship to women (incomplete, as we have discussed, though it is) is subsumed into the wider bracket of "upper-class masculine anxiety". This term, "anxiety", as the Introduction to this thesis notes, is a recurrent one in middlebrow criticism, and is notable for its far-from-condemnatory nature. Nor is this sentiment limited specifically to middlebrow criticism: Jacqueline McDonnell's study of Waugh's depictions of women, for example, lead her to suggest that we should feel "pity" and "despair"<sup>90</sup> towards Waugh. There is a concerted critical effort at work here to ensure that these writers are not considered problematic, or, at least, that they are afforded a certain amount of leeway. Not only does Tuplin have Wodehouse's troubling depictions of women and marriage (having mitigated for it through her apologist interpretation of Bertie's apparent distaste for voyeurism) absorbed into this "anxiety" surrounding class, but that wider topic is then suffused by the firm implication that the matter is entirely inconsequential in any case. Tuplin concludes that the "demeaning" portrayal of the upper classes is "tempered" by "mutual need" and is, ultimately, an "affectionate portrayal" which "validates the continuing dominance of the upper classes".<sup>91</sup> Having obscured Wodehouse's antifeminism through an incomplete reading of Bertie's feelings towards women and subsequently subsuming them into a wider picture of the blameless term "anxiety", Tuplin concludes with the suggestion that such an exploration of class anxiety is largely inconsequential. A mixture of

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<sup>90</sup> McDonnell, p. 214.

<sup>91</sup> Tuplin, p. 207.

mockery and affection not only negates itself but, crucially, is ineffectual: any efforts to genuinely criticize the upper-class are “tempered” by the limitations of the middlebrow itself, suggesting that the middlebrow is simply incapable of bringing about change, let alone harm. Yet, as I have shown, Wodehouse’s explorations of masculinity and femininity cannot be limited to the context of interwar middlebrow writing and associated class tensions. Felicity Nussbaum summarizes the assumptions of literary antifeminism as follows: “that women are unruly monsters, that women are valued principally for beauty, that masculinized women are perverse”.<sup>92</sup> All three assumptions are present in the above analysis: Bertie’s voyeurism, far from the mitigation afforded it by Tuplin’s apologist argument, does suggest “beauty” is the principle value of the women he sees; Bertie’s aversion to masculine women is documented heavily by Tuplin, but only in the context of the 1920s; and the “unruly monster” of womanhood is implicit throughout. Women are unruly; therefore, women are the ruling party throughout these texts, and their monstrousness, as Highet suggests, is apparent not in physical appearance, but when known “intimately”. In the context of insidious satire which thrives on its unacknowledged status, criticism such as this, fascinating though it is, provides the perfect site for antifeminism’s continued survival, the full extent of which will be explored in Chapter III of this thesis.

## **Exemplary Satire and Apology**

Fredric V. Bogel’s essay, “The Difference Satire Makes: Reading Swift’s Poems”, begins with a rumination on a tendency of discomfort among students of satire:

our students tell us in numerous ways that they are made uneasy by the spectacle of the satirist sitting in judgment on a wide range of real and imagined poetic or moral failures. More than the difficulties of line and couplet rhetoric, or literary and political

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<sup>92</sup> Nussbaum, p. 159.

allusion, it is this act of judgment that chills the sympathetic current of the undergraduate soul.<sup>93</sup>

It is, perhaps, to that same “chill” that I owe the formulation of this thesis. Bogel goes on to explain the position in which this uneasiness leaves the literary critic when faced with “troubling” aspects of the satirical text. Per Bogel, there is an underlying assumption in approaching satire, even in readings sceptical of the satirist’s claim to authority and judgment, that “satire expects us to endorse the satirist’s authority, tacitly asks us to align our reading selves with the satirist and therefore to set ourselves against the object of satire”.<sup>94</sup> This, Bogel goes on to explain, is an erroneous position: the relationship between satirist and object of attack is, in fact, too complex to allow for it. This assumption presupposes “that satire is a response to a perceived threat in the world external to the text, and to a pre-existing difference between satirist and satiric object”.<sup>95</sup> The contention here is that satire is borne not of attacking the other, but, rather, of “partial identification”: if it was not, “there would be no reason to establish the otherness of the satiric object”.<sup>96</sup> Without question, this notion is true of the antifeminist satire present in Wodehouse and Waugh, particularly in the context of a middlebrow recognized as intrinsically gendered. Nicola Humble offers an observation pertinent to much of this thesis: the middlebrow constitutes a site of exploration, as subsequent chapters of this thesis will return to, of the New Woman in the interwar period, who “took on the practicality and emotional control once the province of the male: she was competent, assured and unemotional”.<sup>97</sup> This worrying of gender norms contextualises the “ambiguous state” which, for Bogel, is the root of all satire, and, as a consequence, this thesis effectively performs what he considers “the task of literary criticism” in noting the “modes of

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<sup>93</sup> Fredric V. Bogel, “The Difference Satire Makes: Reading Swift’s Poems” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. Connery and Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p. 44.

<sup>94</sup> Bogel, p. 45.

<sup>95</sup> Bogel, p. 45.

<sup>96</sup> Bogel, p. 46.

<sup>97</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 197.

persistence in the satiric text<sup>98</sup> of that initial ambiguity. Certainly, this is a strength of Tuplin's aforementioned essay: her observations regarding Bertie's preoccupation with the "Amazon"-like Honoria Glossop<sup>99</sup> is a prime instance of the "persistence" of a gendered ambiguity, as the ever-changing state of interwar gender norms produce an ambiguity solved by Wodehouse's antifeminist satire, marking women with masculine qualities as objects of polite horror in the eyes of Bertie and consequently fuelling a censoriously anti-marital narrative. Of course, as I have outlined, the strictures of middlebrow criticism prohibit the final point of connection, linking such ambiguity to a troubling component of satire, thus obscuring such attacks. Though a later text, Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* (1948) exhibits a similar antifeminist satiric strain underlying the more overtly censorious depiction of American funeral culture, rooted in precisely the same gendered ambiguity characteristic of middlebrow writing and the period which spawned it. The heroine, Aimée, finds herself in a love triangle in which one suitor, Mr Joyboy, worries traditional masculinity by dint of his domesticity and attachment to his mother ("he looked undignified in his apron"<sup>100</sup>) while the other, Dennis, would frequently have her pay for their dates ("As often as not it was *I* who took *you* out"<sup>101</sup>). Trapped between the ungentlemanly callousness of the former in his refusal to release her from her engagement, and disinterest from the mother-doting latter, Aimée is unable to become a "home-loving, home-making American girl"<sup>102</sup> and is therefore forced to commit suicide in a show of satirical contempt for gender roles in a state of flux. This is, perhaps, an atypical example of Waugh's antifeminist impulse, given that Aimée herself is not constructed in too negative a manner, but it is clear from his earlier satires that women's

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<sup>98</sup> Bogel, p. 46.

<sup>99</sup> Tuplin, p. 200.

<sup>100</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 94. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>101</sup> *The Loved One*, p. 108.

<sup>102</sup> *The Loved One*, p. 94.

emancipation, particularly as embodied by Margot Metroland, comprises the beating heart of the gendered ambiguity which places women in, as Bogel has it, “threatening proximity”<sup>103</sup> to men.

As we have seen, the celebratory aspect of middlebrow criticism is one manner by which exploration of the site of gendered ambiguity which gives rise to antifeminist satire is limited: Tuplin’s analysis cannot simultaneously adhere to such a critical tradition while interpreting the Jeeves canon as antifeminist satire. The same cannot be said, however, for that Waugh criticism which both cannot ignore his status as a satirist (refuted though it may be by some) and acknowledges that there are undeniably problematic elements of Waugh’s works: what Bogel might call “troubling”. In returning to the notion of the assumption that reader and satirist must be aligned, a second element of critical obfuscation emerges. Bogel argues that the assumed alignment between satirist and reader can lead to what he terms “exemplary” satire as a method of attempting, critically, to reconcile that alignment with the disturbing notion that the reader must, therefore, be aligned with the satirist’s more unpalatable views. This “exemplary” reading is “a dramatizing of a position in order to satirize it, not the taking of that position by the author”.<sup>104</sup> However, there are problematic connotations:

Interpretations like these permit us to accommodate troubling details of a text, and to do so while still reading ‘with the grain’. Moreover, in allowing us an author whom we endorse, they also provide us with a self we can admire. [...] What [such an interpretation] ignores, what it needs to ignore, is the possibility that what we take to be exemplary incoherence is simply incoherence, that, say, the misogyny we understand as quoted or ventriloquized is actually being uttered and endorsed. This sort of ultimately recuperative reading certainly produces a readerly ego of considerable coherence, but [...] In upholding the satirist’s apparent failings or incoherences as intended, as exemplary, as normative, we are also defending a readerly ego that is coherent, flattering, and disastrously alienated.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Bogel, p. 46.

<sup>104</sup> Bogel, p. 51.

<sup>105</sup> Bogel, p. 51.

The assumed alignment between satirist and reader, combined with the consequent need to defend the “readerly ego”, results in a criticism capable of obscuring the nature of problematic satiric censure by casting it as mere “ventriloquism”. David Bradshaw’s introduction to a relatively recent edition of *Decline and Fall* is a highly illustrative example of an exemplary reading and, by extension, offers an understanding of the stakes inherent in a critical culture capable of obscuring or proliferating problematic and gendered elements of these satirists in critics’ efforts to read such texts “with the grain”.

Bradshaw’s exploration of *Decline and Fall* constitutes an excellent and sensitive reading of Waugh’s more problematic elements, perceptively engaging with the difficulties in reconciling contemporary political correctness with the controversial racial components of this text. Certainly, when compared to the author of *The Anatomy of Satire* (1962) written fifty years prior, it is not difficult to determine the manner in which critical culture has, historically, encouraged the proliferation of Waugh’s troubling censure. In that text, Highet is entirely complicit in the “racist caricatures”<sup>106</sup> in Waugh’s work, suggesting that *Black Mischief* “makes a fine satirical comment on the current idealistic doctrine that all races are brothers under the skin”<sup>107</sup> (later, and more pertinently in the context of this thesis, Highet suggests that the “foul” nature of satire is often commented upon by women, who, “with their kind hearts, are prone to make this criticism”<sup>108</sup>: this is not an attitude conducive to effectively interrogating antifeminism). However, testament to fifty years of progress though Bradshaw’s text may be, his essay is subject to the readerly assumptions which result in the need to invoke the notion of exemplary satire and, by extension, the blind spots inhabited by antifeminist satire emerge. Bradshaw acknowledges that Waugh’s satire appears problematic:

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<sup>106</sup> Greenberg, p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> Highet, p. 204.

<sup>108</sup> Highet, p. 235.

It is [...] possible that some readers may feel uneasy at having yielded so wholeheartedly to Waugh's comic vision. For instance, to lampoon ethnicity with the unbridled relish which the narrator and Fagan bring to their accounts of the bestial appearance and moral bankruptcy of the Welsh could ruffle sensitivities which were either unacknowledged or disregarded in 1928.<sup>109</sup>

The term "uneasy" is also used by Bogel, and Bradshaw's counter to such unease also aligns with Bogel's reader-response understanding of satire: "Waugh's anti-Welsh comments should also be considered in the context of a novel in which most normal values are inverted and none of the characters [...] measures up to the standards which might reasonably be expected of him or her given their professional or social standing".<sup>110</sup> It would therefore, Bradshaw contends, be "perverse to regard Fagan as a serious commentator on anything".<sup>111</sup> The significance of this statement is heightened by its proximity to Bradshaw's prior acknowledgement of the temptation to connect Fagan's sentiments to Waugh's private feelings on the Welsh. He effectively moves to counter this temptation: the character of Fagan is unpalatable, thus, the racist censure he espouses may be disregarded, ensuring, as Bogel has it, that the troubling aspects of Waugh's satire need not be considered "uttered and endorsed" by the satirist himself. This attitude is also prevalent in a recent French article in which the critic suggests Bertie's opinion of women is hypocritical and his criticisms therefore "rebound on him"<sup>112</sup>: a textbook example, as with Bradshaw, of the critic attempting to hold up the satirist's misogyny as exemplary. In defending the "distasteful attitudes and offensive terms" used in the text, claiming that they are defensible in the vein of the exemplary due to "Waugh's exposure of his characters' absolute unfitness to denigrate anybody", Bradshaw invokes the same phrase employed by Bogel, noting that it would go "against the grain"

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<sup>109</sup> David Bradshaw, introduction to *Decline and Fall* ed. David Bradshaw (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. vii

<sup>110</sup> Bradshaw, p. ix.

<sup>111</sup> Bradshaw, p. ix.

<sup>112</sup> Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay, "P. G. Wodehouse's 'Thoughtful Lightness' and Detached Involvement: Satire, Parody and the Subversive Use of the Canonical Intertext in *Code of the Woosters* (1938)", *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines: Revue de la Société d'Etudes Anglaises Contemporaines* Vol. 51 (Dec 2016) DOI: 10.4000/ebc.3425

of the novel to “take Fagan’s vilification of the Welsh as anything more than the stagy bombast of a humbug”.<sup>113</sup> As Bogel theorizes, Bradshaw must defensively resist the notion of Waugh offering truly troubling satire in order to read “with the grain”. This process transforms the critic, however admirable for his attempts to address Waugh’s often troubling targets, into an apologist.

Apology continues to feature in the essay, as the inversion of Fagan’s respectable social position and moral compass which renders the satire exemplary widens to encompass most characters in the novel. Bradshaw goes on to cite Douglas Lane Patey, who suggests further inversions: “guardians who don’t guard, teachers who don’t teach [...] mannish women and womanish men”.<sup>114</sup> It is instructive to apply this sentiment to Margot Beste-Chetwynde. Margot possesses wealth and property; she runs a successful, albeit immoral, business, and she is sexually promiscuous. Applying Bradshaw’s principle of inversion to her, we find that the “standards which might reasonably be expected” of Margot are that she should be married, lacking in money and property, and chaste. Patey’s sentiment is entirely clear. The inversion represents a negative transformation (he goes on to note “unjust judges” and “a physician who kills”<sup>115</sup>) in which the resulting position is unpalatable: teachers should teach, guards should guard and, crucially, men should not be “womanish”, and women should not be “mannish”. This reading of the satire promotes precisely the division borne of that site of gendered ambiguity which, as mentioned above, necessitates Waugh’s antifeminist attack in the first instance. Teaching is recognised as a vehicle for satiric attack by other critics. Ogborn and Buckroyd state that *Decline and Fall* attacks “the expensive façade of the education system”,<sup>116</sup> and the inversion of the teachers undoubtedly contributes to this. Once the principles are applied to Margot, however, we are faced with a woman who is not emancipated but, rather, in the conditions she would be in prior to the number

<sup>113</sup> Bradshaw, p. ix.

<sup>114</sup> Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), p. 62.

<sup>115</sup> Patey, p. 62.

<sup>116</sup> Ogborn and Buckroyd, p. 29.

of legal and social changes that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on which the notion of the New Woman were partially built. There are two possible conclusions to be drawn from this: it could be that Bradshaw agrees with this assessment, in which case he considers a satiric attack on the New Woman uncontroversial. This would be inconsistent, however, with the time he devotes to carefully exploring the systems of checks and balances which underpin the anti-Welsh, anti-Semitic, and racist features of *Decline and Fall*. The second, and by extension more likely, conclusion is simply that Bradshaw does not recognize the possibility that antifeminism is a fundamental component of Waugh's satire. Without that recognition, the satiric attacks upon women are granted a form of legitimacy: while the proliferation of Waugh's antifeminism is possible through any scholarly omission, the effect is magnified in a critic who takes such pains to untangle the various problematic components of the satire. The implication Bradshaw inadvertently projects is that those topics he does not cover are, by definition, unproblematic ones, and those he does are defended, at least to some extent, through a defensive dissociation from genuine satiric attack.

Unlike the criticism charted in the other sections of this chapter, Bradshaw's stands relatively alone (although, as we have seen, he turns to prominent Waugh scholars such as Lane Patey during the course of his essay). Though Bradshaw may not be a facet of a broader trend, his critical clout remains sufficient to significantly influence perception of Waugh. His renown in the world of twentieth-century literary study (and, particularly pertinent in this instance, his position until his death as Co-Investigator of the University of Leicester's Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh project) lends a great deal of authority to his judgments, which, especially in the context outlined above of an inadvertent oversight equating to tacit acceptance, could easily obfuscate Waugh's antifeminism. Moreover, the essay on which I draw is Bradshaw's Introduction to a Penguin edition of *Decline and Fall* which is still in circulation (the cover of my eBook copy features a picture of Jack Whitehall from the 2017 adaptation of the novel). As such, this criticism

is far more likely to reach the general reader than most of the secondary resources I draw upon throughout this thesis. To both the scholarly community and the general readership, then, Bradshaw's complex and sensitive reading of Waugh's troubling components can work to render Waugh's antifeminist satire still more insidious and subtle, whether this criticism disregards or defends it.

### **Biographical Criticism and the Feminist Killjoy**

As we have seen, the mechanisms of critical obfuscation which protect Wodehouse's and Waugh's problematic satire from serious interrogation are founded partially upon a middlebrow scholarship rooted in defensive celebration, and partially in the defence of the readerly ego of the critic of satire. It is worth returning to Bogel's choice of words when he rightly contends that, "In upholding the satirist's apparent failings or incoherences as intended, as exemplary, as normative, we are also defending a readerly ego that is coherent, flattering, and disastrously alienated". For Bogel, the fundamental misreading inherent in an assumption of exemplary satire produces an "alienated" readerly ego. For Sarah Ahmed, however, in discussing her figure of the feminist killjoy, alienation is at stake in the recognition of troubling aspects of that which others find happiness in:

Becoming a feminist can be an alienation from happiness (though not just that, not only that: oh the joy of being able to leave the place you were given!). When we feel happiness in proximity to the right objects, we are aligned; we are facing the right way. You become alienated—out of line with an affective community—when you do not experience happiness from the right things.<sup>117</sup>

In this light, the critical endeavour of 'softening' Wodehouse and Waugh is an understandable one: the task of the critic has been to ensure that these satirists, producers of characteristically middlebrow "delight, pleasure and charm",<sup>118</sup> continue to be presented as the "right things", lest

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<sup>117</sup> Sara Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Wilful Subjects)" *The Scholar & Feminist Online* Issue 8.3 (Summer 2010) p. 1. [http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/ahmed\\_01.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/ahmed_01.htm)

<sup>118</sup> Erica Brown, *Comedy and the Feminine Middlebrow Novel* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), p. 1.

the critic becomes alienated in a manner more overt than that outlined by Bogel. Such a desire to remain in keeping with an “affective community” is all the more significant for the middlebrow context of this scholarship; as the Introduction of this thesis notes, Macdonald’s celebratory manifesto for the study of these texts is predicated upon a history of “opprobrium” and “stigmatization”. Alienation is, perhaps, a risk more keenly felt for a scholarly community in a field already beset by “shame” and “negative connotations”,<sup>119</sup> hence a desire to accentuate the positive attributes of the texts while offering obfuscation and apology in response to their troubling components. For Bogel, exemplary readings of satire mitigate its troubling components, thus allowing the reader to continue to read “with the grain”; that is, protecting the readerly ego without disturbing the fundamental assumption that reader and satirist must be aligned, however problematic the latter’s aims may be. In Holcomb’s queer reading of Jeeves, we find that what he calls a “perverse” interpretation of Jeeves’s and Bertie’s relationship is, in fact, a strategy which circumvents a need to address Wodehouse’s troubling censure, thus—despite its superficial perversity—protecting the readerly ego and allowing us to continue to read “with the grain”. We continue, per Ahmed, to feel “happiness in proximity to the right objects”. Returning to the Earl F. Bargainnier quotation with which this chapter begins, it is clear that the notion of the “cosy” middlebrow novel (as exemplified for Bargainnier by detective fiction, a matter to which this thesis will return) “owes a great deal to the novels of P.G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh”. This trait, very much akin to the “happiness” Ahmed’s feminist killjoy must combat, is not only noted by critics such as Bargainnier, but created by them. The final manner under discussion with which Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s critical culture is able to defend and celebrate their works is via biographical interpretation of their texts.

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<sup>119</sup> Elka D’hoker and Nicola Humble, “Theorizing the Middlebrow: An Interview with Nicola Humble”, *Interférences Littéraires-Literaire Interferenties* Vol. 7 (November 2011), p. 260.

The lives of Wodehouse and Waugh hold a peculiar fascination among scholars of both writers. As Milthorpe notes, “typically, large-scale studies of Waugh take a strongly biographical line”,<sup>120</sup> and this trend continues as recently as 2016 with its publication of Ann Pasternak Slater’s *Evelyn Waugh* (2016), a text which engages heavily with what Slater considers autobiographical elements of his work. Interest in Wodehouse’s life stems predominantly, perhaps, from the controversy surrounding his internment and the circumstances of his release during the Second World War. The 2013 biopic *Wodehouse in Exile* is a testament to this interest (and it is worth noting, as a brief aside, that Zoë Wanamaker portrays a sharp and domineering Ethel Wodehouse in this work: hardly surprising, given the interests of this thesis). In terms of antifeminist satire, however, criticism of a strongly biographical slant can only serve to obfuscate it still further, thus defending the ‘cosiness’ and ‘pleasure’ associated with these writers. Just as middlebrow scholarship’s interest in the former half of the twentieth century is a limited context for works which draw upon the ancient rhetorical strategies associated with antifeminist satire, this sentiment applies tenfold towards a biographical understanding of these writers’ depiction of women and other problematic subjects. By insisting upon the biographical significance of these writers’ satiric targets, they are consigned to small-scale ephemera; the critic prevents the extrapolation necessary to distinguish satires based upon “persisting [...] sentiments”<sup>121</sup> versus those which “fade from public consciousness”<sup>122</sup> and, consequently, troubling satire is obscured. As Wyndham Lewis suggests, satire of note is best represented, not through characters who are mere biographical analogues—Brenda Last standing in for Waugh’s adulterous first wife, for example—but through “characters as embodied ideas”, sufficiently detached from reality as to constitute a “symbolic company”.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, of course, the biographical stance has the secondary effect of

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<sup>120</sup> Milthorpe, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> Northrop Frye, “The Nature of Satire,” *The University of Toronto Quarterly* Vol. 14, No. 1 (October 1944), p. 78, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/article/551010/pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> John T. Gilmore, *Satire* (Oxon: Routledge 2018), p. 5. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>123</sup> Lewis, p. 50.

minimizing any negative impression of these writers that their problematic satires may promote, providing a sympathetic construction of the satirist and factors which, in the hands of the right critic, function as mitigatory. Two particularly illustrative, albeit brief, examples of this phenomenon are Hitchens's article on Wodehouse and homophobia, and Jacqueline McDonnell's study of Waugh's relationship to women.

Christopher Hitchens offers a minor, yet telling, insight into the biographical practice of dealing with Wodehouse in his article, "The Honourable Schoolboy". Hitchens theorises that Wodehouse's works share certain similarities with Wilde's, and that Wodehouse was likely to have seen plays such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* in his formative years. Consequently, for a time, Hitchens was convinced that the lack of overt allusion to Wilde in the bulk of Wodehouse's *oeuvre* was due to a latent disapproval of homosexuality. Hitchens goes on to explain that, retrospectively, he came to regard this view as "simple minded" on the strength of evidence from Robert McCrum's biography of Wodehouse, in which it is mentioned that Wodehouse would occasionally stay in the house of a "militantly gay" cousin. From McCrum, Hitchens learned that "the most Wodehouse could be induced to say of this relative was that he was 'a weird bird.'"<sup>124</sup> This is the conclusion Hitchens draws, in spite of evidence that in his private correspondence, Wodehouse was "disobliging" towards gay people. Such a detail is just as valid, if not more, than this anecdote from McCrum as a method of divining Wodehouse's true thoughts on homosexuality, yet it is rejected on no other grounds than the anecdote's more palatable construction of Wodehouse. This thesis is not concerned with the possibility of Wodehouse's homophobia. Hitchens's criticism is, however, indicative of a tendency among

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<sup>124</sup> Christopher Hitchens, "The Honorable Schoolboy", [theatlantic.com](http://theatlantic.com)  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/11/the-honorable-schoolboy/303563/> [accessed 10 October 2017]

scholars of Wodehouse and Waugh to believe that no particular moral controversy is discernible in their work; to preserve the “cosiness” identified by Bargainnier.

Jacqueline McDonnell’s *Waugh on Women*, meanwhile, is entirely overt with regards to the negative portrayals of women offered in Waugh’s texts, suggesting that Waugh “makes it quite clear that the female mind is inadequate”, going so far as to suggest that “for serious conversation and intellectual thought one needs the company of men”.<sup>125</sup> She also cites Christopher Sykes’s claim that all Waugh’s “attractive women ha[ve] been bitches or idiots or both”. Though these acknowledgements are franker than those offered by many, they are immediately problematized by the biographical nature of *Waugh on Women*. This text “uses a great deal of biographical material” which McDonnell believes is “necessary to the understanding of the women characters, and also to show that Waugh was not, as has been contended, a pure fantasist”.<sup>126</sup> However, the text immediately assumes the stance of the apologist: “his love for his mother was very special and he invented his own language of love to communicate with her”.<sup>127</sup> Such apology effectively bookends the text, in fact, as McDonnell suggests that, in the face of Waugh’s misogyny, we should feel “pity” and “despair”<sup>128</sup> for him, as opposed to the less sympathetic reactions Waugh might inspire in us. By seeking comparison between the female characters of Waugh’s texts and the real-life women he knew, the critic strips these texts of their power to make broader statements about (or, by extension, satirical attacks upon) women in broader terms. The attack is limited only to, for example, Evelyn Gardner’s affair which, as Waugh noted, coincided with *Vile Bodies’* transition “from gaiety to bitterness”.<sup>129</sup> This phenomenon is taken to greater extremes still in Ann Slater’s recent Waugh study, in which two details among the many which comprise “the regular traffic between life and art”<sup>130</sup> are particularly illuminating. Pasternak Slater notes that “the

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<sup>125</sup> McDonnell, p. 89.

<sup>126</sup> McDonnell, “Preface”, n. pag.

<sup>127</sup> McDonnell, p. 1

<sup>128</sup> McDonnell, p. 214.

<sup>129</sup> McDonnell, p. 14

<sup>130</sup> Ann Pasternak Slater, Evelyn Waugh (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2016), p. 2.

current consensus is that Waugh's marriage broke down halfway through the composition of chapter 6”<sup>131</sup> of *Vile Bodies* (1930). That Waugh's works are so scoured for the reverberations of his personal life is highly indicative of an inability for criticism to detach the two sufficiently to read satirical attack on a wider scale, and this is reflected in *The Guardian*'s review of Pasternak Slater's study. Per the reviewer, “*A Handful of Dust* is a sustained act of revenge against Waugh's first wife, Evelyn Gardner, and her shocking desertion of him. Even the pretentious title can't disguise the fact”.<sup>132</sup> Once biographical reading becomes a given, it is difficult to separate a personal act of vengeance from a broader satiric attack. Pasternak Slater also cites one of Waugh's post-war servants who claimed Waugh made her feel “welcome” which, for this critic, constitutes “the best answer to accusations of snobbery”<sup>133</sup> on Waugh's part. Like Hitchens, one biographical anecdote is sufficient to quell criticism of her subject, and her use of the term “best” strongly points to a disapproval of any non-reverential tone towards these figures.

One of the more effective arguments against treating these writers in such a limited biographical context comes (via Frances Donaldson) from Waugh himself, whom Donaldson cites in her discussion of Wodehouse's aunts. Just as Waugh's antifeminism is stunted by a somewhat facile association with his personal experiences, Donaldson notes that Wodehouse's pejorative depiction of aunts are commonly associated with Wodehouse's own aunts, an idea she rightly derides as “patently absurd”,<sup>134</sup> while Waugh himself notes that Wodehouse's creations are the product of “pure fancy”<sup>135</sup>. The freeing capacity of rejecting a purely biographical criticism is immediately apparent when the context in which these satirists wrote is widened, particularly if we return, once again, to the tradition of satirical antifeminism. John T. Gilmore's recent study of

<sup>131</sup> Slater, p. 20.

<sup>132</sup> William Boyd, “Evelyn Waugh by Ann Pasternak Slater and Evelyn Waugh by Philip Eade – review”, *The Guardian*, 27 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/27/evelyn-waugh-ann-pasternak-slater-life-revisited-philip-eade-william-boyd>

<sup>133</sup> Slater, p. 313.

<sup>134</sup> Donaldson, p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> Donaldson, p. 13.

satire touches, for example, on the tradition of turning Biblical allusion to the use of satire against women. Citing a misogynistic poem by John Owen, which uses the story of Job to satirize women by lamenting the fact that God took Job's children but left him his wife, Gilmore notes the significance of taking "an existing literary work" as a "starting point".<sup>136</sup> He goes on to explain that Owen "adapts his source to his purpose by selection and distortion".<sup>137</sup> While the original Biblical source does not make any particular statement about women, "Owen [...] adapts it to reinforce a misogynistic stereotype about the wretchedness the married state inflicts upon the husband".<sup>138</sup> With this facet of misogynistic satire in mind, and broadening the context of Wodehouse's work beyond how he may have felt about his aunts, satirical significance is swiftly imbued in Bertie's lament for Corky's uncle, who is forced to endure her help around his house:

She tidies his study, no doubt? [...] Straightens his tie? [...] And tells him he smokes too much, and every time he gets comfortably settled in an armchair boots him out of it so that she can smooth the cushions. He must be feeling as if he were living in the book of Revelations.<sup>139</sup>

The Book of Revelations deals in apocalyptic subject matter, which Wodehouse, like Owen, "adapts" to reinforce a "misogynistic stereotype", using hyperbole typical of satiric censure. This is far from an isolated example. In the same text, *The Mating Season*, Bertie—referring, again, to Corky—states that "She smiled in a steely sort of way, like one of those women in the Old Testament who used to go about driving spikes into people's heads".<sup>140</sup> This is a reference to Jael, a heroic figure in the Biblical tradition, once again corrupted for antifeminist purpose. Wodehouse follows a venerable (albeit unpalatable) literary tradition here far beyond the constraints of his lifetime—or his Aunt Mary. Waugh writes in the same tradition (as will be discussed in the

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<sup>136</sup> Gilmore, p. 129.

<sup>137</sup> Gilmore, p. 129.

<sup>138</sup> Gilmore, p. 130.

<sup>139</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 10.

<sup>140</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 126.

following chapter, the eponymous “Fall” of *Decline and Fall* can be read as a reference to both Paul Pennyfeather’s incarceration at the hand of Margot and the Fall of Man) yet even references to such traditions are unnecessary in the pursuit of widening the context of his work beyond the biographical. As he describes Margot preparing to interview prostitutes (unbeknownst to Paul) to further her white-slave trade, we learn that she is “the very embodiment of the Feminist movement”.<sup>141</sup> Clearly, there is an expectation of extrapolation inherent in Margot’s character; in her sexual freedom, immoral business practice, and architectural desecration, Waugh conjures a point of connection, not with any individual woman of his acquaintance, but with “the Feminist movement” itself.

This biographical impulse is the final method, then, of critical obfuscation by which the antifeminist satire of these writers has been able to insidiously endure and proliferate. To return to Waugh’s statement on the “fatuous” assumption that Wodehouse’s characters are drawn from his own experiences, his final remarks are worthy of note:

There are horrific aunts in plenty, but they are not the aunts of ‘Saki’ Munro. All, whatever the delinquencies attributed to them, exist in a world of pristine paradisal innocence. For Mr Wodehouse there has been no fall of Man; no ‘aboriginal calamity’. His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden.<sup>142</sup>

Not only does Waugh argue for the existence of “horrific aunts” without the stipulation that they be considered only with regards to Wodehouse’s upbringing, but in doing so he invokes a sense of the Utopian which, as the following chapter will argue, is used by both writers to advance their respective antifeminist attacks.

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<sup>141</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 192.

<sup>142</sup> Donaldson, p. 13.

## Chapter II

### **“Beware the vengeance of the maiden aunts!”: The Satiric Inhabitation of Utopian Impulse, Inverted Romance and Holmesian Homage**

Satire is often considered parasitic. Connery and Combe state that satire inhabits “the forms of other genres”,<sup>143</sup> while Griffin suggests, when it comes to most literary forms, that satire overwhelms that form: the song and epic “find themselves invaded and parodically subverted by satire: the parasite overwhelms the host”. The novel itself, however, is not this way: “What satire wants to do can generally be done within the generous confines of the novel without disturbing its economy (Evelyn Waugh’s comic novels may be thought of as a limiting case, and in them “novel” may be swallowed up in “satire”)<sup>144</sup>. This differentiation between Waugh and other novelists resonates with Knight’s discussion of the satiric novel versus novelistic satire. Like Griffin, Knight identifies *Decline and Fall* as a representative example of the latter, though he is quick to note that “the distinctions between the two are approximate and subjective, depending in large part on how the generic energies of the text strike a particular reader in a particular reading”.<sup>145</sup> With this subjectivism in mind, Chapter II does not attempt to argue whether the Jeeves texts and Waugh’s early novels should be considered satiric novels or novelistic satires but, rather, demonstrates by way of comparison the similar targets and methods of satiric attack common to each writer. In so doing, as the Introduction mentions, I aim to establish Wodehouse’s satiric credentials: if he and Waugh operate similarly in terms of style and content, and if Waugh is so pre-eminent a satirist that his works may constitute the sole example of satire overwhelming the novel, the Jeeves texts

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<sup>143</sup> Connery and Combe, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p. 4. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>145</sup> Knight, p. 14.

must, therefore, contain the satiric impulse. This chapter attempts to trace the presence of this satiric impulse by identifying a key trait of satire as an “exploiter of other genres”.<sup>146</sup> Though satire may be largely incapable of “overwhelming” the novel itself, I argue instead that the satiric impulse here inhabits the genre fiction Wodehouse and Waugh gesture towards under the broad umbrella of the novel. As John R. Clark has it, “Satirists have always sought to parody [...] traditional literary and popular genres—romance, apologia, Bildungsroman, confession, detective mystery”.<sup>147</sup> In this vein, Chapter II argues that detective fiction, inverted romance, and a utopian impulse are variously present throughout these novels, each one host to a satiric parasite which “hijacks”,<sup>148</sup> as Milthorpe has it, their qualities. This technique is occasionally used to “lampoon”, occasionally to obscure the overt presence of satiric censure, but always advances the satirical antifeminism present throughout, both by attacking these genres themselves and using them to lash out further at the notion of the emancipated woman, further steeping their antifeminism in subtlety; in so doing, the satirist becomes—to use Christiane Bohnert’s term—“invisible”.<sup>149</sup>

Like satire itself, these three genres are associated with morality and didacticism, thus continuing to associate the satiric impulse within these texts—and the antifeminist direction of that impulse—with a morally upstanding undertone. In terms of detective fiction, Winks cites Green, who argues that detective novels “give us a detailed scrutiny of [...] civilization by a highly moral and highly observant mind”.<sup>150</sup> Catherine Roach gestures towards

<sup>146</sup> Knight, p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> John R. Clark, *The Modern Satiric Grotesque and Its Traditions* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1991) p. 27. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>148</sup> Milthorpe, p. 10.

<sup>149</sup> Christiane Bonhert, “Early Modern Complex Satire and the Satiric Novel: Genre and Cultural Transposition” in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* ed. Connery and Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p. 160.

<sup>150</sup> Robin W. Winks, “Introduction” in *Detective Fiction*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 2.

didacticism in her assertion that the “love plot” of the romance novel “teaches”,<sup>151</sup> while Booker notes the “satirical dimension” of dystopian fiction.<sup>152</sup> Not only does this argument of inhabitation strengthen the case for considering these texts antifeminist satires but, perhaps counter-intuitively, it simultaneously offers a further explanation as to why this facet of the satiric impulse goes unnoticed in the critical culture covered in the previous chapter. Through its power of inhabitation, the antifeminist censure noted in this chapter is effectively obscured by the various novelistic genres at its disposal. This chapter takes its cues from Thompson’s *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes*, in which she points to “Wodehouse’s general formula of combining a detective-story structure with an inverted romance plot”,<sup>153</sup> establishing two of the genres in question and prompting the antifeminist implications of associating Jeeves with Holmes. Chapter II also interrogates the romantic inversion present in Wodehouse and Waugh, exploring the satiric possibilities in attacking a genre with, per Catherine Roach, great emancipatory potential. Initially, however, this chapter explores the satiric inhabitation of a utopian impulse which permeates both Wodehouse and Waugh, considering the notion of women as a disruptive element of the utopian visions which subtly govern each text. By briefly exploring multiple sites of antifeminist satire, this chapter will give an indication of how widespread the antifeminism of these writers is, the variety of attacks parasitic inhabitation afford it, and how necessarily subtle these genre masks are in order for the antifeminist satire to have survived the better part of a century or longer without significant scholarly or commercial interrogation.

## **Utopia and Dystopia**

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<sup>151</sup> Catherine Roach, "Journal of Popular Romance Studies," Journal of Popular Romance Studies RSS, accessed December 31, 2017, <http://jprstudies.org/2010/08/getting-a-good-man-to-love-popular-romance-fiction-and-the-problem-of-patriarchy-by-catherine-roach/>.

<sup>152</sup> M. Keith Booker, “Dystopian Fiction” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005) p. 127.

<sup>153</sup> Thompson, p. 159.

The Arrow Books editions of the Jeeves novels indicate, through their use of paratextual quotation, the utopian potential inherent therein. Chief among them is Stephen Fry, who states: “You don't analyse such sunlit perfection, you just bask in its warmth and splendour”. Fry presents us with a Wodehouse immune to analysis which, of course, offers a further explanation for the insidiousness of his satire, but Fry also presents us with a reading of his own: Wodehouse's novels constitute “sunlit perfection”. Other quotations include Waugh himself describing Wodehouse's “idyllic world”, Susan Hill's “his world is perfect”, and Marian Keyes's firm assertion that “nothing bad ever happens in P.G. Wodehouse land. Or even if it does, it's always sorted out by the end of the book”.<sup>154</sup> While these novels do not constitute true utopian fictions, “all fiction, by projecting a world that is different from the real, physical one, has a potential utopian component”,<sup>155</sup> and it is this component, alongside its satiric potential, which bears closer analysis. As Kate Macdonald suggests, Wodehouse creates “a ‘world’ into which the reader enter[s] gladly”.<sup>156</sup> In order to create this “Elysium”,<sup>157</sup> in order to—as Keyes has it—ensure that the “bad” is “sorted out”, Wodehouse must remove women as a threat. To reach the end of the novel, that most implicitly utopian structural element of his novels (per Keyes), he must, in fact, remove women altogether. A reader may be forgiven for assuming that a utopian component is not to be found in the bleaker satiric vision of Evelyn Waugh, but in the context of antifeminism, it is both present and used to similar effect: Chris Ferns posits that “utopia embodies the longstanding human dream of a return to paradise”.<sup>158</sup> The eponymous “Fall” of Paul Pennyfeather, precipitated by the carnal knowledge granted him by a woman, causes an imprisonment analogous to the

<sup>154</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (London: Arrow Books 2008), n. pag. All future references will be to this edition.

<sup>155</sup> Booker, “Utopia and Dystopia”, p. 624.

<sup>156</sup> Kate Macdonald, “Problematic Menswear in P.G. Wodehouse and Dornford Yates” in Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016) p. 231.

<sup>157</sup> Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), p. 25. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>158</sup> C. S. Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp. 4-5. All further references will be to this edition.

Biblical Fall of Man (a centuries-old allusion in antifeminist satire, as Nussbaum notes: “Restoration satirists most frequently trace the ‘history’ of women’s pride and lust to its source in Genesis”<sup>159</sup>), heavily suggesting that for Waugh, as for Wodehouse, paradise is not attainable in the presence of women. In the absence of the emancipated woman lies the antifeminist utopia.

“What Angelika Bammer describes as the ‘rudimentary plot’ [of utopian literature] takes the form of a narrative which ‘begins as the narrator/protagonist leaves his world to visit utopia and … ends when he leaves utopia to return home’”<sup>160</sup>. As we shall see with regards to romance, the relationship between these writers and utopia is inverted in nature: Bertie Wooster and Paul Pennyfeather already exist in a state of relative bliss and return to it by the end of their respective novels; as Kreitner has it, Jeeves novels begin “with a scene of domestic peace followed [...] by a note of foreboding”.<sup>161</sup> Utopian fiction and satire are highly compatible, each being predicated upon a critique of the conditions in which they are created. Chris Ferns explores the difficulty of doing this in the context of utopia, suggesting that

its aspirations are both political (to convince the reader of the desirability of its particular social vision) and aesthetic (to do so in an artistically convincing manner). And in trying to do two things at once, it often succeeds in doing neither: the utopian vision is dismissed by political theorists as naïvely impractical, and by the literary critics as bad art.<sup>162</sup>

Connery and Combe note a comparable issue surrounding satire, observing that “satire insists on its efficacy, its ability to chasten, chastise, reform, and warn”, and suggesting that this is incompatible with “the reign of the New Critics”, hence its relative neglect during the mid-

<sup>159</sup> Nussbaum, p. 24.

<sup>160</sup> Ferns, p. 13

<sup>161</sup> Kenneth Kreitner, “Wooster the Musician” in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse’s Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 153.

<sup>162</sup> Ferns, p. 5.

twentieth century. Robert C. Elliott could only render satire “worthy of critical analysis”, Connery and Combe observe, once it had become art, “exactly at the moment when the belief in its efficacy is extinguished”,<sup>163</sup> as the Conclusion of this thesis will discuss. This tension is also present in the middlebrow classification of literature in which Wodehouse and Waugh find themselves. John Baxendale points to the oppositional opinions of Virginia Woolf and H.G. Wells:

Woolf criticized [Edwardian novelists] for being mainly interested in externals such as social conditions [...] leaving the reader with ‘a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction’ which could be dealt with only by doing something: joining a society, or writing a cheque. But for some writers this was exactly what novels were for [...] Wells asserted the exactly opposite view from Woolf’s: that literature was not an end in itself but a means to an end, and then declared that he himself would rather be called a journalist than an artist.<sup>164</sup>

In short, a concatenation of elements come to a head in the invocation of utopia these texts offer. Satire, utopianism and the middlebrow have been considered, historically, unworthy of study due to a lack of artistic quality, their supra-literary interests rendering the texts more akin, as Wells has it, to journalism than art. We shall return to the thorny issue of satire’s efficacy. What this concatenation denotes in terms of antifeminist satire, however, is an extraordinary set of circumstances in which antifeminist satire can remain insidious and undetected. The antifeminism of Wodehouse and Waugh is masked by a utopianism considered “bad art”, within the confines of middlebrow comic novels which cannot compare (per the hitherto restrictive view of the Academy) to the aesthetic heights of modernism. Moreover, even if such satire were recognized in a literary-critical context, it is necessarily stripped of its power, including any potential power to harm—a notion I shall later question.

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<sup>163</sup> Connery and Combe, p. 5.

<sup>164</sup> Baxendale, p. 14.

Having established an inverted utopian frame, the events which constitute the bulk of the novels themselves do not take place in a utopian setting but, rather, depict a world in which oppressive women hold more power than the male protagonist, casting the protagonist as a victim of the dominant women in their respective worlds in a manner consistent with Macdonald's observations on the context of such masculine middlebrow works: "The social, political and intellectual dominance of the male in the Edwardian period was experiencing resistance from a femininity that was potentially even stronger than the male."<sup>165</sup> As a consequence, the satiric antifeminism inhabiting these texts does not only evoke utopia, but its dystopian counterpart, a notion entirely in keeping with "the satirist's permanent *mythos* [which] postulates and dramatizes the sad tale that his culture is in discombobulation and decay".<sup>166</sup> Keith M. Booker suggests that "dystopian literature is not so much a specific genre as a particular kind of oppositional and critical energy or spirit. Indeed, any number of literary works (especially modern ones) can be seen to contain dystopian energies". Though this justifies a reading of these texts through the lens of a satiric inhabitation of such "dystopian energies", it would be equally justifiable to suggest Booker's term is a little imprecise. His only criterion for the presence of "dystopian energies" is "an element of social or political criticism"<sup>167</sup> which, as Artur Blaim rightly notes, "turn[s] every text into a dystopia",<sup>168</sup> running the risk of devaluing the term. Blaim goes on to cite Chloe Houston, who suggests that it is possible for a text such as *Gulliver's Travels* to contain "images of and interactions with ideas of utopia and dystopia", while being "neither a utopia [...] nor a

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<sup>165</sup> Kate Macdonald, "Introduction: Identifying the Middlebrow, the Masculine and Mr Miniver" in *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read* ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 12.

<sup>166</sup> John R. Clark, "Vapid Voices and Sleazy Styles" in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* ed. Connery and Combe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 21.

<sup>167</sup> Keith M. Booker, *Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> Artur Blaim, "Hell upon a Hill" in, *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, ed. Fátima Vieira (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 81. All further references will be to this edition.

dystopia".<sup>169</sup> Like Booker, Houston advances a notion that there are degrees of engagement with utopia and dystopia. To argue, therefore, that the matriarchal overtones of these texts are suffused with dystopian "energies" is to locate "images" and "ideas" of dystopia within them. Ferns offers an example of one such dystopian idea in his discussion of those fundamental shifts in literary perception which took place in the early-to-mid twentieth century, as traditional utopian vision became dystopian in nature:

The vast majority of utopias written prior to the twentieth century [portray] utopian society as something to be imposed on humanity in its own best interests. To modern eyes, of course, this traditional utopia seems regimented, lacking in freedom [...] To a contemporary of More or Campanella, their more perfect societies offered in fact a great deal of freedom— albeit mainly a freedom from a range of existing constraints, rather than 'individual freedom' as it is currently conceived of in western society.<sup>170</sup>

The tension between the traditional utopia and "individual freedom" as it was understood in the twentieth century caused "a general turn toward the dystopian",<sup>171</sup> and it is this tension with which Wodehouse and Waugh engage (and they are hardly alone in this: "modern satire", per Cunningham, "is uniformly dystopian"<sup>172</sup>) albeit in a far less overt sense than contemporaries such as Huxley, Orwell, and Zamyatin. The notion of losing "individual freedom" in the context of women and marriage conjures dystopian energies which are turned to antifeminist use.

Bertie and Jeeves share the anxiety that marital dominance will restrict their freedom. In the world of Jeeves, marriage is not an institution which puts power "in the hands of men",<sup>173</sup> as Judith Fetterly has it, but in the hands of the emancipated woman, who functions in these texts as what Laura Mooneyham identifies (via Frye) that fundamental component of

<sup>169</sup> Blaim, p. 80.

<sup>170</sup> Ferns, p. 14.

<sup>171</sup> Booker, "Utopian and Dystopian Fiction", p. 625.

<sup>172</sup> Cunningham, p. 423.

<sup>173</sup> Judith Fetterly, "Introduction: On the Politics of Literature" in *Feminisms Redux: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn Warhol-Down and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p.138.

comedy upon which Wodehouse relies: she is an “obstacle”; a “bond” which must be “cut”, allowing the text to move from unhappiness to happiness.<sup>174</sup> The same is equally true of Waugh’s early satires: as McDonnell notes, “He gives his heroines power while causing his heroes to be powerless in some way; and consequently, the heroes are ruled by the actions of the heroines”.<sup>175</sup> It is important to note that, as Dasenbrock avers, utopia and dystopia—what he calls “visionary” satire—constitute a “powerful moral criticism”.<sup>176</sup> Through its inhabitation of this visionary tradition, Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s antifeminism associates itself with the construction of the satirist noted in the Introduction as a highly moral figure who, per Julie Sanders, “rights the wrongs” of their age,<sup>177</sup> thus rendering the satire either insidious (for a moral person would surely not attack women’s basic freedoms) or more persuasive (if the satirist is moral, perhaps feminism should be attacked). It is in this context that the motif of the powerful woman has spanned the entirety of the Jeeves *ouvre*, detectable both in an early short story, in which Honoria Glossop looks upon Bertie in a “proprietary”<sup>178</sup> manner, and in the final novel, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* (1975), in which Vanessa decides to remove and replace Bertie’s name: “I think I shall call you Harold”.<sup>179</sup> This is a clear inversion of what is, in reality, a patriarchal practice. Occasionally, Bertie’s fear of a loss of “individual freedom” through matrimony is overtly stated; *Thank you, Jeeves* (1934) has Bertie describe marriage as “a life sentence”.<sup>180</sup> Dugan correctly asserts that “Jeeves’ word is law; what he says is right”<sup>181</sup>; thus, he ratifies Bertie’s distress by sharing it (Jeeves would

<sup>174</sup> Laura Mooneyham, “Comedy among the Modernists: P. G. Wodehouse and the Anachronism of Comic Form” *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.40, No.1 (April 1994), p. 115.

<sup>175</sup> McDonnell, p. 110.

<sup>176</sup> Dasenbrock, p. 248.

<sup>177</sup> Julie Sanders, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early Modern Drama, 1576–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). p. 156.

<sup>178</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Scoring Off Jeeves” in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 70.

<sup>179</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 70. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>180</sup> P. G. Wodehouse, *Thank you, Jeeves* (London: Arrow Books, 2008), p. 140. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>181</sup> Lawrence Dugan, “Worcestershirewards: Wodehouse and the Baroque” *Connotations*, Vol. 20 (2011) <http://www.connotations.de/article/lawrence-dugan-worcestershirewards-wodehouse-and-the-baroque/>

not be party to emotion borne purely of Bertie's idiocy) observing the freedoms he will lose should Bertie marry: "my experience is that when the wife comes in at the front door the valet of bachelor days goes out at the back".<sup>182</sup> Perhaps the most in-depth picture Bertie paints of patriarchal loss of liberty comes at his reaction to exposition offered by Jeeves, regarding the fact that Madeline Bassett has forced Gussie to become a vegetarian:

I picked up the lighter in a sort of trance. I was aware that Madeline B. was as potty as they come in the matter of stars and rabbits and what happened when fairies blew their wee noses, but I had never dreamed that her goofiness would carry her to such lengths as this. But as the picture rose before my eyes of Gussie at the dinner table picking with clouded brow at what had unquestionably looked like spinach, I knew that his story must be true. No wonder Gussie in agony of spirit had said that Madeline made him sick. Just so might a python at a Zoo have spoken of its keeper, had the latter suddenly started feeding it cheese straws in lieu of the daily rabbit.<sup>183</sup>

Bertie concludes with an analogy, comparing Gussie to a "python at a Zoo" and Madeline to "its keeper". This is entirely in keeping with the fear of a loss of liberty as a result of betrothal or marriage and, as such, contributes to the dystopian energies satirically associated with women throughout these texts. By extension, of course, the vegetarianism itself is likewise associated with a loss of individual freedom; as Bertie notes in a previous passage, Madeline "made"<sup>184</sup> Gussie become a vegetarian. The choice of "python", an overtly priapic image, drives home the androcentric nature of victimhood common to the Jeeves canon. In his betrothal to Madeline, Gussie loses his manhood and Madeline usurps his patriarchal role, a motif to which this chapter will return in relation to the financial hold Rosie M. Banks has over Bingo Little in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* (1940). We also have a repetition of "rabbit", once as an example of the "goofiness" Bertie attributes to Madeline, and once again as the ideal prey for Gussie's "python". The implication is that Gussie should be capable of

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<sup>182</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "Bertie Changes His Mind" in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 692.

<sup>183</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (London: Arrow Books, 2008), p. 55. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>184</sup> *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, p. 54.

defeating and consuming Madeline's "goofy", feminine characteristics; that the woman should sustain him, not capture him. Wodehouse's inversion of the true nature of marriage and betrothal becomes apparent here, but rather than expose the absurdity of the concept, it fuels the satiric dystopian energies of the text, as vegetarianism becomes matriarchal tyranny.

What constitutes fear and analogy for Bertie is the literal fate of Paul Pennyfeather, who, on the eve of his marriage to Margot Beste-Chetwynde, is placed in prison for the prostitution and white slavery business run by Margot herself. Tony Last, protagonist of *A Handful of Dust*, finds himself in "a kind of prison"<sup>185</sup> when his wife's infidelity drives him to become an explorer, doomed to eternally read Dickens to his captor while Brenda Last simply marries again. Marriage, in an imagined society in which women are (subtly, yet incontrovertibly) the dominant sex, strips away the individual freedom of men; thus, from the patriarchal perspective these texts inhabit, associating women's emancipation with dystopia and standing in contrast with the feeling, as implied in the Arrow Books paratext, that there is an idyllic quality—a utopian impulse—to be found in the absence of women. Waugh's later novel, *Love Among the Ruins* (1953), is overtly dystopian, but similar energies are apparent in the denouement of the much earlier *Decline and Fall*. Paul's journey begins and ends with his pleasant life of "honey buns and anchovy toast",<sup>186</sup> in the consummately masculine institution of Oxford University, culminating in the equally androcentric career choice of becoming "ordained".<sup>187</sup> This utopian framing aligns with Bammer's structural outline of the utopia, satirically inverted such that Paul's journey begins and ends in this utopian androcentricity. Individual freedom only prevails with the banishment of women and their associated dystopian energies.

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<sup>185</sup> Reed Way Dasenbrock, "An Absurd Century: Varieties of Satire" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 245.

<sup>186</sup> *Decline and Fall* p. 289.

<sup>187</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 291.

By associating their imagined matriarchal societies with dystopian energies, and by conjuring those energies through engaging with the suspicion twentieth century writers viewed traditional utopian visions, a second line of attack is afforded Wodehouse and Waugh's antifeminist satire. Novels such as *We* (1924) and *Brave New World* (1932) clearly engage with the notion of utopia gone awry due to a lack of "individual freedom", and it is in this tradition that Wodehouse and Waugh follow. However, by associating dystopian energies with women, they implicitly attack feminist utopian fiction. This attack can be traced via comparison with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), a feminist utopia which predates both *Decline and Fall* and the first Jeeves novels. The date of its publication is significant: Jean Pfaelzer suggests that *Herland*, like many feminist utopias, emerged in a context of "significant restructuring of women's social and political roles",<sup>188</sup> with the influence of the First World War and the looming right to vote for certain women in 1918. By the same token, Jeeves first came about circa 1915—three years prior to the beginnings of women receiving the vote—while *Decline and Fall* and the first of the Jeeves novels emerge on or shortly after 1928, a year which saw a large extension of women's voting rights. The "restructuring" of women's roles, a frequent preoccupation with the middlebrow, contextualises this satiric attack which denigrates not only the notion of a society which treats women well but, moreover, constitutes an attack on women's writing, which will be explored in more depth in the coming section on popular romance. The society of women depicted in *Herland* is notable for its depiction of motherhood and its associated love and kinship which, as the narrator discovers, is the driving force which maintains the utopia, and it is in the depiction of mothers offered by Waugh that we gain a sense of the dystopian energies directed at feminist utopias.

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<sup>188</sup> Jean Pfaelzer, "The Changing of the Avant Garde: The Feminist Utopia" *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 15, No. 3 (November 1988), p. 282.

Gilman's narrator relays the story of Herland's founding, which culminates in a virgin birth: "and then the miracle happened—one of these young women bore a child".<sup>189</sup> Engaging in Biblical allusion and the notion of a creation myth resonates, as mentioned previously, with Waugh's own flirtation with such allusion. Like Adam, Paul is tempted by knowledge, which Waugh conflates with sexual consummation through Margot's justification for intercourse: "It's best to make sure, isn't it, darling [...] it may be just an idea of yours that you're in love with me".<sup>190</sup> For Gilman, utopian femininity comes about through Messianic virgin birth which becomes a cause for public celebration. For Waugh, the dystopian inversion of female domination is born in darkness, with the insistence that they "don't turn on the light"<sup>191</sup> and lacking, through Margot's status as a "goddess of sterility",<sup>192</sup> procreative purpose. In a satirical corruption of middlebrow feminism's construction of the New Woman as "a sexual being"<sup>193</sup> in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, such as the characters of Victoria Cross, Margot's promiscuousness is directly linked to her engagement with Paul ("next day Paul and Margot announced their engagement"<sup>194</sup>) and, by extension, further linked to Paul's imprisonment; sex becomes a weapon in Waugh's dystopia, whereas, in Gilman's women, "there was no sex-feeling to appeal to".<sup>195</sup> For Waugh, the attainment of power does not increase the motherliness of women, as is the case in *Herland*, but results in manipulative promiscuity without intent to procreate. This particular dystopian inversion of the feminist utopia is echoed in *A Handful of Dust*. When Brenda Last learns of the death of her son, she briefly assumes the person who has died is her lover, John Beaver. Upon

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<sup>189</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (Sweden: Wisehouse Classics, 2016), p. 43. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>190</sup> *Decline and Fall* p. 183.

<sup>191</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 183.

<sup>192</sup> John Howard Wilson, "The Hero's Misadventure in Decline and Fall", *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 4-7.

<sup>193</sup> Petra Dierkes-Thrun, "Victoria Cross's *Six Chapters of a Man's Life*: Queering Middlebrow Feminism" in *Middlebrow and Gender 1890-1945*, eds. Ehland and Wächter (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), p. 204.

<sup>194</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 183.

<sup>195</sup> *Herland*, p. 68.

realising that it is, in fact, her son who has died, her immediate reaction is one of relief: “Oh thank God”.<sup>196</sup> This is, of course, an overt absence of motherly feeling. Both Margot’s and Brenda’s emancipation lead to moral corruption and promiscuity. The consequent dystopian energy is built in precisely the manner of Waugh’s contemporary dystopian peers during the interwar period, drawing on a “suspicion that, if ‘ideal’ societies could be established at all, this establishment would lead to [...] tyranny”.<sup>197</sup> The tyrannical power of the emancipated woman, established in Bertie’s comparison between Madeline Bassett and a zookeeper, leads to imprisonment in Waugh’s satires and the fear of it in the Jeeves texts. *Herland* depicts the narrator’s imprisonment in terms of benevolence and care, his captured state being both comfortable and transient, whereas Paul and Tony suffer nightmarish treatment as a consequence of their respective partners’ actions.

Wodehouse engages with *Herland* along very similar lines. Indeed, his letters suggest that he was, in turn, the sort of man Gilman is interested in criticizing through her utopian vision. In 1914, one year before the publication of *Herland* and the birth of Jeeves, Wodehouse wrote a letter to Leslie Bradshaw, claiming: “I really believe that, unless you’re in love with her, you can dispense with any woman [...] one’s true friendships are never with them”.<sup>198</sup> This strikes a remarkably similar tone to a remark made by Terry, the more unpleasant of Gilman’s male protagonists: “Here ARE the women—nothing but women, and you admit yourself there’s no trace of a man in the country [...] There’s not only no fun without ‘em—no real sport—no competition”.<sup>199</sup> It is perfectly feasible, therefore, to suppose that Wodehouse would have been hostile towards the notion of a feminist utopia, and nowhere is this more notable than in the depiction of aunts across the Jeeves canon. The aunt

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<sup>196</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011), p. 162. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>197</sup> Booker, “Utopian and Dystopian Fiction”, p. 625.

<sup>198</sup> *A Life in Letters*, p. 89.

<sup>199</sup> *Herland*, p. 44.

is a primary disruptive force in the structure of the Jeeves novels, with Bertie's idyllic existence frequently punctured early in the novel by the unexpected arrival of Aunt Dahlia or an ominous telegram from Aunt Agatha; the aunt is the pinnacle of matriarchal power. It is worth noting an association between aunt and dystopia is inherited in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), in which "cattle prod"-wielding Aunts are a class of women responsible for suppressing handmaidens' liberty.<sup>200</sup> The significance of inhabiting utopia and dystopia in the name of antifeminist satire lies in a notion to which this thesis will repeatedly turn, but especially in the next section of this chapter: if utopian fiction, as this section commences by noting, is believed to "convince the reader of the desirability of its particular social vision", it follows that its inhabitation fulfils the dual functions of overturning the act of persuasion inherent in such works as *Herland*, while replacing them with its own, albeit subtler, vision of an androcentric utopia in which women are best left absent (a notion notable, as we shall see, in Wodehouse's thoughts on women and Sherlock Holmes). There is a dialogic relationship between the feminist utopia of Gilman and the utopian and dystopian qualities of Wodehouse and Waugh, each responding to the ideological positions of the other (though not, for obvious reasons, specifically to one another). *Herland*'s misogynistic Terry is highly displeased with the amount of time he is forced to spend among women who are too old to strike him as sexually appealing, and he is also disturbed by their strength and athleticism. He offers a warning virtually indistinguishable from the sort apt to escape from Bertie Wooster's lips: "Beware the vengeance of the Maiden Aunts!"<sup>201</sup>

## Romance Fiction

If romance is one of—or even the—central cultural narrative(s), with roots stretching into the culture's foundational religious story, and if this narrative is being

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<sup>200</sup> Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (London: Vintage Classics, 2017), p. 14.

<sup>201</sup> *Herland*, p. 45.

experimented with in new and potentially liberatory ways for wider sexual justice, then romance novels are doing deep work for their readers and for the culture. By “deep work,” I mean that this work is partly unconscious [...] operating at the level of both individual psychology and larger socio-cultural dynamics. The purpose of this work, I argue, is to assuage the drag and rub of patriarchy, to try to make up for the costs to a woman’s psyche of living in a culture that is always just a little, at least potentially, in certain ways against her.<sup>202</sup>

Such, according to Catherine Roach, is the power of popular romance. The firm assertion that this genre is capable of influencing “a woman’s psyche”, of affecting change on a “socio-cultural level”, has profound implications in the context of the satiric inhabitation of this genre in the works of Wodehouse and Waugh. In some respects, these are the stakes of this thesis as a whole: not only do I attempt to argue for the existence of antifeminist satire but, moreover, I argue that there are damaging cultural implications inherent in the failure to recognize it. If romance is capable of positive “deep work”, capable of assuaging patriarchal harm, its satiric subversion is capable of inflicting that harm. Roach sets out a powerful argument in favour of the emancipatory and palliative potential for women readers of romantic “mass market genre fiction”. She posits, for example, that “Romance novels help women readers, especially heterosexual women, deal with their essentially paradoxical relationship toward men within a culture still marked by patriarchy and its component threat of violence toward women”.<sup>203</sup> Of course, it is worth noting that some scholars would use such a point to argue that this is not positive: Schaub’s assessment of feminist criticism pertaining to romance cites Greer’s and Radway’s respective condemnations of romance’s recuperative effect and, as such, Greer might refer to this phenomenon as “women cherishing the chains of their bondage”.<sup>204</sup> However, I would argue that Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s satirical inhabitation and subsequent inversion of middlebrow romance fiction, resulting in

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<sup>202</sup> Catherine Roach, "Getting a Good Man to Love: Popular Romance Fiction and the Problem of Patriarchy". *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, Vol. 1.1 (August 4, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Roach, p. 1.

<sup>204</sup> Schaub, p. 127.

the creation of worlds of unpleasant marriage and oppressive matriarchs in which the heterosexual woman is not “marked by patriarchy”, but a dominant force capable of threatening men in various forms, is far more problematic than the failings of romance fiction itself. As Schaub notes, the marriages which end traditional romance novels are “affirmative” moments which champion “the heroine’s freedom”.<sup>205</sup> As the previous section has shown, freedom does not go hand-in-hand with marriage in the case of Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s protagonists. Though their satiric attack does not go so far as to advocate violence against women, by casting men as victims of women, they strip away the “component threat of violence” rightly associated by Roach with patriarchy. In so doing, that satiric impulse which hijacks romance essentially works to undo the “reparative aspect” of romance fiction, replacing it with a palliative for an entirely imagined sense of male victimhood. This false sense of male victimhood, through a combination of the adaptation discussed in Chapter III and a middlebrow tone which, per Schaub, “is so much more like that of contemporary speech than any literary modernist novel” is “more likely to influence today’s readers”,<sup>206</sup> a notion to which this thesis will return.

For Clive E. Hill, the middlebrow is, at least partially, defined by “satire (of the highbrow)”.<sup>207</sup> My subjects do align with this: much of the recent *Middlebrow Wodehouse* examine Wodehouse as a participant of the ‘Battle of the Brows’, while Stannard notes Waugh’s disapproval of “the egotism of the self-consciously *avant-garde*”.<sup>208</sup> The hierarchical divisions within the middlebrow, however (to which this section will swiftly turn), suggest that a more nuanced understanding of different middlebrow categories’ use of satire is required. Thus, it is important to understand these masculine middlebrow works’

<sup>205</sup> Schaub, p. 127.

<sup>206</sup> Schaub, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> Clive E. Hill, “The Evolution of the Masculine Middlebrow: Gissing, Bennett and Priestley” in *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 39.

<sup>208</sup> Martin Stannard, *Evelyn Waugh Volume I: The Early Years, 1903-1939* (London: Flamingo, 1993), p. xviii.

inversions of romance as satire, as opposed to, per Hill, “avoidance”<sup>209</sup> of texts verging on the lowbrow—and by extension, as we shall discuss, active agents in the construction of romance’s identity as somehow ‘lower’. To this end, perhaps the most overt use of satiric inversion lies in Bertie Wooster’s attitude towards marriage. For Roach, the couple coming together in love is part of the central emancipatory message of romance fiction: “you can’t fight patriarchy, lest you be a bad slave and displease your master; but you must fight patriarchy, in the sense of holding out for no less than this perfectly egalitarian master. For while the master here rules, no matter—by the time of the HEA [Happily Ever After], it’s clear he rules to serve and to cherish. And so patriarchy ends. Although he’s in charge, she has him: she owns his heart”. For Bertie and his friends, this notion is antithetical to marriage. Psychologically and materially, the woman is “master”; it is only by serving and cherishing that the husband has a hope of receiving “egalitarian” treatment. Bertie hints at this when Vanessa announces her intention to marry him in *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, convinced that “she would have been starting to mould me and jack up my soul, and I like my soul the way it is”.<sup>210</sup> The collection *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* includes several short stories exploring the marriage of Bertie’s friend Bingo Little to Rosie M. Banks, prominent author of romance fiction (to whom I shall return later in this chapter). As we learn, Rosie is the breadwinner and, therefore, controls Bingo’s money (or, as one Drones member puts it, their marriage has resulted in Rosie “get[ting] above herself and [...] throwing her weight about”<sup>211</sup>). This is hugely significant in the context of inverting Roach’s notion of ending patriarchal dominance through love: Bingo’s previous appearances in the Jeeves stories proper frequently involve Bingo’s dependence upon his uncle for money. Rosie usurps the uncle’s role, installing her matriarchal dominance in place of a patriarchal one, and sets about

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<sup>209</sup> Hill, p. 39.

<sup>210</sup> *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, p. 52.

<sup>211</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Bingo and the Peke Crisis” in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971), p. 8. All further references will be to this edition.

limiting Bingo's activities such as gambling. In fact, the plot of "Comrade Bingo" (1922), prior to his marriage, is driven by the fact that Bingo's uncle, Lord Bittlesham, won't give Bingo much of an allowance because his own finances are now dominated by his new wife: "ever since he married he's been launching out in every direction and economising on *me*".<sup>212</sup> The world of Jeeves is awash with references to the covert dominance of the matriarch; a minor, yet telling, example being the violent Orlo eyeing Bertie in an "Aunt Agatha-esque manner".<sup>213</sup> The terror associated with Orlo's violent tendencies (violence being, as Roach mentions above, a patriarchal trait) can, for Bertie, best be articulated through comparison to Aunt Agatha, a matriarchal figure. This view is reflected in Wodehouse's life: in 1940, he compared one of his Nazi captors to a figure akin to an aunt.<sup>214</sup>

The social position of Margot Beste-Chetwynde in the first of Waugh's "satiric romances"<sup>215</sup> inverts romance as described by Roach even before she brings about Paul's incarceration. The "Happily-Ever-After" of her first marriage was not the consequence of love, but the death of her husband (which, according to Flossie Fagan, she arranged<sup>216</sup>) and, due to Victorian emancipatory litigation such as the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, Margot was able to inherit his wealth and property. It is difficult to imagine a concept further from egalitarianism than one party being alive and the other dead. Further, the aforementioned Biblical allusion (which is, per Gilmore as cited in Chapter I, an established satirical strategy) inherent in the title of the novel is, itself, a satirical inversion of what Roach considers "the romance narrative within the Christian religious story". She argues that "'Find your one true love and live happily ever after' is one way to describe the narrative content of Christian theology, of the ideal relationship between the believer and the One True Love of

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<sup>212</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "Comrade Bingo" in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 216.

<sup>213</sup> *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, p. 58.

<sup>214</sup> McCrum, p. 288.

<sup>215</sup> Carens, p. xii.

<sup>216</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 61.

Christ the Son or the Christian Father God".<sup>217</sup> Waugh's use of the word "Fall" in the title, however, is suggestive of the Fall of Man, a story in which the love between Adam and Eve, and the encouragement the latter offers the former, results in being cast out from paradise (an early example, perhaps, of women disrupting a Utopian vision, as outlined above). Love, in *Decline and Fall*, does not draw upon those aspects of Christianity pertinent to salvation but, rather, of damnation. By satirically inhabiting the religious component of romance, Waugh's satire is able to harness the "omnipresence and cultural power" of those entwined concepts, steering them away from any positive impact and, instead, subverting them for the purposes of antifeminist attack.

Unlike those satiric attacks pertaining to detective and utopian fiction, however, Wodehouse and Waugh do not content themselves merely with satirically inhabiting romance to antifeminist effect: they also attack romance fiction itself, alongside the women writers responsible: Waugh, as McDonnell notes, "took great joy in denigrating women novelists"<sup>218</sup> while for Wodehouse, as Ann-Marie Einhaus comments, "lady novelists" are "given short shrift [...] in many of Wodehouse's stories".<sup>219</sup> It is here that their respective satiric impulses shift to a more personal plane. Though women have never been the threat to men implied in the satiric attacks outlined by this thesis thus far, women were a threat, in a commercial sense, to both Wodehouse and Waugh in their capacity as middlebrow writers. While Wodehouse's attacks on highbrow writers have been thoroughly documented by Ann Rea, who considers Wodehouse an active proponent of the "Battle of the Brows",<sup>220</sup> it is in his

<sup>217</sup> Catherine Roach, "'Getting a Good Man to Love: Popular Romance Fiction and the Problem of Patriarchy,'" *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, no. 1.1 (August 4, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>218</sup> McDonnell, p. 214.

<sup>219</sup> Ann-Marie Einhaus, "Know Your Audience: Middlebrow Aesthetic and Literary Positioning in the Fiction of P.G. Wodehouse", in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 29.

<sup>220</sup> Ann Rea, "Reading Up or Curling Up with a Book: Aspiring and Promiscuous Readers in P.G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Bertie Stories" in *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context*, ed. Ann Rea (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 38.

depiction of the middlebrow romance writer that true satirical derision takes hold. Macdonald cites Huyssen in her discussion of the gendering of the middlebrow: “the political, psychological, and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass cultures and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities”.<sup>221</sup> Romance fiction, a middlebrow genre<sup>222</sup> dominated by women writers (and, as Baxendale has it, “predominantly female”<sup>223</sup> readers) is attacked, and with it the redefinition of gender roles and occupation of middlebrow space it represents. Humble points to the feminine middlebrow as a space in which, as mentioned previously in this thesis, “the new woman took on the practicality and emotional control once the province of the male: she was competent, assured and unemotional”, particularly when compared to the “effete and dapper Bertie Wooster”<sup>224</sup> (it is unsurprising, in light of this description of women, that the unemotional brilliance of Jeeves should emerge alongside Bertie as a palliative; a reassuring reclamation of traditional male traits, despite his domestic duties). It is in this template for the new woman that Wodehouse and Waugh base their satiric depictions of threatening, dominant women. The feminine middlebrow not only depicts a woman less susceptible to patriarchal dominance but, moreover, that depiction takes place in a commercial space upon which these writers depend for their living, one which places male middlebrow writers “in danger of emasculation”.<sup>225</sup> Further, as Ehland and Wächter observe in the Introduction to their recent collection, the perceived femininity of the middlebrow traced throughout much scholarship of the subject gives rise to a “stigma” surrounding “female fiction” on the basis

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<sup>221</sup> Kate Macdonald, “Introduction: Identifying the Middlebrow, the Masculine and Mr Miniver” in *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read* ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>222</sup> Baxendale, p. 15.

<sup>223</sup> Baxendale, p. 20.

<sup>224</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 197.

<sup>225</sup> Macdonald, “Introduction”, p. 16.

that “the issues of gender and assumed literary merit are closely associated with one another”.<sup>226</sup> As masculine occupants of the largely feminine middlebrow sphere, Wodehouse and Waugh attack women writers in order to dissociate their own middlebrow works from ostensibly lower-quality middlebrow women’s writing. Victoria Stewart reminds us that, historically, the association between women and the middlebrow was such that “even its male practitioners were ‘commonly referred to as effeminate.’”<sup>227</sup> As such, Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s antifeminist satire is entirely consistent with Bogel’s claim that “satire is not a response to a prior difference but an effort to make a difference, to create distance, between figures whom the satirist—who is one of those figures—perceives to be insufficiently distinguished”.<sup>228</sup> As an aside, I would argue that this satirical effort only serves to complicate Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s attempts to “create distance”: Humble notes that the feminine middlebrow is distinguished from the masculine middlebrow by its greater interest in “the shifting meanings of femininity” versus the masculine interest in “humour”. By using satirical humour to address femininity, however censoriously, Wodehouse and Waugh draw themselves closer to the feminine middlebrow sphere (a “territory” Humble does associate with Waugh).<sup>229</sup> While, as I shall address, these satires may have participated in the devaluation of the feminine middlebrow, it is unclear to what extent Wodehouse and Waugh escape that label themselves. In *Louder and Funnier* (1932), Wodehouse devotes an entire essay to the subject of what he perceives to be the ‘masculine’ genre of the thriller, clearly signposting its distinction from equivalent ‘women’s’ middlebrow romance novels, noting with some disparagement that “the worst of it is that ninety-six out of every hundred

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<sup>226</sup> Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter, “Introduction: ‘...All Granite and Female Fiction’” in *Middlebrow and Gender 1890-1945*, eds. Ehland and Wächter (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016), p. 1.

<sup>227</sup> Victoria Stewart, “The Woman Writer in Mid-Twentieth Century Middlebrow Fiction: Conceptualizing Creativity”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Autumn 2011) p. 22.

<sup>228</sup> Bogel, p. 45.

<sup>229</sup> Elka D’hoker and Nicola Humble, “Theorizing the Middlebrow: An Interview with Nicola Humble”, *Interférences Littéraires-Literaire Interferenties* Vol. 7 (November 2011), p. 263.

[thrillers] contain a heroine and a love story".<sup>230</sup> Such a vitriolic stance is necessary in order to perform that satiric function of, per Bogel, creating "distance"; thus, the thriller is presented as an entirely masculine arena upon which a femininity encroaches: "Who ever first got the idea that any one wants a beastly girl messing about and getting in the way when the automatics are popping I am at a loss to imagine".<sup>231</sup> Wodehouse's primary vehicle of satiric attack upon romance in the world of Jeeves, however, is Rosie M. Banks, popular romance novelist and, latterly, wife of Bingo Little.

The longest citation of Rosie M. Banks's work, one of many "dismissive references to female sentimental novelists,"<sup>232</sup> appears in *The Mating Season*. Relatedly, this particular Jeeves novel provides further evidence of Wodehouse using satire to attack literary peers who have incurred his displeasure. Following the controversy surrounding Wodehouse's notorious Berlin radio broadcasts, erstwhile friend and creator of Winnie the Pooh, A. A. Milne, was a prominent voice in the outcry condemning Wodehouse, erroneously, as a traitor to his country.<sup>233</sup> In a letter to Denis Mackail written in 1945, a few years prior to the publication of *The Mating Season*, Wodehouse wrote: "nobody could be more anxious than myself [...] that Alan Alexander Milne should trip over a loose bootlace and break his bloody neck",<sup>234</sup> a rare instance of cursing in Ratcliffe's collection. It is significant, therefore, that Bertie Wooster's horror at the prospect of Christopher Robin is presented in very similar terms to his horror at the notion of Rosie M. Banks's book, *Mervyn Keene, Clubman*, in the same novel. Upon hearing Madeline Bassett's summary of the plot, Bertie remarks: "I was feeling a bit stunned. I had always known in a sort of vague, general way that Mrs Bingo wrote the world's worst tripe—Bingo generally changes the subject nervously if anyone mentions the little woman's

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<sup>230</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "Thrillers" in *Louder and Funnier* (London: Everyman's Library, 2015), p. 35.

<sup>231</sup> "Thrillers", p. 36.

<sup>232</sup> Einhaus, p. 30.

<sup>233</sup> *A Life in Letters*, p. 311.

<sup>234</sup> *A Life in Letters*, p. 375.

output—but I had never supposed her capable of bilge like this”.<sup>235</sup> Along similar lines, Bertie describes reading Christopher Robin poems as akin to going “over Niagara Falls in a barrel”, while speculating that “a poem in the book about Christopher Robin having ten little toes” would, under normal circumstances, “provoke mob violence”.<sup>236</sup> The similar levels of disdain Wodehouse offers suggests that the middlebrow women’s romance novel is equally as unpalatable to him as a former friend who wished him exiled from Britain. In the short story “Bingo and the Little Woman,” disdain for the female romance novelist is made more apparent than that directed towards Milne. Unlike the rest of this chapter’s interests, this short story shifts from inhabitation to that more overt characteristic of satire: parody. Gilbert Highet, in his *Anatomy of Satire*, defines parody as follows:

Parody is not simply imitation [...] If a copy amuses its hearers and readers, and pleases them with the accuracy of its imitation, but leaves them quite unshaken in their admiration of the original, feeling no scorn for it and seeing no weakness they had not seen before, then it is no parody, and it is not satirical. But if it wounds the original (however slightly), pointing out faults, revealing hidden affectations, emphasizing weaknesses and diminishing strengths, then it is satiric parody.<sup>237</sup>

“Bingo and the Little Woman” (1922) offers an extract from Rosie M. Banks’s work, *The Woman Who Braved All*, in which “weaknesses and diminishing strengths” are entirely emphasized, the hyperbolic presentation of what Wodehouse perceives to be the maudlin style of the lady novelist coming to the fore in parodic prose: “‘What can prevail’—Millicent’s eyes flashed as she faced the stern old man—‘what can prevail against a pure and all-consuming love? Neither principalities or powers, my lord, nor all the puny prohibitions of guardians and parents’”.<sup>238</sup> Not only does this parody ring true in the context of romance novels of the 1920s in which this story was written (Thompson notes Wodehouse’s

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<sup>235</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 170.

<sup>236</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 222.

<sup>237</sup> Highet, p. 68.

<sup>238</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Bingo and the Little Woman” in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 326-7.

relationship to the likes of Ethel M. Dell, “an exponent of the ‘burning kisses’ school of prose, which Wodehouse [...] mocked”<sup>239</sup>) but this parody provides a template of traditional romance fiction compared to which the genre’s satirical inversion is made apparent. The “stern old man” whom the protagonist, Millicent, is attempting to win over is a figure we encounter in many of Bertie’s accidental romantic dalliances—Roderick Glossop, Watkyn Bassett, and J. Washburn Stoker, to name a handful—yet in the world of Bertie Wooster, in which women and marriage are singularly unpleasant, Bertie himself is content to allow such figures as Banks’s fictional “Lord Windermere” to disapprove of him, disrupting this formula to satirically antifeminist effect: marrying a modern woman is far more terrifying than any amount of stern old men. This position is ratified by Jeeves himself, who occasionally invokes the wrath of such men in order to spare Bertie the horrors of matrimony with their daughters, as in the case of “Sir Roderick Comes To Lunch” (1922). In this story, Jeeves gives Roderick Glossop the impression that Bertie is a “looney”,<sup>240</sup> and therefore unsuitable to marry his daughter. Far from standing up to the “Lord Windermere” figure conjured by Wodehouse as the archetypal lovers’ obstacle in romance fiction, Bertie feels “pure relief”<sup>241</sup> at the prospect of such a figure’s disapproval.

The tension between the feminine and masculine middlebrow, as denoted by Wodehouse’s satiric attack on the romance novelist, is by no means limited to the Jeeves canon. A striking example lies in the short story *Honeysuckle Cottage* (1925), in which a writer of masculine, hard-boiled detective fiction finds himself haunted by the spirit of his romance-novelist aunt. As the story progresses, the protagonist finds a female character appearing unbidden in his writing, despite his belief that “a detective story [...] should have

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<sup>239</sup> Thompson, p. 95.

<sup>240</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch” in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 85.

<sup>241</sup> “Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch”, p. 86.

no heroine".<sup>242</sup> As the story progresses, this heroine comes to life, "just the sort of girl [James's aunt] used to write about".<sup>243</sup> James, who, in the tradition of Bertie Wooster, "dislike[s] all girls"<sup>244</sup>, finds himself increasingly terrified by the fact that the supernatural events of the story are forcing him to propose to his heroine-made-flesh:

James Rodman had a congenital fear of matrimony. Though a young man, he had allowed himself to develop a great many habits which were as the breath of life to him; and these habits, he knew instinctively, a wife would shoot to pieces within a week of the end of the honeymoon.<sup>245</sup>

The motif of liberty lost, that aspect of dystopian energy recorded in the former half of this chapter, becomes apparent once again. In this instance, however, it is conjured not merely by the notion of marriage but, in a broader sense, by the power of the romance novel. The threat shifts from page to reality; Wodehouse's satiric attack belies an understanding that the popularity of romance as represented by James's aunt (and the powers of producing the narrative conventions of romance fiction her spirit possesses) is a tangible danger to the freedoms enjoyed by the masculine writer of middlebrow material. The commercial threat represented by the feminine middlebrow could deprive Wodehouse of the means to survive; in that sense, the deprivation of habits which constitute "the breath of life" may not be hyperbolic from the perspective of a writer such as Wodehouse. As James L.W. West notes, "the marketplace"<sup>246</sup> should be considered a factor in the composition of a writer's work. This is, surely, especially true of a satire which targets a commercial threat. *Honeysuckle Cottage* and Rosie M. Banks (the most complimentary description of her mentioning that, in

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<sup>242</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, "Honeysuckle Cottage" in *Meet Mr Mulliner* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), p. 151. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>243</sup> "Honeysuckle Cottage", p. 154.

<sup>244</sup> "Honeysuckle Cottage", p. 153.

<sup>245</sup> "Honeysuckle Cottage", p. 160.

<sup>246</sup> Thompson, p. 11.

s spite of her romance-novelist status, “she was not without a certain rude intelligence”<sup>247</sup>) suggest a motive for an attack on the emancipated woman and the associated opportunities in terms of education and writing such emancipation afford her: she does not threaten Wodehouse and Waugh purely in the abstract sense of male anxiety borne of a slightly crumbling patriarchy but, rather, directly and materially: from their perspectives, women constitute “competition for the ever-expanding audience of readers”<sup>248</sup> which Casey considers a central element of middlebrow literary production. This is particularly true of Wodehouse who was “given [his] first big ‘break’ by Mills & Boon”, a publisher known for its output of predominantly women’s fiction.<sup>249</sup> As with their use of ancient satirical devices, however, this motive for attack is not bound to the twentieth-century context into which these writers are often placed: in Casey’s invocation of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1855 diatribe on the subject of “a damned mob of scribbling women” whose “trash” leave him with “no chance of success”,<sup>250</sup> we find precedent for both the sense of commercial threat and resultant cultural devaluation Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s satires perceive and to which they contribute.

Humble tells us that the feminine middlebrow is representative of “the middle classes” themselves and, as such, were read by “the majority of people [...] their novels made the Book-of-the-Month lists in the newspapers, sold in their tens of thousands in book club editions, and packed the shelves of the lending libraries”.<sup>251</sup> Against this commercial backdrop, it is within the realm of possibility to imagine a writer such as Wodehouse feeling threatened; critics such as Einhaus heavily emphasise the significance he attached to making money: “Whereas Woolf considers money and space as prerequisites for writing, Wodehouse

<sup>247</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Bingo Bans the Bomb” in *Plum Pie* (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton Paperbacks, 1983), p. 106. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>248</sup> Casey, p. 27.

<sup>249</sup> Laura Vivanco, *For Love and Money: The Literary Art of the Harlequin Mills & Boon Romance* (Penrith: Humanities-eBooks LLP, 2011), p. 13.

<sup>250</sup> John T. Frederick, “Hawthorne’s ‘Scribbling Women’”, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1975) p. 231. DOI: 10.2307/364660

<sup>251</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, pp. 2-3.

is ready to embrace writing itself as both the means and the end of obtaining money and space".<sup>252</sup> It is entirely plausible to suppose that a feeling of male minority—or, at least, the threat thereof—might pervade the professional lives of Wodehouse and Waugh against a backdrop of a largely feminine middlebrow. Einhaus goes on to note Wodehouse's gleeful anecdote in which a school library reported far more of Wodehouse's novels stolen than Agatha Christie's.<sup>253</sup> That this anecdote refers to a school library is significant: Schaub notes that her childhood love of Georgette Heyer, and the “deeply passionate emotional attachment reserved for the favourite texts of one’s youth”, likely had more of an influence on her “character” than the “intellectual love of an adult” she feels towards Virginia Woolf.<sup>254</sup> Naturally, these examples are entirely personal and anecdotal, but I believe they constitute a telling microcosm of the implications inherent in allowing troubling middlebrow satire to exist unquestioned: by being as popular, or even more popular, than reparative works like romance fiction, or like Christie's mystery novels (which, per Schaub, “can shape [their] readers into feminists”<sup>255</sup>) while retaining the “deeply passionate emotional attachment” such middlebrow works inspire in formative readers, antifeminist satire can take insidious root in the minds of its readership. Wodehouse's preoccupation with widening his reach, and thereby his profits, is rooted partially in an understanding that women, to some extent, threaten those profits, precipitating a depiction of oppressive women in general, and unpleasant women writers in particular, throughout his fiction. Professional rivalry, then, is as much a factor in the satiric attack of women writers as any broader disapproval of emancipation.

While this inhabitation of romance fiction is, perhaps, one of the more overtly satirical aspects of Wodehouse, Waugh, more commonly associated with satiric vitriol, does

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<sup>252</sup> Einhaus, p. 23.

<sup>253</sup> Einhaus, p. 32.

<sup>254</sup> Schaub, p. 6.

<sup>255</sup> Schaub, p. ix.

not openly attack the romance writer beyond his broad inversion of the romance plot. However, a thread of animosity towards female writers is entirely detectable in both *Vile Bodies* and *Black Mischief*. Nina Blount constitutes a particularly appropriate example, due largely to her association with writing in terms of mass culture. Nina writes an article under the guise of Mr Chatterbox due to Adam's lack of availability, and inadvertently writes about a “green bowler”,<sup>256</sup> a fictional fashion trend on which Adam is forbidden from writing. This precipitates a rare moment of genuine alarm from Adam, who exclaims “Oh, God”,<sup>257</sup> before a futile attempt to retract the article. This disastrous consequence of a woman writing causes Adam to lose his income, rendering marriage impossible. It is significant that the detail in Nina’s writing which causes this issue is found in what Adam calls the “imaginary”<sup>258</sup> portion of the article; fiction, not journalism, is the element of the female writer which brings with it such negative connotations. As Wodehouse’s attack on the romance novelist implies, Waugh directly associates a woman possessing the power to write with a man’s loss of writing revenue. *Jeeves in the Offing* displays a remarkably similar interest in women writing fictive journalism to the detriment of a man’s income. Bobbie Wickham writes a section of Kipper Herring’s review of Aubrey Upjohn’s book in which she makes untrue (and therefore fictional) assertions, leaving Kipper in danger of being sued, getting fired as a consequence and put on the publishers’ “blacklist”.<sup>259</sup> On a somewhat less subtle note, *Black Mischief*’s Prudence Courteney is unable to finish her own piece of writing, *Panorama of Life*. Though this is not a work of fiction, it is implied that eroticism, very much a cousin of romance,

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<sup>256</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 164. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>257</sup> *Vile Bodies*, p. 213.

<sup>258</sup> *Vile Bodies*, p. 213.

<sup>259</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Jeeves in the Offing* (London: Arrow Books, 2008), p. 135. All further references will be to this edition.

forms a fundamental part of the work, and Waugh punishes her for this act of writing accordingly: Basil Seal eats her.<sup>260</sup>

In a wider sense, the punishment Wodehouse and Waugh apply to romance fiction is the contribution such satirical denigration may have had upon the reputation and cultural esteem held by the genre. As Humble notes, “Romance was probably bottom of the pecking order”<sup>261</sup> even in relation to other middlebrow works, and it is entirely plausible to suggest that satire launched by these fellow middlebrows was an active, and destructive, agent in the arena of literary merit. By understanding the satirical disparagement documented in this section as a factor in the cultural devaluation suffered by romance, a picture of antifeminist satire as genuinely deleterious continues to form. To return to the notion introduced by Roach, romance fiction’s ability to “assuage the drag and rub of patriarchy” is inevitably hampered by satirical attacks borne of a supremely patriarchal position. One of the claims sometimes made by satirists, including Waugh himself, is the ability of the mode to produce “shame”.<sup>262</sup> The implicit shame attached to the bottom-of-the-hierarchy women’s fiction—the term ‘guilty pleasure’ is not an unfamiliar one in criticism pertaining to such works—is, surely, not conducive to the palliative work ascribed to it by Roach. Though, as the opening of this section notes, the extent to which romance is capable of assuaging patriarchal damage is up for debate, this chapter is concerned with charting the sheer breadth and variety of antifeminist attacks, and, by extension, the manners in which such attacks could bring about some form of negative impact. I have, arguably, had to sacrifice a certain amount of nuance to the altar of such breadth, but the association between a satirical attack on romance fiction and writers, and the process of cultural devaluation which has consigned such works to the

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<sup>260</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p. 301. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>261</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 14.

<sup>262</sup> Milthorpe, p. 2.

realm of the ‘guilty pleasure’, is a compelling one. This process is particularly notable (and particularly pertinent to this chapter’s interest in demonstrating the vast range and variety of antifeminist attack), per Humble, when romance is compared to detective fiction, which “ranked high as it was the preferred leisure reading of men”.<sup>263</sup> Per Schaub, detective fiction was “both the most popular and the most intellectually respectable”<sup>264</sup> of such genres. On the subject of Sherlock Holmes, Wodehouse makes a telling observation:

What we liked so much about Sherlock Holmes was his correct attitude in this matter of girls. True, he would sometimes permit them to call at Baker Street and tell him about the odd behaviour of their uncles or step-fathers [...] in a pinch he might even allow them to marry Watson [...] but once the story was under way they had to retire to the background and stay there. That was the spirit.<sup>265</sup>

This speaks directly to the “male ideals” put forward by crime novels which, as Jay Dixon suggests, is why they “garner respect”.<sup>266</sup> In their antifeminist satire in general, and their censorious depictions of women writers in particular, Wodehouse and Waugh were able to help create the conditions in which their work was received more favourably than their women counterparts, while simultaneously projecting a false impression of oppressive dominance in terms of literary output in addition to their general, pervasive fiction of women and marriage as the source of male misery. It is no surprise, therefore, that their antifeminist satire also conjures and inhabits elements of detective fiction itself, associating themselves with a ‘superior’ middlebrow genre while drawing heavily upon the delight inherent in works in which, at least as far as Wodehouse is concerned, women are made to “retire to the background and stay there”.

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<sup>263</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 13.

<sup>264</sup> Schaub, p. viii.

<sup>265</sup> *Louder and Funnier*, p. 37.

<sup>266</sup> Jay Dixon, *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon 1909-1990s* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 2.

## Detective Fiction

The observation that the Jeeves stories are heavily influenced by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories requires no great feat of analytic perception, nor has this been undocumented by scholars. Thompson notes that Jeeves "is a close parallel to Holmes, and Bertie resembles Watson in several ways. Jeeves is the problem solver, Bertie the admiring onlooker who records the pair's adventures in what he consistently calls the Wooster 'archives'".<sup>267</sup> However, Wodehouse scholarship, in the tradition identified in the first chapter of this thesis, fails to account for the antifeminist connotations of the satiric inhabitation of Conan Doyle's contribution to the canon of detective fiction. *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (1963) includes a characteristic lament on the subject of women:

the gentler sex love blackmail. Not once but on several occasions has my Aunt Dahlia bent me to her will by threatening that if I didn't play ball she would bar me from her table, thus dashing Anatole's lunches and dinners from my lips. Show me a delicately nurtured female, and I will show you a ruthless Napoleon of Crime prepared without turning a hair to put the screws on some unfortunate male whose services she happens to be in need of. There ought to be a law.<sup>268</sup>

The "Napoleon of Crime" is, of course, a reference to Holmes's nemesis, Professor Moriarty.<sup>269</sup> Not only does this passage gesture towards several features of antifeminist attack already noted throughout Chapter II—the power of women over men in Dahlia's ability to bend Bertie to her will; the tyrannical overtones in the torturous phrase "turning the screws"—but it also suggests that all women resemble what Daniel Smith considers "the first great fictional master criminal",<sup>270</sup> while establishing the notion that women are not constrained by "law". *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* cements the antifeminist role of the Holmesian

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<sup>267</sup> Thompson, p. 105.

<sup>268</sup> *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, p. 81.

<sup>269</sup> Daniel Smith, *The Sherlock Holmes Companion* (London: Aurum Press, 2009), p. 122. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>270</sup> Smith, p. 122.

Jeeves in a similar vein, with a display of intelligence from the aforementioned prompting a telling reaction from Bertie:

It seemed incredible. I felt like Doctor Watson hearing Sherlock Holmes talking about the one hundred and forty-seven varieties of tobacco ash and the time it takes parsley to settle in the butter dish.

‘This is astounding, Jeeves’, I said. ‘Professor Moriarty wouldn’t have lasted a minute with you’.<sup>271</sup>

Wodehouse’s satiric inhabitation of detective fiction (one which he tacitly acknowledges in other works, including a humorous essay in which an admiring ‘fan’, complimenting Wodehouse on his work, has mistaken Wodehouse for the crime writer Edgar Wallace<sup>272</sup>) hinges upon two elements, then: women are associated with crime, and Jeeves with their vanquisher. Thompson comes close to making this association herself, as she notes Jeeves’s mirroring of Holmes’s attempt to outsmart Irene Adler (known by the moniker, incidentally, of “The Woman”): “Jeeves fared better than Holmes did [...] he was bested by The Woman”.<sup>273</sup> Naturally, Jeeves, a patriarchal palliative, cannot be defeated by any woman.

Winks cites Green, who posits that part of the popularity of the detective novel is influenced by the manner in which “they give us a detailed scrutiny of [...] civilization by a highly moral and highly observant mind”.<sup>274</sup> Recent scholarship has worried this arguably reductive understanding of “highly moral” detective fiction protagonists in general and Holmes in particular: Clare Clarke notes that the late Victorian crime genre is not “unproblematically [...] reassuring”, and that Holmes is not the clear-cut beacon of lawful morality the scholarly tradition surrounding him tends to assume. However, she does not

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<sup>271</sup> *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, p. 37.

<sup>272</sup> *Louder and Funnier*, p. 33.

<sup>273</sup> Thompson, p. 113.

<sup>274</sup> Robin W. Winks, “Introduction” in *Detective Fiction*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 2

dispute that, to some extent, Holmes constitutes “the guardian of the moral principles by which society should operate”.<sup>275</sup> The notion of Jeeves, as the detective figure, possessing a “highly moral” mind is demonstrative of the fundamental compatibility between the detective fiction genre and the moralism of its associated satiric parasite. In an essay in the same collection, W. H. Auden makes a similar observation with regards to Holmes himself, who exists in a “state of grace”.<sup>276</sup> Like the satirist’s “implicit claims to moral authority”,<sup>277</sup> Jeeves, by association with Holmes, is placed in a privileged moral position. By extension, the antifeminist satire for which he is a vehicle is suffused with “the principles by which society should operate”, while the actions of the women he regularly defeats are not. Joseph Kestner suggests that Holmesian criminals are people who have “turned aside from their proper roles”.<sup>278</sup> In the context of middlebrow literature deeply concerned with the fluctuation of gender roles, it is unsurprising that the antifeminist impulse should find a home within this “classically [...] masculine” genre.<sup>279</sup> The satiric inhabitation of detective fiction does not merely provide another avenue for satiric attack, but it actively provides a sense of the moral necessity for that attack; a desire to restore the “social balance” which the “crime” of feminism has “upset”.<sup>280</sup>

The association between women and crime is equally established in Waugh’s works. As McDonnell notes, both *A Handful of Dust* and *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957) describe women’s speech as “thieves’ slang”.<sup>281</sup> A more extended understanding of women

<sup>275</sup> Clare Clarke, *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 8. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>276</sup> W.H. Auden, “The Guilty Vicarage” in Detective Fiction, ed. Robin W. Winks (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 21.

<sup>277</sup> Greenberg, p. 54.

<sup>278</sup> Joseph A. Kestner, *Sherlock’s Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) p. 17.

<sup>279</sup> Marty Roth, *Foul and Fair Play: Reading Genre in Classic Detective Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. xiii. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>280</sup> Kestner, p. 12.

<sup>281</sup> McDonnell, p. 205.

and crime is, of course, *Decline and Fall* and its depiction of Margot Beste-Chetwynde. The chapter “Interlude in Belgravia”, mentioned briefly in Chapter I of this thesis, humanises the previously simplistic character of Paul Pennyfeather, who becomes “an intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted young man”, one who can be “trusted”.<sup>282</sup> Waugh here makes use of a characteristic of the “satiric novel” noted by Bohnert: “It (ab)uses the readers’ sympathy for the hero to manipulate them into accepting the satire’s premises”.<sup>283</sup> In this chapter (its title itself somewhat Holmesian in nature, recalling “Scandal in Bohemia”, the story in which Holmes is defeated by The Woman) Waugh begins a process which transforms Paul Pennyfeather from an *ingenu* literary device to a person who is innocent in the more literal sense of the term: he has not committed any crime. This process concludes with the judge’s remark on the occasion of Paul’s criminal trial:

no one could be ignorant of the callous insolence with which, on the very eve of arrest of this most infamous of crimes, the accused had been preparing to join his name with one honoured in his country’s history, and to drag down to his own pitiable depths of depravity a lady of beauty, rank and stainless reputation.<sup>284</sup>

As with the attack on romance writers, what is implied in Wodehouse becomes overt in Waugh: Margot Beste-Chetwynde is a blatant criminal, and the above passage is a satirical representation of men suffering for the crimes of women. Waugh draws upon the association between women and crime, in a Holmesian chapter, to offer a rare occasion in which his detached and apparently amoral world is punctured by a hint of genuine *pathos* towards Paul Pennyfeather. The detective figure of Paul’s “unshakeable” friend, Potts, who so ably produces the evidence necessary to indict Paul, plays with the power of the detective as what

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<sup>282</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 162.

<sup>283</sup> Bohnert, p. 168.

<sup>284</sup> *Decline and Fall*, p. 216.

Stephen Knight calls a “moral” evaluator.<sup>285</sup> Auden suggests that “the identification of the criminal is subordinate to the defeat of his criminal designs”.<sup>286</sup> By Potts’s failure to wield his power as a moral evaluator by condemning the innocent Paul, Waugh worries that fundamental element of detective fiction: the defeat of criminal designs. While Wodehouse offers hope of the defeat of women and the criminality their emancipation embodies, Waugh characteristically does not, harkening back to the tyranny associated with dystopian energy: such is the power of the woman, she cannot be held accountable for her crimes; Paul, therefore, is not only punished for her crimes, but for the patriarchal crime of allowing women to gain such power and influence. Milthorpe argues that it is Paul’s “tolerance” of drunkenness which “leads to his expulsion from Oxford, imprisonment in Blackstone, and (staged) death at the hands of a drunkard”. For Milthorpe, *Decline and Fall* “enacts a program of disciplinary procedures not against those who destroy, but against the figures in traditional positions of power and authority who fail to temper and direct the energy of those for whom they are responsible”.<sup>287</sup> By his willingness to be Margot’s scapegoat, Waugh’s antifeminist satire is directed at Paul himself for, as Milthorpe suggests, failing to temper a person for whom he, a patriarch, ought to be responsible.

Dystopian energy in the context of the detective is not present in the Jeeves texts; however, the utopian impulse is. Auden suggests that the setting of the detective story is ideally “the Great Good Place; for the more Eden-like it is, the greater the contradiction of murder”.<sup>288</sup> There is, of course, no murder in these novels—not in the Jeeves stories, at any rate—but there is, as my previous analysis suggests, a disruption of the utopian impulse which governs those works in the form of women. That their fundamental criminality should

<sup>285</sup> Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 82-3. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>286</sup> Auden, p. 15.

<sup>287</sup> Milthorpe, p. 30.

<sup>288</sup> Auden, p. 19.

form a crucial part of this disruption is, surely, no accident, and it is not limited to the blackmail (an act Wodehouse describes in *Plum Pie* (1966) as, “With the possible exception of diamonds [...] a girl’s best friend”<sup>289</sup>) Bertie alludes to in his comparison between women and Moriarty. Heta Pyrhönen states, on the matter of guilt in detective fiction, that “The question ‘Whodunit?’ is [...] not identical with the question ‘Who is guilty?’ because the investigation shows guilt to be a more universal phenomenon than crime”.<sup>290</sup> The short story “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count” (1922) is demonstrative of both the literal association between women and criminality on the one hand, and the gynocentric assignation of guilt on the other. Bertie begins to feel an attraction towards Aline Hemingway: “if Love hadn’t actually awoken in my heart, there was no doubt it was having a jolly good stab at it”.<sup>291</sup> However, Jeeves reveals that she is a criminal, attempting to rob Bertie by demanding he pay for a stolen set of Aunt Agatha’s pearls. Though Aline has a male accomplice, Soapy Sid, it is precisely her femininity—her ability to attract Bertie—which allows for the success of their criminal enterprise; this, combined with the use of pearls, heavily feminizes the nature of crime in this story, in a manner consistent with Roth’s assessment of women in classic detective fiction, in which the detective is either, like Jeeves, “indifferent to female sexuality” or, like Bertie, faced with “a world bristling with sexual lure and threat” (strong terms, perhaps, when applied to Bertie’s relative lack of sexual impulse, but as the previous chapter notes, an undercurrent of sexual voyeurism is detectable in Bertie’s character).<sup>292</sup> Not only does Aline attempt to cause Bertie to fall in love with her, she does so in such a manner as to usurp Jeeves in terms of sartorial advice by complimenting the cummerbund which has recently provoked Jeeves’s ire (“I think it’s very becoming”<sup>293</sup>). Macdonald notes

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<sup>289</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “A Good Cigar is a Smoke” in *Plum Pie*, p. 159.

<sup>290</sup> Heta Pyrhönen, “Detective Fiction” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005) p. 103.

<sup>291</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count” in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 97.

<sup>292</sup> Roth, p. 115.

<sup>293</sup> “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count”, p. 89.

that the “inverted power relationship between master and man makes Jeeves the master, because he wields power over Bertie’s clothes”.<sup>294</sup> The attempt by the criminal, Aline, to usurp Jeeves’s role in Bertie’s life associates criminality with the notion of becoming “the master” of a man, just as dystopian energy equates wifely matrimony to tyranny.

By restoring the pearls after their theft, Jeeves is firmly positioned in the role of the detective, securing his privileged moral position and tacitly reinforcing his disapproval of women with a pervasive sense of criminality. Jeeves does not merely solve a mystery and prevent a crime, however, but takes advantage of the moral position in which he finds himself to assign guilt: not to Aline Hemingway, but to Aunt Agatha. As a woman in the world of Jeeves, Agatha is not able to access the moral status of the detective and, as such, she accuses an innocent victim of the crime (a trait half shared with Margot). Not only is her inability to solve crime a minor indication of moral deficiency, but this is compounded by her victim, a chambermaid so upset that she “whoop[s] in the corner”<sup>295</sup> as Bertie confronts his aunt. Guilt is clearly assigned to Agatha as Bertie describes her reaction to the truth: “Aunt Agatha simply deflated before my eyes”.<sup>296</sup> Per Pyrhönen’s model, Jeeves’s investigation does indeed demonstrate guilt in addition to crime, and women lie at the centre of both. Ultimately, to my mind, the most significant element of detective fiction which Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s parasitic satires exploit is not guilt, but rather a fascination with, and pleasure in, the restoration of moral order. Just as Holmes’s solution to a case brings about satisfaction for the reader, so, too, do Jeeves’s solutions to Bertie’s matrimonial distress. Associating the problem with women and its solution with the pleasure of the detective triumphant, the reader becomes complicit in the joyous catharsis of defeating women. Waugh, characteristically the gloomier of the pair, offers no Jeeves-like figure to

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<sup>294</sup> Macdonald, “Problematic Menswear”, p. 232.

<sup>295</sup> “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count”, p. 100.

<sup>296</sup> “Aunt Agatha Takes the Count”, p. 101.

restore order; *Decline and Fall*'s Potts fails to adequately deduce the criminality of Margot, while *A Handful of Dust* offers a glimpse at a judicial system in which Tony Last feels obliged to incriminate himself in fictitious infidelity to satisfy his unfaithful wife's requirements, culminating in his perpetual imprisonment. In both cases, the chaos of criminality and injustice looms, and its silhouette is decidedly feminine.

## Chapter III

### “Why must I be plagued by these aged bitches?”: Adaptation and Antifeminist Afterlives

John T. Gilmore, writing in 2017, is the latest in a long line of satire scholars to note that “even extremely successful topical satires can fail to last as the situations that gave rise to them fade from public consciousness”.<sup>297</sup> As such, Northrop Frye offers the view that “satire based on persisting moral sentiments has a better chance for immortality than satire based on fluctuating ones.”.<sup>298</sup> Antifeminist satire is not, from a twenty-first-century perspective, inspired by “moral sentiment”. However, it is possible to adapt Frye’s statement: the effects of feminism are more prevalent today than they were in Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s time. Just as that sentiment survives, so too does an associated antagonism towards the notion of gender parity, and it is this antagonism, at least in part, which allows a large variety of adaptations of the works of Wodehouse and Waugh to survive with their antifeminist satiric impulses entirely intact. Linda Hutcheon notes that “Many professional reviewers and audience members alike resort to the elusive notion of the ‘spirit’ of a work or an artist that has to be captured and conveyed in the adaptation for it to be a success. [...] Sometimes it is ‘tone’ that is deemed central, though rarely defined [...] at other times it is ‘style’”<sup>299</sup>. These terms, “spirit”, “tone”, and “style” which supersede “form” are strikingly similar to those modal characteristics of satiric novels which comprise the satiric impulse, the latter identifiable through similarly non-specific terms such as “attitude”.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Gilmore, p. 5.

<sup>298</sup> Northrop Frye, “The Nature of Satire,” *The University of Toronto Quarterly* Vol. 14, No. 1 (October 1944), p. 78, accessed March 1, 2018, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/article/551010/pdf>.

<sup>299</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) p. 10. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>300</sup> Milthorpe, pp. 3-4.

One aspect common to the various adaptations covered in this chapter is a continuation of the satiric impulse even when, in texts such as *Thank You, Jeeves!* (1936) there are significant generic and plot-based deviations from the literary source, antifeminist satiric attack continues to thrive. In this instance, the film more closely resembles Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935), made in the previous year and adapted from the novel by Wodehouse's middlebrow contemporary John Buchan. The genre transformation which sees Bertie and Jeeves plunged into a spy thriller is, though unfaithful to the plot of its literary source, consistent with Wodehouse's constant flirtation with the various genres noted in Chapter II of this thesis and allows for multiple opportunities to engage with the antifeminist traits of its novelistic counterpart, allowing, for example, for an amplification of the satiric association between women and danger. Not only does adaptation allow antifeminist attack to survive and proliferate but it can ensure, as Sanders suggests, "survival of a source text that might otherwise have slipped from view".<sup>301</sup> This is easy to imagine in a text such as *Decline and Fall*, which does not conjure the gravitas of those texts more often cited as Waugh's masterpieces such as *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). Waugh's earliest satire was adapted once in *Decline and Fall... of a Birdwatcher* (1968) and again by the BBC in *Decline and Fall* (2017); frequently enough to ensure its relevance and endurance, while interest in ensuring the survival of Jeeves via adaptation is notable in Ben Schott's upcoming 2018 publication, *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*.<sup>302</sup> Another pertinent example of adaptation promoting survival might be a recurring sketch in *The Armstrong and Miller Show* (2009) in which Armstrong plays Stafford, a version of Bertie Wooster, while Miller portrays a Jeeves-like Veal. In one memorable sketch, a visit from Aunt Hilda causes Stafford to exclaim,

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<sup>301</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, second ed. (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p. 88. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>302</sup> Alison Flood, "Bertie Wooster returns as a spy in Jeeves sequel by Schott's Miscellany author", *The Guardian*, Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/13/bertie-wooster-returns-as-a-spy-in-jeeves-sequel-by-schotts-miscellany-author>.

“Why must I be plagued by these aged bitches?”. The sequence that follows involves Aunt Hilda threatening to “cut” Veal before being drugged and thrown in the Grand Union Canal.<sup>303</sup> This is a clear example of the power of adaptation to amplify its source (as this chapter will explore) in its hyperbolic treatment of Wodehouse’s depiction of threatening women and Bertie’s desire to be rid of them. Further, the antifeminism is amplified by the use of this Wodehousian trope as a means to generate further comedy as opposed to a critique of the source, another area to which this chapter will return. Clearly this sketch, being broadcast to a large BBC One audience who may not have encountered Wodehouse, also aids in the survival of the Jeeves texts alongside their undetected antifeminist impulse.

A fundamental reason for this lack of detection lies, once again, with the close relationship between Wodehouse, Waugh, and the middlebrow. Per Hutcheon: “in both academic criticism and journalistic reviewing, contemporary popular adaptations are most often put down as secondary, derivative, ‘belated, middlebrow, or culturally inferior’”<sup>304</sup>. Even before commencing a more comprehensive exploration of the antifeminist impulse in terms of adaptation theory, the familiar effect of perceived cultural inferiority borne of a middlebrow status suggests that these texts have been, as Macdonald has it, “anathematized” and “stigmatized” by both critical and journalistic writers.<sup>305</sup> In true middlebrow-critic fashion, Hutcheon immediately notes Virginia Woolf’s disapproval of adaptation: “As early as 1926, Virginia Woolf, commenting on the fledgling art of cinema, deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium and called film a ‘parasite’ and literature its ‘prey’ and ‘victim’”<sup>306</sup>. Such

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<sup>303</sup> *The Armstrong and Miller Show*, “Episode Four”, Series Two. Directed by Dominic Brigstocke. Written by Armstrong, Miller, Blackwell *et al.* BBC, November 9 2009.

<sup>304</sup> Hutcheon, p. 2.

<sup>305</sup> Macdonald, “Introduction”, p. 11.

<sup>306</sup> Hutcheon, p. 3.

derision and consequent neglect undoubtedly aids in the unquestioned survival of antifeminist satire.

## **Amplification**

Adaptations possess the power to amplify their sources. Hutcheon states that adapters “actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate”.<sup>307</sup> Sanders concurs, suggesting that adaptation “be it in the form of novel, play, poem, or film, invariably transcends mere imitation, serving instead in the capacity of incremental literature [...] adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating, amplifying”.<sup>308</sup> Consequently, examples of the antifeminist satiric impulse being enhanced throughout Wodehouse and Waugh adaptations are myriad, though particularly notable in *Thank You, Jeeves!* (1936), *Decline and Fall... of a Birdwatcher* (1968) and *Decline and Fall* (2017). In the order suggested by Sanders, however, we commence by examining two texts which, in remarkably similar ways, amplify Wodehouse’s antifeminist impulse by placing Bertie and Jeeves in the world of H.P. Lovecraft. The first, *Scream for Jeeves* (1994), opens its initial short story (a retelling of Lovecraft’s “The Rats in the Walls”) with comic juxtaposition which sets the tone for the text as a whole, as Tubby tells Bertie of his ancestry, referring to “the hideous tale of Mary de la Poer, who shortly after her marriage to the Earl of Shrewsfield was killed by him and his mother, both of the slayers being absolved and blessed by the priest to whom they confessed what they dared not repeat to the world”. Bertie then responds with “Frightful dragon, was she? Sounds a bit like my Aunt Agatha”.<sup>309</sup> In this exchange lies a microcosm of the collection’s comic roots: the horror of Lovecraftian exposition juxtaposed with Wodehousian lightness. Yet, clearly, the lightness in this instance constitutes an

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<sup>307</sup> Hutcheon. p. 3.

<sup>308</sup> Sanders, p. 9.

<sup>309</sup> P.H. Cannon, “Cats, Rats and Bertie Wooster” in *Scream for Jeeves: A Parody*, Ebook. (Rhode Island: Necronomicon Press, 1994), n. pag. All further references will be to this edition.

amplification of Wodehouse's antifeminism: the notion of Aunt Agatha being murdered in a fit of madness is comic fodder for Cannon. The implication of this contrastive technique is that, for Cannon (and for many adapters discussed during the course of this chapter) antifeminism is an intrinsic element of the Jeeves canon. Adaptation is impossible without it. The combination of Wodehouse and Lovecraft has such potent comic potential by way of the aforementioned contrast in tone and content that there is simply no need to attack women: there are very few female characters in the stories Cannon adapts, yet he insists on littering his text with derogatory comments about women which, in the context of Lovecraftian horror, only exacerbates the poor representation offered by Wodehouse.

Poor representation of women comes to a head in the second Lovecraftian adaptation, Alan Moore's "What Ho, Gods of the Abyss?" (2000). In this adaptation, a prose section of a graphic novel, Aunt Dahlia is mesmerised into helping a group of cultists conjure Lovecraft's iconic monster, Cthulhu, in the grounds of Brinkley Court; much of the humour is derived from Bertie's inability to comprehend the situation. At the climactic moment in which Dahlia and the cultists perform the necessary ritual, Bertie narrates that, "Jeeves gasped out an oath that I have never heard him or, now that I think about it, anyone else use before. He warned me that I should not look, but [...] I beheld a vision more nightmarish yet than any that I'd hoped to see in this world or beyond".<sup>310</sup> It quickly transpires that, unlike Jeeves, Bertie is not alarmed by the Lovecraftian creature, but by Aunt Dahlia's lack of clothing as she performs the ritual: "I'd feared that Morris dancing might result from all this folk tradition lark, but naturism really was the limit".<sup>311</sup> The amplification of antifeminism in this sequence hinges upon Moore's faithful depiction of Jeeves. The Jeeves of Wodehouse's own texts would not lose control to such an extent as to swear; Bertie considers him "stirred" if his eyebrow raises

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<sup>310</sup> Alan Moore, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Black Dossier* (California: DC Comics, 2000), p. 110. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>311</sup> Moore, p. 110-11.

“perhaps and eighth of an inch”.<sup>312</sup> Yet by way of Moore’s fidelity to the character, there is no inconsistency. Rather, Moore exploits the seriousness with which Lovecraft’s fiction is necessarily suffused in order to produce its generic namesake: horror. As Lovecraft himself suggests:

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form.<sup>313</sup>

The “truths” and “genuineness” of fear in horror literature provoke, as Clive Bloom has it, a “profound uneasiness”<sup>314</sup> in the reader, and Moore amplifies those truths with his faithful depiction of Jeeves, alongside the uneasiness by having the ordinarily indomitable Jeeves both witness something Bertie does not describe and becoming uncharacteristically upset by this vision. In other words, the reader may feel that if this creature can induce Jeeves to swear, it must, indeed, be frightening, and for a moment that fear is shared with the reader. Laughter dissipates this fear instantly, of course, as Bertie offers a reprieve from the unknown with a moment of revelation: he is far more preoccupied with a naked and spasmodic Aunt Dahlia, yet in this moment of laughter lies an amplified antifeminist attack. Not only is a woman the butt of a joke but, moreover, the seriousness entwined in Lovecraftian horror and the fidelity of Jeeves’s actions are superseded by the naked Dahlia: she is worse. Chapter II makes mention of Wodehouse’s depiction of women as akin to Professor Moriarty, one of the great literary antagonists. Moore depicts women as akin to Cthulhu, a figure of “unimaginably ancient horror”.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, “Jeeves Makes an Omelette” in *The World of Jeeves*, p. 717.

<sup>313</sup> H.P. Lovecraft, *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1967), p. 141.

<sup>314</sup> Clive Bloom, “Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition” in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), p. 215.

<sup>315</sup> Robinson Peter Krämer, “Classical Antiquity and the Timeless Horrors of H.P. Lovecraft” in *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy*, ed. Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin Eldon Stevens (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 93.

Neither the 1968 film adaptation nor the 2017 miniseries of *Decline and Fall* compare Margot Beste-Chetwynde unfavourably to a Lovecraftian Elder God; nonetheless, amplification plays a significant role. *Decline and Fall... of a Birdwatcher* (1968) concentrates its amplification particularly in its opening sequence. The novelistic Paul Pennyfeather is sent down for indecent exposure due to falling victim to a drunken Bollinger Club. This event occurs in *Decline and Fall... of a Birdwatcher* alongside a second incident unique to the film: prior to the Bollingers' intervention, two undressed women mistakenly believe Paul to be peering into their window with binoculars (he is, in fact, looking at a rare bird).<sup>316</sup> He then collides with one of the women after his ordeal with the Bollinger Club, half dressed. As a consequence, Paul is not sent down for indecent exposure as in the novel, but for "attempted rape".<sup>317</sup> The association between looking, sexual desire and power is made in Laura Mulvey's influential "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema":

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkely, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.<sup>318</sup>

These scantily-clad women initially appear to conform to Mulvey's description of "woman displayed as sexual object". Yet Paul, ostensibly the holder of the "determining male gaze" emphatically does not look at the women: a shot purporting to access Paul's point of view by showing the rare bird through his binoculars demonstrates this. Active looking, in this

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<sup>316</sup> *Decline and Fall... of a Birdwatcher*. DVD. Directed by John Krish. Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1969.

<sup>317</sup> Robert Murray Davis, "Up to a Point, Mr. Foxwell: The Adaptation of Decline and Fall", *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2, (Autumn 2005), pp. 1-3.

<sup>318</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* Vol. 16, No. 3 (October 1975), accessed March 9, 2018, DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>.

sequence, is assigned to the women. By looking at Paul, they project a “phantasy” of their own: that he is, as the dons describe him, a “sexual pervert”. As Mulvey notes, “sexual imbalance” is the cause for the gendered split in looking, but this film—as in the novel—invets that gendered imbalance, maintaining Waugh’s fiction that the rise of the New Woman leads to a world, as discussed in Chapter II, in which women are dominant. Though the film’s gratuitous depiction of scantily-clad women naturally offers the characters up to the male gaze in precisely the terms Mulvey describes, the film strips Paul of the power of the male gaze and transfers it to women; the grammar of film itself thereby contributes to a sense of Paul as a victim while creating a sense of the gaze returned as the women stare back at him. Not only, then, is a woman responsible for Paul’s subsequent imprisonment but, in this adaptation, a woman is culpable for Paul being sent down from Oxford in the first instance. This doubling is an overt antifeminist amplification: the film literally doubles the number of women responsible for his misfortune.

A more covert form of amplification occurs during Margot’s party. In this sequence, the cinematic technique of voiceover is employed as we hear Otto Silenus explaining his reluctance to marry Margot. In conjunction with this sentiment, Margot is shown removing women from their male dancing partners and pairing them up with one another instead, leaving a ring of bereft men watching the women, a distinct group with Margot at their head, dancing with one another. This sequence achieves a number of effects: Margot’s impulse to have the women dance while men watch foreshadows the revelation of her prostitution business; that Margot leaves the men isolated foreshadows her treatment of Paul; the silent removal of women from men attaches a certain malevolence to the notion of women’s emancipation and independence which is so fundamental to Waugh’s antifeminist satire. Counter-intuitively, this sequence even amplifies the understanding of Waugh’s antifeminism as subtle: although we are explicitly shown Margot doing this, her actions are steeped in

symbolism and foreshadowing. They are not clearly signposted. Further, the sequence is interspersed with cuts back to Paul and Otto, establishing their conversation—itself on the subject of marriage to Margot as unwise—as the dominant aspect of the scene; Margot’s movements, like Waugh’s novelistic antifeminism, occurs only in the background. By its depiction of women disrupting men’s sight is antifeminism rendered visible.

More visible still, however, is the antifeminism of *Decline and Fall* (2017). In the second chapter of this thesis, I cite a brief chapter of Waugh’s *Decline and Fall* entitled “Interlude in Belgravia”, in which Waugh calls to attention Paul’s admirable and capable character, before allowing him to fade into the “shadow” he constitutes for the bulk of the text. This, I argued, allows the reader to feel a certain amount of sympathy towards Paul, thus ensuring that his imminent imprisonment at Margot’s hands evokes a sense of victimhood, and thereby associating Margot and her immoral business practices with a certain amount of antagonism. This miniseries amplifies that sense of victimhood by several orders of magnitude, following in the footsteps of Stephen Fry’s adaptation of *Vile Bodies* which, as Emily Shreve notes, takes typically detached, comic moments from the book and leaves them “mired in sentimentality”.<sup>319</sup> Beginning in an early scene in which Whitehall’s Paul Pennyfeather miserably apologises to a portrait of his deceased father, the miniseries embarks upon a recurrent motif of Paul’s orphaned status, clearly in an attempt to elicit sympathy from its audience.<sup>320</sup> Further, and perhaps more significantly, a sequence in the third episode brings this sympathetic quality to bear as Paul displays his horror at prison life. In this sequence, we witness Prendy’s severed head being held aloft by his murderer; his wig detaches itself in the murderer’s hand, and Prendy’s head bounces, in an altogether gruesome manner, down a

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<sup>319</sup> Emily Shreve, “From Vile Bodies to Bright Young Things: Waugh and Adaptation”, *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* Vol. 39, No. 1 (2008 Spring), p. 6.

<sup>320</sup> *Decline and Fall*, “Episode 1”. Directed by Guillem Morales. Written by James Wood. BBC, first aired 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

flight of stairs.<sup>321</sup> Paul's reaction to this event, which is only described at second-hand in the novel, is emotional and horrified in a manner unavailable to the literary Paul, limited as the latter is by the detachment of Waugh's prose. A similar sequence occurs after Paul learns of Margot's impending marriage to Sir Humphrey Maltravers; in this instance, Paul throws his dinner to the ground in anger before spending the night in a state of drunken melancholia, visibly weeping. The turmoil through which Paul goes is directly attributable to Margot, and the miniseries amplifies the psychological stress Margot's actions cause Paul in a way the novel simply does not. Such is the enormity of this amplification that James Wood felt the need to add a prison scene not present in the novel in which Prendergast speaks for the audience on the subject of Margot, giving voice to the antifeminist core of novel and adaptation alike: "she's a monster".

## Critique

Adaptation, as theorists of the subject note with great frequency, is capable of offering a critique of its source. Though plenty of adaptation—certainly, most of the texts covered in this chapter—imitates, reveres, and amplifies its source, both Hutcheon and Sanders make the case for adaptations which "not only interpret [their sources] but in doing so they also take a position on it".<sup>322</sup> Sanders fleshes out this notion in her suggestion that "Adaptation is [...] frequently involved in offering a commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes".<sup>323</sup> This is a notion at once central to this chapter and entirely removed from it: for the most part, the various Wodehouse and Waugh adaptations do not make any overt attempts to criticize or comment upon their sources, choosing instead to

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<sup>321</sup> *Decline and Fall*, "Episode 3". Directed by Guillem Morales. Written by James Wood. BBC, first aired 14<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

<sup>322</sup> Hutcheon, p. 93.

<sup>323</sup> Sanders, p. 3.

focus on a faithful transmission of the core elements of plot, characterization, and—crucially—satire, and a list of adaptations which manifestly do not do this seems unnecessary. However, this omission is significant in itself: by dint of the lack of commentary and critique offered by each adaptation, the source texts are implicitly ratified: the mere existence of the adaptation constitutes a suggestion that, in fact, there is no controversy or problematic component of the source, just as the fastidiousness of Bradshaw's exploration of Waugh's troubling elements, as noted in Chapter I, strengthens his antifeminism by dint of its omission. This can only render the satiric impulse still more insidious. Such an accusation can hardly be levelled at any individual writer or director responsible for adapting Wodehouse or Waugh, of course. As this thesis has shown, the antifeminism inherent in these texts is difficult to trace: adaptation may constitute “reinterpretation”, but such an act is impossible in terms of antifeminist satire which has not been sufficiently interpreted in the first instance. Further, the revisionary and critical impulse which guides adaptation's proclivity for commentary and critique is limited by the middlebrow status of Wodehouse and Waugh, detectable in Sanders's summation of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which offers a commentary on *Jane Eyre*:

she [Jean Rhys] is giving voice to the suppressed stories of the English literary canon, and in this way her novel has become canonical in its own right, a standard bearer for the revisionary impulse in literature, the counter-discourse or counter-culture that Widdowson regards as central to its practice. *Wide Sargasso Sea* represents a central example of both the feminist and the postcolonial novel.<sup>324</sup>

For Sanders, it is significant that *Jane Eyre* is a part of the English literary canon, and it is this association which allows Jean Rhys's “counter-discourse” to become canonical in turn. Adapting the middlebrow comic novels of Wodehouse and Waugh, however, only begets further middlebrow associations (as the introduction to this chapter notes, adaptation is often seen and dismissed as “middlebrow”). Unsurprisingly, then, adaptation of Wodehouse's and

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<sup>324</sup> Sanders, p. 92.

Waugh's modernist contemporary, Rhys, is allowed certain freedoms which texts more peripheral to the canon cannot attain, and the middlebrow nature of Wodehouse and Waugh once again allows for their antifeminism to pass unchallenged.

It is, of course, difficult to provide examples of something omitted. A brief parallel may be drawn, however, between Hutcheon's observations regarding operatic adaptations of Prosper Mèrimèe's *Carmen* and the most well-known televisual adaptation of Jeeves, *Jeeves and Wooster* (1990). This parallel is instructive, if only in demonstrating a tangibly missed opportunity. Per Hutcheon: "What is striking is that neither operatic Carmen is the vicious and devious woman of Mèrimèe's text. The three narrative voices disappear as we move from a telling mode to a showing one. We see and hear Carmen, unmediated by overt male intervention; she speaks/sings for herself".<sup>325</sup> As with *Carmen*'s operatic adaptations, *Jeeves and Wooster* constitutes an opportunity to depict women who are "vicious and devious" (among a vast array of similarly unpalatable characteristics) while "unmediated by overt male intervention". The Jeeves texts are, with minor exceptions, narrated by Bertie Wooster, and it is from his perspective that we learn of the terror associated with women. *Jeeves and Wooster*, however, does not use this technique. As a consequence, we are forced to watch through the lens of a narrative third. It would not be difficult, therefore, for this adaptation to enact a similar transformative effect for Wodehouse's women characters, "unmediated" as they are by a male narrator, thus commenting upon the antifeminist satire upon which they are based. Not only does *Jeeves and Wooster* fail to do this, but, far from commenting upon its source, this adaptation strives to compensate, using cinematic techniques unavailable to the novel in order to reinforce its antifeminist attack. George Bluestone notes the various facets of film (and, by extension, television) inaccessible to the novel, including "music".<sup>326</sup> The episode "Lady

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<sup>325</sup> Hutcheon, p. 156.

<sup>326</sup> George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 7. All further references will be to this edition.

"Florence Craye Arrives in New York" uses music to satiric effect. As Florence Craye enters the bookshop in which Bertie is browsing, the hitherto gentle music takes on a distinctly ominous, threatening tone.<sup>327</sup> Faced with the opportunity to grant Florence a voice free of Bertie's narrative grasp, as in the novels, the episode instead establishes her as a threatening figure by other means, maintaining the satiric impulse where it may otherwise have perished.

Cinematic technique is used to similar effect in *A Handful of Dust* (1988). In a later sequence, we witness a panning shot of Brenda's bed, displaying first a half-eaten meat pie (purchased from an especially cheap vendor in an earlier scene) before slowly revealing Brenda's body. The shot culminates in a view of her weeping face. At this point in the narrative, Brenda has been forced to reconcile with the fact that Tony's disappearance means a complete loss of income for her, combined with the loss of Mr. Beaver. We then cut to a sleeping Tony Last, trapped among Mr. Todd's tribe. Here a parallel panning sequence occurs: in this instance, the shot pans down from Tony's face, ending with the bowl from which Tony has imbibed filling the frame.<sup>328</sup> The clear implication is that this bowl is complicit in Tony's sudden weariness: he has been drugged. The cutting and panning juxtapose these scenes, cementing the status of Tony Last as Brenda's "hapless victim", as David Bittner has it of the novelistic Tony.<sup>329</sup> The fact that the cheap pie and Mr. Todd's poison occupy similar positions in the frame hammers home the implication that Brenda's situation is several orders of magnitude less severe than that of Tony: Brenda being forced to economise does not compare to Tony's perpetual captivity. Criticism of Waugh often attempts to read 'barbarism' in both his depictions of other countries and what he perceives to be modern England (Milthorpe notes that, for Basil Seal returning from Azania in *Black Mischief*, "modern London is also a savage

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<sup>327</sup> *Jeeves and Wooster*, "Lady Florence Craye arrives in New York", Episode 19. Directed by Ferdinand Fairfax. Written by Clive Exton. ITV, first aired 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1993.

<sup>328</sup> James Wilby and Kristin Scott Thomas, *A Handful of Dust*. DVD. Directed by Charles Sturridge. New York: New Line Cinema, 1988.

<sup>329</sup> David Bittner, "Tony as Hero of *A Handful of Dust*; or, 'Last' but Not Least", *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 4-6.

place”<sup>330</sup>). However, through the use of these cinematic techniques, any comment on social savagery is localised upon Brenda and, by extension, the modern women she represents. These examples demonstrate not only the capacity for adaptation to allow the satiric impulse to survive, but the ability adaptation here possesses to breathe new life into it.

The notion of new life for Wodehouse’s problematic satire via *Jeeves and Wooster* is perhaps best represented by an episode which is not notable for its antifeminism (no more, that is, than any other) but for its remarkably problematic depiction of race. Despite its lack of direct pertinence, a discussion of this episode is instructive, demonstrating what Hutcheon might describe as the “dialogic”<sup>331</sup> relationship between this adaptation and the source texts, each ratifying and masking the problematic elements of the other. The episode is loosely based upon *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, and much of the plot revolves around Sir Watkyn Bassett’s black amber statuette, which, in a manner typical of Jeeves stories, Bertie is variously charged with stealing and returning. In the novel, Jeeves simply returns the statuette to Sir Watkyn’s collection, pausing only to tell Madeline Bassett that Bertie is a “kleptomaniac” and therefore unsuitable for marriage.<sup>332</sup> The episode “Totleigh Towers” (1993), however, departs from the novel in an unprecedented manner. In this episode, Jeeves has Bertie attempt to impersonate an African “tribal chief”<sup>333</sup> come to reclaim his statuette, complete with blacking-up and an attempt at a comedy accent. A constant concern, in writing this thesis, lies in ensuring that it does not devolve into a simple (albeit long-winded) accusation of sexism, and this is equally true, in this instance, of racism. One of the stakes inherent in this thesis is a reassessment of what we may be tempted to brush away as ‘casual’ sexism or ‘casual’ racism. By reading the troubling components of these works as satirical (or, perhaps, acknowledging that such components *are*

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<sup>330</sup> Milthorpe, p. 58.

<sup>331</sup> Hutcheon, p. xiv.

<sup>332</sup> *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, p. 192.

<sup>333</sup> *Jeeves and Wooster*, “Totleigh Towers”, Episode 22. Directed by Ferdinand Fairfax. Written by Clive Exton. ITV, first aired 13<sup>th</sup> June 1993.

satirical, whether we interpret them as such or not) this thesis challenges what it means to interact with such troubling elements. One avenue, which the Conclusion will discuss at length, lies in the notion of efficacy: if satire can, as it claims, bring about reformation of one sort or another, could this apparently ‘casual’ misogyny lead to the proliferation or reinforcement of an antifeminism still alive today? A second avenue, and one which I think this analysis touches on, concerns satire’s occupation of, to use a colloquialism, the ‘moral high ground’. Robert C. Elliott notes the qualities which, via *apologiae*, satirists traditionally imbue in their self-constructions. The satirist, per Elliott, is “a moral man”.<sup>334</sup> Though the antifeminist components of Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s works are subtle, popular perception of these writers as satirists exists regardless, bound to the pseudo-respectable, if erroneously identified, satiric targets of aristocratic values, buffoonish fascists, and similar, more ‘worthy’ targets. It is also worth recalling Bogel’s discussion of the difficulties in breaking free of the readerly assumption that reader and satirist must be aligned, and that there is therefore an inherent self-defensive resistance, upon establishing the satiric credentials of a writer, to associate their satire with a distasteful abuse of its censure. As a consequence, it is arguable that in instances such as this *Jeeves and Wooster* episode, featuring as it does an instance of racism, there is a spectrum of mechanisms borne of its satirical context which allow for the racism to occur unchallenged. This may be through some tacit alignment with the satirist, in which the reader believes the target to be worthy (recalling such readings as Hight’s cheerful assumption, as mentioned in Chapter I, that Waugh’s *Black Mischief* “makes a fine satirical comment on the current idealistic doctrine that all races are brothers under the skin”<sup>335</sup>) or, on the less extreme end of the spectrum, the work is given the ‘benefit of the doubt’ due to its satirical pedigree: the satirist, we assume, cannot be problematic because “he is [...] a moral man”. Wodehouse’s novel *Thank*

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<sup>334</sup> Elliott, p. 265.

<sup>335</sup> Hight, p. 204.

*You, Jeeves* (1934) does feature Bertie disguising himself as a black-faced minstrel, and Wodehouse evidently felt no qualms in using a racist term on no less than seven occasions during the course of that novel,<sup>336</sup> a term which scholars have described as a “slap in the face”<sup>337</sup> even when used by Mark Twain in 1884, let alone Wodehouse’s own usage some fifty years hence.

Clearly, this moment of infidelity in “Totleigh Towers” does have precedent in the source texts. The remarkable aspect of this racist inclusion is that it should appear in an adaptation as late as 1993. In the same episode, in fact, when Bertie sings the song “Oh, by Jingo”, a line referring to “Gollies” (this being another term which, by the end of the twentieth century, is quite rightly considered racist) is replaced entirely, yet—presumably due to the literary precedent—the act of blacking-up is not seen as worthy of similar reticence. Comparison may be made to the 2015 miniseries *And Then There Were None*, based upon an Agatha Christie novel featuring a titular racial slur. This change in title, alongside the racially charged rhyme around which the plot revolves in Christie’s novel, is an example of adaptation criticizing its source in a manner this episode of *Jeeves and Wooster* refuses. Not only does this phenomenon return us to Bargainnier’s notion of Wodehouse as an essentially harmless, “cosy” writer, but this example serves as a prime instance of the privileged moral position of the satirist. If such overt racism, broadcast on the cusp of the twenty-first-century, is considered permissible, then it is expectable that the far subtler issue of the antifeminism this thesis is concerned with has been so underexplored. Given the fidelity of this series and the problematic relationship between the Jeeves novels and race, it is plausible to argue that Clive Exton considered the “Totleigh Towers” sequence to be in the spirit of Wodehouse. Booker notes that

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<sup>336</sup> *Thank You, Jeeves*, p. 23.

<sup>337</sup> James S. Leonard and Thomas A. Tenney, “Introduction: The Comtroversy over *Huckleberry Finn*” in *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*, eds. James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis (Duke University Press Books, 1991), p. 5.

Exton captures the “flavour” of the source texts.<sup>338</sup> If that “flavour” is harmless, so must be its more problematic components. By extension, then, it is entirely unsurprising that the insidious antifeminist spirit proliferates without criticism throughout *Jeeves and Wooster*.

The same cannot be said, however, of *Decline and Fall* (2017). This adaptation does exercise the power to comment upon and critique its source in its decision to alter Captain Grimes’s sexuality. The established reading of the character is that Grimes’s “repulsive practices”, include “child abuse”.<sup>339</sup> The first episode of *Decline and Fall* (2017) does not adhere to this reading, however, instead showing Grimes engaging in sexual intercourse with Margot’s chauffeur, an adult man.<sup>340</sup> This is, implicitly, a critique of its source: unlike *Jeeves and Wooster*, Waugh’s novel is here deemed too distasteful for a faithful retelling. However, even in this act of critique, the adaptation betrays its lack of interest in Waugh’s antifeminism. The danger of watching these adaptations with a view to the possibility of commentary or critique of the source, as I mention at the beginning of this section, is that any lack of critique is an implicit ratification: the remaining subject matter, faithful and unchanged, cannot be worthy of critique if it has not overtly been depicted as such by the adaptation. In this instance, critique of the novelistic Grimes’s perversion has the effect of enhancing the unacknowledged antifeminist attack inherent in *Decline and Fall*. Both novel and adaptation depict Grimes bemoaning his fate as he becomes engaged to Flossie Fagan. Given his reprehensible character, however, the animosity felt by the novelistic Grimes towards marriage does not constitute the antifeminist attack Bertie Wooster’s feelings on the matter do. As David Bradshaw argues (flawed though that argument may be, as Chapter I notes) many of the controversial views

<sup>338</sup> Michael Booker, “Jeeves and Wooster (1990-1993)”, *BFI screenonline* <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1060579/> [accessed August 13, 2018]

<sup>339</sup> Simon Heffer, “Decline and Fall: Evelyn Waugh’s orgy of bad taste.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 29 July 2016, [www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/decline-and-fall-evelyn-waughs-orgy-of-bad-taste/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/decline-and-fall-evelyn-waughs-orgy-of-bad-taste/)

<sup>340</sup> *Decline and Fall*, “Episode 1”. Directed by Guillem Morales. Written by James Wood. BBC, first aired 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

offered by the characters of *Decline and Fall* are offset by their own monstrous personalities. Fagan's views on the Welsh, for instance, cannot be simplistically dismissed as racism on Waugh's part: they can equally be read as demonstrative of Fagan's unpalatable nature. However, the televisual Grimes is a closeted homosexual at a time in which his sexual orientation is illegal. When this Grimes refers to the frequency with which he is "in the soup", the picture he conjures for his audience is not that of a horrific pederast, but a man persecuted as a consequence of one of the great injustices of history. That he must marry Flossie in order to cover up his sexuality and therefore prevent Doctor Fagan from firing him for his homosexuality is, indeed, a notion worthy of attack. By making this critique against *Decline and Fall*, by "offering a revised point of view from the 'original'",<sup>341</sup> the adaptation gives license and justification for antifeminist satire: attacking marriage is a motif this thesis has encountered on multiple occasions. In terms of its dystopian association with imprisonment, for example, or as a means of scapegoating men, or simply as a barometer against which Wodehouse and Waugh measure gendered power, the derogatory depiction of marriage is a bastion of antifeminist sentiment. As a notable aside: Robert Murray Davis reads Leo McKern's 1966 portrayal of Grimes as that of an "incorrigible heterosexual";<sup>342</sup> in this case, the implicit critique of an inappropriate pederasty aligns with the conventionally anti-marital satiric jibes we have encountered throughout this thesis, as McKern's bigamous Grimes simply desires to flee from such a state.

The televisual Grimes, his sexuality altered such that he is transformed from monster to victim, allows for the proliferation of that attack, alongside myriad examples of throwaway sexism (he describes Flossie as a "haybag", for instance). This adaptation makes use of another element of television unavailable to the novel to further this notion of marriage as an institution

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<sup>341</sup> Sanders, p. 3.

<sup>342</sup> Robert Murray Davis, "Up to a Point, Mr. Foxwell: The Adaptation of *Decline and Fall*", *Evelyn Waugh Newsletter and Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2, (Autumn 2005), pp. 1-3.

which primarily benefits women: casting. Gemma Whelan is cast as Diane Fagan, whom Grimes describes as “man-looking”. Grimes hits upon a role for which Whelan is often typecast, an obvious example being her part as Quaint Irene in *Mapp and Lucia* (2014).<sup>343</sup> This casting choice becomes significant during Grimes’s wedding sequence, in which Whelan’s character gives her sister away.<sup>344</sup> The combination of casting Whelan as an overtly masculine woman while removing any obstacle to Grimes’s status as a genuine victim has a profoundly antifeminist result in the context of this marriage: Diane Fagan usurps the traditionally male role of giving away the bride, removing the association between the custom of marriage and its undertones of patriarchal transaction, better allowing for the marriage to become a state in which Grimes will be oppressed by his wife. By extension, of course, the fact that Grimes is ultimately imprisoned due to his bigamy takes on new significance in the same manner: like Paul, marriage is the cause for his arrest and, like Paul, the televisual Grimes is a far more sympathetic character, thus enhancing Waugh’s pre-existing antifeminist attack.

## **Retrospective Impact**

*Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* (2013) is a literary adaptation in which Sebastian Faulks imitates Wodehouse in what purports to be an extension of the Jeeves canon. Writing in *The Spectator*, Dennison’s review suggests that “Faulks captures perfectly both the tone and the spirit of Wodehouse’s originals. What’s more, he does so in a manner that, in rekindling happy memories of those books, reinvigorates one’s retrospective enjoyment of the originals”.<sup>345</sup> The potential impact a reading of Faulks’s adaptation may have on a subsequent

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<sup>343</sup> *Mapp and Lucia*, “Episode 1”. Directed by Diarmuid Lawrence. Written by Steve Pemberton. BBC, first aired 29<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

<sup>344</sup> *Decline and Fall*, “Episode 2”. Directed by Guillem Morales. Written by James Wood. BBC, first aired 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

<sup>345</sup> Matthew Dennison, "The Imitable Jeeves," *The Spectator*, November 01, 2013, accessed March 03, 2018, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/11/jeeves-and-the-wedding-bells-by-sebastian-faulks-review/>

rereading, as Dennison advocates, of Wodehouse's Jeeves texts has significant implications. Per Hutcheon, "any adaptation that adds backstory, character- or world-development has added something new to a prior version(s)"<sup>346</sup> and, in this instance, the "something new" is a new interpretation of Bertie's attitude towards women. Faulks's Bertie concludes the novel by marrying a love interest, Georgina, while Jeeves also takes a wife. Faulks's Jeeves explains that he considers Georgina to be a suitable partner for Bertie, having "formed a high opinion of her"<sup>347</sup> and he therefore does not feel the need to tender his resignation or sabotage the relationship. This is a markedly different attitude to the canonical Bertie, who, as I note in Chapter II of this thesis, uncompromisingly compares all women to Professor Moriarty. Faulks's interpretation of the character (and the world in which he exists) has it that Bertie does not take issue with all women; rather, he has simply not found an appropriate love interest until *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*. If the reader, as Dennison suggests, finds they are invigorated to reread Wodehouse's Jeeves stories, they may encounter a phenomenon noted by Hutcheon: "now I know what an enemy orc or a game of Quidditch (can) look like (from the movies), I suspect I will never be able to recapture my first imagined versions again".<sup>348</sup> In a similar vein, a new and persuasive interpretation of the Jeeves canon becomes available to the reader: rather than a sustained commentary upon the impossibility of finding a woman who Bertie could marry without being subject to the Omphale archetype, Bertie's various attempts to flee women instead become an extended romantic quest: his entanglements are mere obstacles on the path to encountering Georgina. As a consequence, rather than drawing attention to the antifeminist satire Bertie's fear of marriage constitutes, this adaptation fundamentally alters the knowing reader's perspective on that attack, rendering the attack still

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<sup>346</sup> Hutcheon, p. 193.

<sup>347</sup> Sebastian Faulks, *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* (London: Arrow Books, 2014), p. 338. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>348</sup> Hutcheon, p. 29.

less visible. In essence, this adaptation contributes to the system of masking and insidiousness which dominates this thesis.

A similar mechanism of retrospective interpretive alteration occupies C. Northcote Parkinson's *Jeeves: A Gentleman's Personal Gentleman* (1979), another literary adaptation which, in this case, purports to be a biography of Jeeves. This falls squarely, therefore, into Hutcheon's aforementioned category of adaptations which add "backstory, character- or world-development". In this instance, Parkinson explores Jeeves's own aversion to women, rendering the antifeminist attack of the source texts all the more insidious, not by altering their meaning as Faulks does, but by bestowing upon them some semblance of respectability. As a boy, the young valet-in-training is sent to work as a servant at a girls' school run by Dame Daphne Winkworth of *The Mating Season* (she is one of five aunts to feature in that novel: "one's deaf, one's dotty, and they're all bitches"<sup>349</sup>). Jeeves is concerned by this and, upon asking if any of the girls are "dangerous", is informed: "it would be quicker to list the few that aren't".<sup>350</sup> This remark sets the tone for Parkinson's faithful depiction of a world in which women are, universally, unpleasant; the young girls of Daphne Winkworth's school are as monstrous as the "bitches" of Deverill Hall. It is also prophetic: shortly into Jeeves's career at the school, the girls force him into kissing one of them and photograph the incident, knowing that this evidence would be sufficient to get him fired and is, therefore, leverage for blackmail. That this falls entirely in line with Wodehouse's own frequent use of woman-led blackmail throughout the Jeeves canon is significant in two respects. Firstly, the fact that a narrator in the third person records this, in conjunction with the lack of Bertie Wooster, indicates that the anti-woman sentiment which suffuses the source texts is not merely a consequence of Bertie's idiosyncratic opinion, but an objective fact (cemented still further by

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<sup>349</sup> *The Mating Season*, p. 31.

<sup>350</sup> C. Northcote Parkinson, *Jeeves: A Gentleman's Personal Gentleman* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1979), p. 26. All further references will be to this edition.

Parkinson's claim to verisimilitude in purporting to be a biographer, a phenomenon to which this thesis will return). Secondly, this incident returns us to the notion of the power of adaptation to amplify.

A crucial element of antifeminist attack throughout the Jeeves canon lies in Bertie's aversion to eroticism and, by extension, the promiscuity of women. That this is antifeminist is beyond dispute: increased sexual freedom is a clear mark of the emancipation Wodehouse and Waugh satirize. The novel *Thank You, Jeeves* attacks promiscuity, albeit subtly, since Bertie cannot countenance any overt reference to sexuality, when Bertie unexpectedly finds Pauline Stoker in his bed: "The attitude of fellows towards finding girls in their bedroom shortly after midnight varies. Some like it. Some don't. I didn't."<sup>351</sup> Pauline then reveals that a knock on the door may be her father who, in turn, may be armed with a gun.<sup>352</sup> This clear association between women's sexual freedom and life-threatening danger for Bertie, a bachelor, is, of course, a minor example of the antifeminist satire littered across the Jeeves canon, but Parkinson's use of the same motif amplifies that attack while simultaneously ratifying it. In *Jeeves: A Gentleman's Personal Gentleman*, sexuality is referenced in more overt terms than Bertie's stiff euphemism regarding his virginity (he states that he has never "had his license so much as endorsed"<sup>353</sup>) as Parkinson describes the photograph of a girl kissing an unsuspecting Jeeves as suggestive of a "roof-top orgy".<sup>354</sup> This depiction of women's promiscuity echoes "the satiric myth of the whore" in which, in eighteenth-century satire, "all women personified lust", thus ensuring that "the responsibility for carnality rested on women's provocative shoulders".<sup>355</sup> In retrospectively applying good reason for Jeeves's aversion to women in Wodehouse's source text, Parkinson invokes a satirical tradition which the largely (though, as

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<sup>351</sup> *Thank You, Jeeves*, p. 78.

<sup>352</sup> *Thank You, Jeeves*, p. 88.

<sup>353</sup> *Thank You, Jeeves*, p. 84.

<sup>354</sup> Parkinson, p. 28.

<sup>355</sup> Nussbaum, p. 15.

Chapter I argues, with exceptions) sexless Jeeves stories proper cannot fully access. This invocation can alter the reader's perception of the source texts, just as *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* does. A subsequent rereading of "Bertie Changes His Mind", for example, in which Jeeves manipulates Bertie into speaking at a school for girls to demonstrate how unpleasant schoolgirls are, seems a less uncharitable depiction of women in light of the ill treatment afforded Parkinson's Jeeves in the same environment. Bertie demanding that Jeeves run over some of the girls in his "extraordinary bitterness"<sup>356</sup> is at once all the more satirically charged while becoming a far less controversial stance, ratified as it is by the sympathetic picture of a bullied Jeeves painted by Parkinson. This is an image which, as Hutcheon suggests, is difficult to erase upon returning to the source.

Such erasure is made all the more difficult by Parkinson's choice of genre. *Jeeves: A Gentleman's Personal Gentleman* purports to be a biography, offering Jeeves as a genuine historical figure. Parkinson makes liberal use of footnotes citing fictitious sources ("Silversmith is mentioned in *The Butlers of England* by Claude Manley but deserved more space than the author gave him"<sup>357</sup>) making a claim to the 'real' as he explores Jeeves's career in this adaptation. Julie Sanders notes the liminal position adaptations of nineteenth-century texts take between history and fiction:

In *Metahistory*, Hayden White famously argued that any work of history was as much a piece of rhetorical construction as any work of fiction, and that the play of rhetorical surfaces across historical narratives influences the reader as much as the events or 'facts' being recounted [...] history, in this account, is a matter of perspective; it is influenced and shaped by the ideology and the subject-position of the historian. Several of the adaptations we are considering here that revisit the nineteenth century, or seek to voice marginalized or repressed groups, suggest something similar in their search to reveal 'hidden histories', the stories between the lines of the published works of fact and fiction. Metafiction and metahistory collide in interesting and provocative ways in the course of this self-consciousness about the constructed nature of texts.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> "Bertie Changes His Mind", p. 707.

<sup>357</sup> Parkinson, p. 15.

<sup>358</sup> Sanders, p. 106.

Jeeves first appeared in the early twentieth century, of course, but there are nonetheless parallels to be made in terms of a veneer of historicity offered by Wodehouse. In one letter, Wodehouse even makes the claim that he considers himself a “historical novelist”.<sup>359</sup> Further, both Wodehouse and Waugh situate their respective canons in an approximation of the real world by reference to the Second World War. *Put Out More Flags* (1942) is explicitly set during wartime (which, in turn, places the previous five novels united by Margot Metroland in the context of the real). *Ring for Jeeves* (1953) explains Bertie’s absence from the novel through the use of its post-war setting: Jeeves mentions that due to a crumbling upper-class in the economic climate following the Second World War, Bertie must attend “an institution designed to teach the aristocracy to fend for itself”.<sup>360</sup> More overtly still, the protagonist, Lord Rowcester, makes mention of serving as a Commando in the Second World War.<sup>361</sup> As Chapter II of this thesis explores, the worlds created by Wodehouse and Waugh feature women as the implicitly dominant sex. Consequently, the satiric attacks of these works are predicated upon the notion that, in fact, these writers are voicing a “marginalized and oppressed group”, as Sanders has it: men. It is not implausible to suppose that Wodehouse’s occasional reach for reality (“Comrade Bingo” explores the prevalence of Communist groups, while Roderick Spode is a clear satire of Oswald Mosley) could be read with a certain amount of historical significance a century later, nor, therefore, that such a search for “hidden histories” could be compounded by Parkinson’s claim to be writing non-fiction in his own depiction of Jeeves. This claim is amplified further by the status of Parkinson himself, better known for his non-fiction. The antifeminist satiric impulse benefits from such implicit claims,

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<sup>359</sup> McCrum, p. 356.

<sup>360</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Ring for Jeeves* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 50. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>361</sup> *Ring for Jeeves*, p. 123.

however slight, to historical ‘fact’; they legitimize its existence and strengthen its attack, particularly in the context of the aforementioned middlebrow status of adaptation, in which social critique is an expectable characteristic.

The connection between what may broadly be described as “heritage” television and cinema and a claim to historical fact is explored by Jane Mattisson. Mattisson argues that popular fiction in television such as *Downton Abbey* “produces history for the many as opposed to the specialized academic history written for the few”.<sup>362</sup> Certainly, the middlebrow nature of both Wodehouse and Waugh and their respective adaptations render them, by definition, “for the many”, and their historical backdrop places these adaptations within a nexus of texts which influence cultural memory. This does not apply only to Parkinson’s fictive Jeeves biography, but to more recent works such as *Decline and Fall* (2017) and *Blandings* (2013). Mattisson’s notion that television series such as the Wodehouse and Waugh adaptations under discussion constitute “the primary means by which people learn about history today”, combined with Sanders’s suggestion that adaptation purports to uncover certain historical truths has profound implications in terms of the satiric representation of oppressive women and victimised men in which these writers indulge. It is perfectly feasible to suppose that adaptations such as Parkinson’s, alongside any adaptation which introduces these interwar antifeminist satires to a fresh audience, might be erroneously read as depictions of the “hidden histories” of men who its audience believes were genuinely oppressed by women. The power of the adaptation to offer a certain amount of historicity to these antifeminist fictions, combined, of course, with adaptation’s ability to breathe fresh life into the satiric impulse which pervades these works, serves to add fuel to such problematic fires.

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<sup>362</sup> Jane Mattisson, “Downton Abbey: a Cultural Phenomenon. History for the Many,” *Sic- A Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation* 5, no. 1.5 (December 01, 2014), doi:10.15291/sic/1.5.lc.4.

Perhaps this chapter should conclude, however, with a more precise consideration of the mechanisms by which adaptation breathes new life into satire. In Chapter II, I cited Dustin Griffin's suggestion that satire, which he, among others, characterises as a parasite, is capable of overwhelming its host, albeit not in the case of the novel. Remarkably similar terms are employed in the derogatory depiction of adaptation, as Robert Stam notes:

if mutation is the means by which the evolutionary process advances, then we can also see filmic adaptations as 'mutations' that help their source novel 'survive'. Do not adaptations 'adapt to' changing environments and changing tastes, as well as to a new medium, with distinct industrial demands, commercial pressures, censorship taboos, and aesthetic norms? And are adaptations not a hybrid form like the orchid, the meeting place of different 'species'? For La Roche, creating a hybrid is like playing at being God Almighty. But La Roche also invokes the metaphor of the parasite, a trope typically deployed against adaptations, seen as parasitical on their source texts and on the A-list prestige of literature. La Roche speaks of giant flower parasites that devour and kill their host tree, much as critics speak of adaptations which overwhelm and vampirize their sources, 'sucking the life' out of their 'hosts'.<sup>363</sup>

Of course, such views are the product of a process of cultural stratification whereby adaptations, especially filmic and televisual adaptations, are ranked below their literary counterparts, just as the literary middlebrow has been much-maligned for its perceived cultural inferiority. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, adaptation is middlebrow.

Hutcheon offers a pertinent counter-reading to the notion of adaptation-as-parasite:

An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise. Yet Richard Dawkins argues that because ideas propagate themselves by imitation, they are like either malign or benign parasites. When we plant a fertile idea in someone's mind, he says, we turn it into a vehicle for the idea's propagation 'in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell' [...] is this how some stories propagate? Adaptations reveal that stories do seem to have what he calls either high or low 'infective power'.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Robert Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Allesendra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>364</sup> Hutcheon, p. 176.

Once we begin, as Hutcheon tacitly advocates, to perceive adaptation as a source of life, we may therefore be able to understand it as a potential host for the insidious satire of Wodehouse and Waugh. This satire is as insidious as the “ideas” which Dawkins associates with “parasites”. Dawkins notes that parasites may be both “malign” and “benign”; I would suggest that the satirical parasite which these adaptations “propagate” enters into a symbiotic relationship with its host. In this relationship, the host-adaptation ensures the survival of its satirical parasite, while the parasite renders unnecessary those “mutations” which Stam argues are necessary in the face of, among other things, “new [...] commercial taboos” and “changing tastes”, allowing for a marked increase in fidelity which, as this chapter has noted, is still prized by audiences. By allowing the adaptation to access antifeminism, a sentiment which still finds an audience today, cultural relevance is assured while preserving a large amount of fidelity. When interviewed, the cast of *Decline and Fall* (2017) enthusiastically note the continuing relevance of Waugh’s satire, yet, when forced to name some of his targets, the list quickly trails off with reference to “mad German architects”.<sup>365</sup> This pervasive understanding that Waugh’s satire is still pertinent, combined with an inability to convincingly articulate why, precisely, that is, encapsulates the subtlety of this antifeminism and its ability to symbiotically benefit its host without recourse to the overt mutation Stam perceives as necessary. Clearly, neither the adaptors of this text, nor those of the earlier *Jeeves and Wooster* (1990) felt the need to update their respective settings to the twenty-first-century in the manner of the ever-popular *Sherlock* (2012), in order to accommodate, as Stam has it, “changing tastes”. By the same token, this symbiosis renders “mutation” to avoid, per Stam, “new [...] commercial taboos” apparently unnecessary: the perceived cosiness of Wodehouse

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<sup>365</sup> Jack Whitehall, “Satire”, *Decline and Fall*, Directed by Guillem Morales. Written by James Wood. BBC, first aired 31st March 2017.

and Waugh, as established in Chapter I, allows for Hugh Laurie's blackface, for example, to exist untroubled by such taboos, thus demonstrating that such adaptations constitute the ideal vehicle for the subtler practice of the satire against women charted throughout this thesis. In establishing a symbiotic relationship between the adaptation-host and its "benign" satiric parasite, which is only achievable when the intrinsically middlebrow subject of adaptation is treated with sufficient respect to be considered its own entity, we can trace the system by which this satire leaps from host to host, thus more convincingly painting a picture of a satire which, via what Dawkins terms "infective power", has taken insidious root across a wide variety of mediums throughout British culture.

As the Conclusion of this thesis will discuss in greater depth, Casey argues that teaching and studying the middlebrow "potentially makes the study of literature less precious and more relevant to everyday acts and concerns—a reinvigoration that has important ramifications in a world in which the arts and humanities disciplines are frequently accused of being out of touch".<sup>366</sup> Thus far, this thesis has been concerned with establishing the premise of an antifeminist satire borne of such popular writers that its problematic censure has been capable of taking insidious root in the culture of the last century. However, the fact that it has been a century—Jeeves was born over one hundred years ago—does not necessarily imply relevance to the everyday: though Wodehouse and Waugh are still widely read, their works certainly lack the reach of contemporary television and film. By applying similar principles to the inherently middlebrow practice of adaptation, however, and charting the manners in which this antifeminist satire is able to thrive, not only in 1936's *Thank You, Jeeves!*, but even within a 2017 BBC One miniseries, the middlebrow may absolutely be considered less "precious" than the study of other fields, and certainly more pertinent to everyday life. Moreover, in acknowledging the multiple mediums through which this satire

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<sup>366</sup> Casey, p. 33.

survives, we are forced to confront the important question of to what extent this insidious satire, borne of ostensibly harmless comic writing, is capable of bringing about the reformation to which satire lays claim. If such subtle satire is sufficiently efficacious, the spread of antifeminism absolutely constitutes an “everyday [...] concern”, and it is to this question that the Conclusion turns.

## Conclusion

For sarcasm to be effective, the user of it must be met halfway. His hearer must appear to be conscious of the sarcasm and moved by it. Mike, when masters waxed sarcastic toward him, always assumed an air of stolid stupidity, which was as a suit of mail against satire.<sup>367</sup>

Wodehouse makes an excellent point, and one which is deeply pertinent to the interests of this thesis. The previous chapters have argued for an especially insidious breed of satiric attack, one which is covert, masked, and which benefits from a critical culture of either neglect or celebration. That this insidiousness renders the satire durable and therefore capable, as Chapter III argues, of surviving up to the present day, is moot if the satiric target is not “conscious”, as Wodehouse has it, of attack: “satire is only effective if it is perceived by persons other than its author to be such”.<sup>368</sup> The question of satire’s efficacy, or lack thereof, haunts its scholarship and, given that the argument I construct revolves, to some extent, around victims unaware of and unmoved by the attack to which they are subject, Wodehouse and Waugh would appear to present their victims with “mail” against which their satire cannot penetrate. In this sense, my thesis does not appear to contribute to discussions of efficacy. Ralph M. Rosen, however, argues that satire, as it is traditionally understood, is beset by paradoxical positions which render it unable to produce the behavioural or attitudinal changes to which it lays claim. Viewed in this context, the notion of an insidious satire is held in an altogether different light. Per Rosen:

Satirists can never really be successful at censuring, entertaining, and instructing--the three defining pretences of satire-- the same group of people. Satirical targets implicitly need to be taught, after all, but they will not relish being attacked, and so will not be amused, nor will they likely appreciate the satirist's art. It is also quite

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<sup>367</sup> P.G. Wodehouse, *Mike and Psmith* (OTB eBook Publishing, 2015), p. 69. All further references will be to this edition.

<sup>368</sup> Gilmore, p. 3.

unlikely that they would change their mind or behaviour as a result of the satire's censure.<sup>369</sup>

This is the crux of Rosen's argument. The victims cannot be instructed to improve themselves if they take umbrage to the satirist's censure or, by extension, if they are oblivious to it. As a consequence, Rosen argues that satire is simply unable to successfully offer its claim of persuasion via didacticism, and it certainly cannot alter the world it attacks. Yet Rosen makes certain foundational assumptions which limit his argument: the claim that "satirical targets implicitly need to be taught" is not one which I believe applies to the antifeminism of Wodehouse and Waugh, and therein lies the power of their satirical subtlety.

As Frances Donaldson notes, Wodehouse's audience, in common with all masculine middlebrow writers, was largely male ("out of every ten Wodehouse addicts only one will be a woman"<sup>370</sup>). We can assume the same of Waugh, given his disdain for women readers. It is for this reason that Kate Macdonald's collection on the masculine middlebrow invokes the reading habits of "*Mr. Miniver*", while Nicola Humble's aforementioned argument that the feminine middlebrow "addressed" its women readers suggests, equally, that the masculine middlebrow addresses men. Though there are no doubt myriad woman readers of both satirists also, it is not controversial to suggest that the intended readership for Wodehouse and Waugh would have been predominantly male; consequently, in these texts' capacities as vehicles for antifeminist satire, it is unlikely that they were written with a view to "instructing" their targets: women who benefit from feminist advances. Chapter III of this thesis cites Northrop Frye's notion of attacking "persisting [...] sentiments", in this instance, feminism. Feminism is a concept or movement, as opposed to the collection of individual targets which Rosen perhaps envisages in his depiction of political satire, though certainly

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<sup>369</sup> Ralph M. Rosen, "Efficacy and Meaning in Ancient and Modern Political Satire: Aristophanes, Lenny Bruce, and Jon Stewart," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): accessed March 26, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/docview/1019433859/fulltextPDF/BA6151304D834873PQ/1?accountid=8630>.

<sup>370</sup> Donaldson, p. 14.

individual figures may form part of antifeminist attack. With a readership which is not largely comprised of the satiric object, and that object being somewhat nebulous in any case, it is difficult to credit Rosen's claim that "satirical targets implicitly need to be taught" in this instance. This is reflected in the texts themselves, of course. Jeeves is an "immortal"<sup>371</sup> superman: a "godlike prime mover"<sup>372</sup> capable of solving the problems of Bertie and his friends without difficulty; yet, for all his intellectual brilliance and Machiavellian flair, he is incapable of convincing the women who plague Bertie to reform. The short story "Bertie Changes His Mind", dismissed by Brian D. Holcomb as "a rather mundane story that adds little to the Jeeves oeuvre"<sup>373</sup> is, in fact, greatly illustrative of the scope and limitations of Jeeves's instructive powers and, by extension, the satire channelled through him.

The story is framed by Jeeves bringing Bertie his daily whisky and siphon: as the plot commences, Bertie complains of the "bally monotony"<sup>374</sup> of this ritual, leading to a short-lived desire for children which Jeeves swiftly quashes by manipulating Bertie into making a speech in front of unpleasant schoolgirls. By the denouement of the story, the arrival of the whisky is repeated with a markedly different attitude from Bertie: "bally monotony" has become "dashed jolly".<sup>375</sup> Even in this brief outline of the plot, Rosen's three elements of satire are clearly present: censure is directed towards the unpalatable girls; entertainment evident in the humorous juxtaposition between title and content (clearly, Jeeves changes Bertie's mind); and instruction, crucially, is paramount: Bertie has (re)learned that bachelorhood is preferable to marriage and fatherhood. This tripartite separation of satiric qualities allows us to observe that Wodehouse has no desire to instruct the victims of his

<sup>371</sup> N.T.P. Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook Volume One: The World of Wodehouse* (Sackville, N.B: Sybertooth Inc., 2013) p. 76.

<sup>372</sup> Richard Usborne, *Plum Sauce: A P.G. Wodehouse Companion* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2003), p. 86.

<sup>373</sup> Holcomb, p. 226.

<sup>374</sup> "Bertie Changes His Mind", p. 692.

<sup>375</sup> "Bertie Changes His Mind", p. 707.

censure. Jeeves knows that his powers are not equal to the task of manipulating or placating an adopted girl. Given the enormity of those powers, this implicit admission is consistent with Wodehouse's creation of a world in which women are both overwhelmingly dominant and objectively unpalatable, an issue addressed in multiple points of this thesis. As such, he does not make the attempt to bring the moral-didactic qualities of satire to bear upon women. His antifeminist satire attacks women, but it does not do so in an effort to "reform" them, in the hope that they might give up what he depicts as the oppressive powers of emancipation. Rather, Wodehouse concentrates the instructive element of satire on his largely male readership, exploiting the satirist's traditional "position of practical inferiority (he has less power and agency than his target) but moral superiority (he has the high ground and tries to expose his target's wrongful behaviour)".<sup>376</sup> Men in the world of Jeeves are incapable of resisting the oppressive power of women. This notion at once enhances the satiric censure implicit in their depiction and guides Wodehouse's didactic advice to the male readership to whom he "exposes" his target's "wrongful behaviour": cultivate male friendships; resist the 'oppressive' advances of feminism; and recognize androcentricity as a "dashed jolly" state. In so doing, Wodehouse draws on an ancient tradition of antifeminist satire: as Nussbaum notes, such satires historically "exhort men to rise above lust, to suppress their physical desires, [and] to avoid marriage",<sup>377</sup> and such exhortation can only occur when antifeminism is directed towards men, as opposed to its target of women. Paul Pennyfeather finds solace in a similar conclusion; thus, both writers offer what Dasenbrock considers satire's necessary "alternative"<sup>378</sup> to the society they deride.

In its subtlety, then, the antifeminist satire under consideration here effectively confounds Rosen's argument. As opposed to an overtly signposted attack on women which

<sup>376</sup> Rosen, p. 8.

<sup>377</sup> Nussbaum, p. 160.

<sup>378</sup> Dasenbrock, p. 248.

could not succeed in bringing about reformation, this satire has the potential to enact change due precisely, as we have seen, to the insidiousness charted throughout this thesis, particularly Chapter II. This is an appeal to a male readership, one which may, at least to some extent, be receptive to the satirical message underpinning the machinations of Jeeves, and efficaciousness is an entirely plausible consequence. As such, insidious satire supports Frye's hypothesis that, "in order to attack anything, satirist and audience must agree on its undesirability".<sup>379</sup> To cite a more recent critic, Gilmore concurs, noting that "the writers in the long history of misogynistic satire could safely assume that most of their readers would share their views".<sup>380</sup> Yet he concludes that this limitation of engagement allows the "dissatisfaction" associated with such satire to "dissipate itself harmlessly".<sup>381</sup> As we have seen, the antifeminist satiric impulse Wodehouse and Waugh allude to survives via adaptation to the present. At the very least, the capacity of this impulse to reinforce existing misogyny via its satirical censure is not a recipe for dissipation (Helen Chenut argues such satire's "cathartic function" can equally "enflame" antifeminist passions<sup>382</sup>) and it is far from inconceivable that such reinforcement can have deleterious consequences. Such 'reinforcement' is notable in a recent article on racism in the twenty-first century British sitcom:

Key to understanding the 'racist joke' is that the stereotypes that inform this humour are based in contemporary attitudes towards particular groups in society. In order to 'get' a racist joke, stereotypes must be recognized and credible for the hearer. Ronald DeSousa (1987) identifies that when a person finds jokes expressing either sexist or racist stereotype assumptions funny, they implicitly accept these stereotypes' assumptions about the nature of the other.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Northrop Frye, "The Nature of Satire" *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (October 1944), p. 77. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/article/551010/pdf>.

<sup>380</sup> Gilmore, p. 184.

<sup>381</sup> Gilmore, p. 185.

<sup>382</sup> Helen Chenut, "Anti-feminist Caricature in France: Politics, Satire and Public Opinion, 1890–1914", *Modern & Contemporary France* Vol. 20, No. 1 (November 2012) p. 441.

<sup>383</sup> Lloyd Peters and Sue Becker, "Racism in comedy reappraised: Back to Little England?" *Comedy Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2010) p. 193.

As such, problematic humour does not “create” racism or sexism but “reproduce[s] and validate[s]” the “already existing” racism or sexism.<sup>384</sup> This is the process to which Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s satire, in addressing their didacticism in the antifeminist satirical tradition towards men, contribute. As Lumley notes, there is no need to differentiate, in this context, the comic and the satirical: “laughter and criticism”, he argues, are the two fundamentals of satire, but they are not contradictory, since “Laughter is the assumption of a superior position in the group and therefore is a criticism of everything inferior [...] Laughter is a withdrawal upwards and therefore is a condemnation of all below it”,<sup>385</sup> a notion in accordance with Baldick’s more recent assertion that comedy appeals to “a sense of superiority”.<sup>386</sup> In this sense, to find “sexist or racist stereotype assumptions funny” is to become both complicit in a problematic stance, and simultaneously enshrouded in the superior moral ‘high ground’ to which satire lays claim, even before considering the vast array of persuasive satirical techniques and traditions documented throughout this thesis. The result, at the least, is the reproduction or validation of such problematic stances.

The relationship between satirical insidiousness and unthinking complicity is also efficiently addressed via consideration of “Bertie Changes His Mind”. In this light, Ann Rea’s correct assertion that, in Wodehouse’s attack on the highbrow, the reader, through their enjoyment of the attack, becomes “complicit”,<sup>387</sup> takes on greater significance. The reader could be forgiven for arguing that, given the joke implicit in the title, the true target of Wodehouse’s satire here is Bertie and the idle rich social class that he represents. The manipulative power of Jeeves, a middlebrow critic might posit, represents the intellectual triumph of the middle class over the upper class, and in the censorious depiction of the idle rich, we find the ‘true’ satiric target, one which deals with the class preoccupation

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid, p. 194.

<sup>385</sup> Lumley, p. 282.

<sup>386</sup> Baldick, p. 100.

<sup>387</sup> Rea, “Reading Up”, p. 38.

characteristic of the middlebrow. As such, the attack is directed towards a group who can afford to be ridiculed, while ensuring the comfort and ‘cosiness’ of Wodehouse’s Eden is not marred by problematic connotations. This is the most fundamental aspect of this satire’s subtlety. As Orwell points out, the Bertie Woosters of this world, inasmuch as they existed at all, were killed by 1915.<sup>388</sup> Moreover, the ancient antecedents of role reversal as depicted in the balance of power between Bertie and his valet are simply not associated with satiric efficacy; as Gilmore, writing on the distinction between humour and its satirical counterpart, notes,

role reversal, with masters changing places with their slaves or servants, was a feature of the ancient Roman Saturnalia [...] but whatever satirical adjuncts may have gone with this [...] the disruption of the established order was purely temporary, and, by functioning as a sort of safety valve, may have actively helped to secure its continuance.<sup>389</sup>

Roz Tuplin comes to a similar conclusion, noting simply that the Jeeves canon’s portrayal of the idle rich is ultimately “affectionate” and “validates the continuing dominance of the upper classes”.<sup>390</sup> Wodehouse makes the reader complicit in his antifeminist attack on the strength of misreading of his censure, as the reader accedes to Wodehouse’s use of Bertie as a satiric persona, in which his “self-directed humour” via the part he plays in ostensibly contributing to an attack on his own social class “strengthens the authority of the persona and help[s] to win the audience’s sympathy”.<sup>391</sup> This is undoubtedly achieved; I think Richard Usborne speaks for most readers in recording that “my heart aches for [Bertie] in his enormous agonies and rejoices with him in his puny exaltations”.<sup>392</sup> As such, lip service is paid to an attack on the idle rich while securing Bertie’s authority as a subtle instrument of antifeminist satire. Jeeves’s manipulation, as mentioned above, is not equal to the task of altering or

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<sup>388</sup> Orwell, “In Defence of P.G. Wodehouse”, p. 59.

<sup>389</sup> Gilmore, p. 12.

<sup>390</sup> Tuplin, p. 207.

<sup>391</sup> Maria Plaza, *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughing and Lying* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 167.

<sup>392</sup> Richard Usborne, *Wodehouse: At Work to the End* (Middlesex: London Books, 1978), p. 193.

controlling the women in this or any other Jeeves story. Had he bribed the girls, perhaps, to cause Bertie unease, or had he known in advance that the school to which he takes Bertie is particularly notorious, perhaps this argument would stand. Instead, Jeeves merely contrives the breakdown of their car, and tricks the headmistress into believing Bertie to be an orator. Jeeves is secure in the knowledge that all women are unpalatable, and this knowledge is put to use whenever Bertie “lapses” by briefly falling in love or desiring progeny. The only purpose Jeeves’s manipulations serve, on such occasions, is to demonstrate to Bertie that the woman he is temporarily enamoured by is unpleasant: perhaps a criminal, as in “Aunt Agatha Takes The Count”, perhaps tyrannically didactic, as in “Jeeves Takes Charge”. Consequently, Jeeves is a recognizable instrument of the satirist’s “concern for the innocent or the self-destructive fool”.<sup>393</sup> As Nussbaum observes with regards to Juvenal’s notoriously misogynistic *Satire VI*, “The satire makes no pretence of reforming women [...] The end of the satire seems to be to persuade men who are stricken by love’s darts that they can extricate themselves from the entrapment of marriage if they will only rid themselves of illusions about women”<sup>394</sup> (Wodehouse was aware of Juvenal: as Dupeyron-Lafay notes, Bertie offers a garbled quotation of that ancient satirist, comically mixing “Latin and colloquial words and phrases”<sup>395</sup>). Not only does this support my argument regarding men being the true addressees of Wodehouse’s and Waugh’s antifeminist didacticism, but Nussbaum also offers a model for reading Jeeves as a character: his manipulation of Bertie cannot be attributed solely to a gentle ridicule of the upper-class. Rather, he is a satiric instrument of disillusionment, allowing Bertie to “rid” himself of his “illusions about women”. If we read

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<sup>393</sup> Ruben Quintero, “Understanding Satire” in *A Companion to Satire*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>394</sup> Nussbaum, p. 78.

<sup>395</sup> Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay, “P. G. Wodehouse’s ‘Thoughtful Lightness’ and Detached Involvement: Satire, Parody and the Subversive Use of the Canonical Intertext in *Code of the Woosters* (1938)”, *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines: Revue de la Société d'Etudes Anglaises Contemporaines* Vol. 51 (Dec 2016) DOI: 10.4000/ebc.3425

these manipulations of Bertie as a simple attack on the upper classes, we allow ourselves into unthinking complicity with Wodehouse's fundamental assumptions about the role and nature of women. Making the reader complicit is equally true of Waugh's problematic and deleterious satire. *Black Mischief* may well use comparison to Azania to suggest modern Britain is barbarous, but he relies on our acceptance of a more fundamental and insidious satiric stance: that the benchmark for barbarity is to be set by African nations. On the subject of *Black Mischief* and unpalatable efficacy, Christopher Sykes reports that Waugh's reputation in Ethiopia, following the publication of his "disgusting novel", was that of the man who "had done more damage than any other Englishman to Anglo-Ethiopian relations".<sup>396</sup> Antifeminism is the more potent example across the works of these writers, but it can be replaced by any harmful stance on a range of issues in the vast array of satirical middlebrow works.

That these are middlebrow works adds further layers of significance to discussions of these texts' abilities to bring about, or reinforce, negative attitudes towards women and feminism. One such layer is a further rationale for the crafting of an insidious antifeminism. Not only does this subtlety offer greater endurance for Wodehouse's and Waugh's satire and a reprieve from potential critical condemnation, but in it we may detect the pragmatism notable in middlebrow literature. One of the primary concerns of the middlebrow writer is, fundamentally, to sell; Einhaus makes an important distinction between "art" and "craft"<sup>397</sup> in this regard, in which Wodehouse produces the latter. Similarly, Sykes opines that Waugh "always regarded himself, first and foremost, as a craftsman".<sup>398</sup> Consequently, though the readership of the Jeeves stories was largely comprised of men, it would be poor business practice to alienate great swathes of the reading public— women— by openly signposting an

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<sup>396</sup> Sykes, p. 120.

<sup>397</sup> Einhaus, p. 22.

<sup>398</sup> Sykes, p. 322.

antifeminist impulse, particularly given, as Chapter II discussed, the note of commercial competition inherent in Wodehouse's and Waugh's satirical depictions of women writers. This commercial pragmatism is particularly notable in Wodehouse, who kept detailed records of his literary earnings from the beginning of his career,<sup>399</sup> and whose middlebrow status is partially characterized by readerly inclusivity, rejecting, as Einhaus puts it, the "cult of obscurity" surrounding the highbrow, which Wodehouse effectively believed "meant to exclude rather than include readers".<sup>400</sup> As such, these writers are able to have their cake, to use a colloquialism, and eat it, given that—as discussed above—their antifeminist censure need only be registered by those members of the predominantly male readership who are already more amenable to the notion. Their misogyny concludes that emancipated women cannot be reformed; their desire to sell dictates that women should not be alienated; thus, insidious satire within a middlebrow vehicle simultaneously brings about a deleterious impact while spreading its reach as widely as possible (and, by extension, its ability to further its troubling impact).

A more significant aspect of these texts' middlebrow status, however, is the manner in which this academic category interacts with, and bolsters, satirical efficacy. Returning to "Bertie Changes His Mind", we find that this short story actively acknowledges the power of popular texts to instruct or persuade their audiences, allowing for an insight into Wodehouse's understanding of that power. Bertie's desire to become a father is brought about by seeing a play in which a man meets a daughter he never knew he had ("left over from act one"<sup>401</sup>). Bertie envies the protagonist's relationship with his "jolly little girl".<sup>402</sup> This play represents the increased societal pressure on bachelors in the years during, and slightly prior to, Wodehouse's literary ascendency. Nicola Humble observes that

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<sup>399</sup> McCrum, p. 56.

<sup>400</sup> Einhaus, p. 28.

<sup>401</sup> "Bertie Changes His Mind", p. 692.

<sup>402</sup> "Bertie Changes His Mind", p. 693.

an increasing note of concern emerges in nineteenth-century Britain about the tendency among the middle classes to delay marriage. [...] The implication here – that marriage is hard, unpleasant, expensive work undertaken only out of a sense of duty – may go some way to explain why the bachelor might appear an attractively escapist figure to a male readership.<sup>403</sup>

For Wodehouse, the instrument through which society’s “note of concern” towards the figure of the bachelor is channelled is not based upon economics or litigation, but popular fiction. Bertie’s absentmindedness regarding the name of the production (he refers to the play itself as “I-forget-its-dashed-name [...] on at the What-d’you-call-it”<sup>404</sup>) suggests that its inherent concern towards bachelorhood is commonplace, and the play could be one of many. The “hard, unpleasant, expensive work” which constitutes marriage (and, by extension, fatherhood) has featured in this thesis as a primary target of antifeminist attack, and Wodehouse’s suggestion that popular, middlebrow fiction is capable of instructing and persuading Bertie to fold in the face of societal pressure is telling. Not only does this suggest that Wodehouse understood his own satirical work to be a potential agent for change, but, moreover, this acknowledgement tallies with precisely the sort of middlebrow criticism which, as I argued, in Chapter I, has played a part in facilitating the insidiousness upon which this unpalatable satire hinges. While the notion of satire as a force for change is endlessly disputed—as Nussbaum notes, “Whether satire leads to reform in the case of satires against women probably cannot be determined”<sup>405</sup>—the notion of middlebrow literature as impactful and capable of reformation of some sort or another is advocated by scholars without any such baggage. As such, satire’s efficacy becomes entwined with the ability of middlebrow texts, as Humble suggests, to “shape”<sup>406</sup> their readers and bring about some form of practical effect.

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<sup>403</sup> Nicola Humble, “From Holmes to the Drones: Fantasies of Men without Women in the Masculine Middlebrow” in *The Masculine Middlebrow 1890-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 95.

<sup>404</sup> “Bertie Changes His Mind”, p. 692.

<sup>405</sup> Nussbaum, p. 17.

<sup>406</sup> Humble, *Feminine Middlebrow*, p. 11.

This is a recurrent notion in middlebrow studies. Anna Vaninskaya notes the “social criticism” inherent in some middlebrow texts is evident in Virginia Woolf’s assertion that middlebrow fiction does not feel “complete” until the reader does something, “join[s] a society, or, more desperately, [...] write[s] a cheque”.<sup>407</sup> Ann Ardis suggests that middlebrow periodicals bring about the “production of modern citizen-subjects”,<sup>408</sup> Catherine Clay makes a similar assertion in such texts’ part in the “re-shaping of women’s identities”,<sup>409</sup> while Melissa Schaub goes so far as to suggest that middlebrow detective fiction “can shape its readers into feminists”.<sup>410</sup> This latter assertion is particularly striking in light of my understanding of the antifeminist use of detective fiction in Chapter II. If feminism in the likes of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers can make feminists of its readers, it is no stretch to suggest that the satirical inhabitation of detective fiction is capable of causing the reverse, “shaping” readers into pronounced antifeminists.

The arguments this thesis has presented, for a reading of insidious antifeminist satire and for an associated negative efficacy, converge upon our understanding of the middlebrow. In the Introduction to this thesis I suggested, citing Kate Macdonald’s manifesto for a scholarly attitude of conscious and recuperative celebration and respect towards middlebrow literature, that such a critical culture has the capacity to obfuscate the more troubling aspects of the middlebrow. Chapter I fleshed out the notion somewhat, drawing a connection between a preoccupation with “anxiety” and apology. Given the cultural stratification inherent in the middlebrow’s position in relation to the canon, it is nonetheless highly tempting to follow such an example: Einhaus notes as recently as 2016 (citing Brown and Grover) that the term

<sup>407</sup> Anna Vaninskaya, “The Political Middlebrow from Chesterton to Orwell” in *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr Miniver Read*, ed. Kate Macdonald (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p. 164.

<sup>408</sup> Ann Ardis, “Making Middlebrow Literary Texts Matter”, *Modernist Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2011) p. 21.

<sup>409</sup> Catherine Clay, “WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT—If the Highbrow Weeklies Advertised like the Patent Foods’: *Time and Tide*, Advertising, and the Battle of the Brows”, *Modernist Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2011) p. 62.

<sup>410</sup> Schaub, p. ix.

“remains” a “pejorative”<sup>411</sup> label for many; clearly, significant strides are still required in changing perceptions of the middlebrow in spite of the ever-growing and admirable amount of scholarship dedicated to it. ‘Admirable’ is precisely the term: I do not intend for my diagnosis of slightly excessive critical apology to signal disapproval of the field, but to enhance it. Brown and Grover open their collection with the desire to demonstrate that the middlebrow “*matters*”,<sup>412</sup> [emphasis theirs] and this thesis, I believe, serves to enhance that understanding, simply pointing out that the manner in which the middlebrow “*matters*” will not always be flattering. Even in light of the slight limitations of middlebrow scholarship, however, this thesis has shown that this lens is an essential one through which we can explore problematic satire. The emphasis as cited above on the middlebrow’s capacity to “shape” its readers is indicative of a tacit understanding of the power—of, perhaps, the force for ‘good’—middlebrow scholarship is capable of, while the inherently gendered nature of middlebrow study is crucial context for an exploration of antifeminism. As I touched upon in Chapter I, I reiterate here: Ali Brox argues that a lack of critical acknowledgement risks effacing satire’s “reformative and didactic potential”,<sup>413</sup> but I disagree: its ability to reform, such as it is, is determined by the readership and its “reaction”,<sup>414</sup> as Lumley has it, to the satire. Criticism does, however, hold the power to expose the problematic elements of the satire, better to overtly reveal what the audience may otherwise become unthinkingly complicit in. The argument this thesis ultimately advances, then, is that there is a certain responsibility inherent in literary criticism, not only to refuse to neglect middlebrow texts peripheral to the canon, but to ensure that there is not an excessive culture of celebration attached to those texts; the presence of insidiously problematic aspects of ostensibly harmless

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<sup>411</sup> Einhaus, p. 16.

<sup>412</sup> Brown and Grover, p. 1.

<sup>413</sup> Ali Brox, “Simple on Satire: Langston Hughes, Gender, and Satiric Double-Consciousness”, *Studies in American Humour*, New Series 3, Issue 21, January 2010, p. 15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42573584>

<sup>414</sup> Lumley, p. 254.

middlebrow works, as we have seen, could feasibly lead to an unpalatable efficacy. Janet Galligani Casey's essay on the importance of teaching the middlebrow demonstrates a tacit acknowledgement of the responsibilities inherent in this field of study, noting that

The middlebrow [...] potentially makes the study of literature less precious and more relevant to everyday acts and concerns—a reinvigoration that has important ramifications in a world in which the arts and humanities disciplines are frequently accused of being out of touch.<sup>415</sup>

As Chapter III observes, this satire borne, at least partially, of an interwar gender ambiguity thrives today. In studying the depiction of fictitiously oppressed men and oppressive women in the context of popular culture and with the understanding that such fictions can have real-world ramifications, it is not difficult to draw points of connection to “everyday acts and concerns”: recent sociological studies have shown that a similar “belief of men as victims”<sup>416</sup> is notable in antifeminist websites and forums, for example. In Casey's argument, traces of Terry Eagleton's understanding of the function of criticism are detectable:

it is arguable that criticism was only ever significant when it engaged with more than literary issues—when, for whatever historical reason, the ‘literary’ was suddenly foregrounded as the medium of vital concerns deeply rooted in the general intellectual, cultural and political life of an epoch [...] It has only been when criticism, in the act of speaking of literature, emits a lateral message about the shape and destiny of a whole culture that its voice has compelled widespread attention.<sup>417</sup>

While “the shape and destiny of a whole culture” might be ever so slightly beyond the scope of this thesis, these comments, in conjunction with Casey's understanding of middlebrow study as a medium through which everyday concerns can be addressed, offer a model for the ethical responsibilities inherent in middlebrow scholarship which must touch upon unpalatable satirical content. The middlebrow is frequently given to social critique, and therefore the study of it can be “foregrounded as the medium of vital concerns”, as Eagleton

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<sup>415</sup> Casey, p. 33.

<sup>416</sup> Rachel Schmitz and Emily Kazyak, “Masculinities in Cyberspace: An Analysis of Portrayals of Manhood in Men's Rights Activist Websites”, *Social Sciences* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2016) DOI: [10.3390/socsci5020018](https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5020018).

<sup>417</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 107.

advocates and Casey echoes. As such, there is both an ethical and scholarly responsibility implicit in the study of middlebrow satire: in challenging the more troubling elements of its subjects, middlebrow criticism is at once capable of uprooting the insidious growth of those unpalatable elements of the satire which, per its own scholars, is capable of “shaping” readers, while—in so doing—making the study of literature “less precious” by addressing genuine and ongoing issues. As such, fundamentally, and as this thesis has demonstrated, middlebrow criticism should involve an extended objection to every aspect of Stephen Fry’s summation of the Jeeves saga, one which adorns the blurb of every recent edition of that collection: “You don’t analyse such sunlit perfection”.

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