

A Postcolonial Feminist Reading of Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust, Black Mischief and Scoop*

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ABSTRACT

Evelyn Waugh is commonly said to be a misogynist. However, his stance toward women was ambiguous. For, though he presents a male world in his fiction and his racialist tendencies, Eurocentricism and class consciousness almost always color his attitude toward women, he also provides the reader with some challenging roles for women. This is echoed in his depiction of the 'sexed subaltern' who often belongs to categories such as Oriental, colonized, non-white and underclass women. The female subaltern, then, is arguably triply colonized, this time by the author. Working from a postcolonial feminist perspective, in the present article an attempt is made to portray the complicity of racism, sexism, colonialism, and even the first world Feminism in the discourse of Western Imperialism in making the colonized women more colonized. To serve this end, representations of Wauvian women in *A Handful of Dust*, *Black Mischief* and *Scoop* are explored to shed light on, firstly, Waugh's attempt to colonize all women literarily and secondly, his biased attitude toward the non-western women as alterity.

Keywords: Evelyn Waugh; *A Handful of Dust*; *Black Mischief*; *Scoop*; Alterity; Sexed Subaltern; Colonialism; Oriental; Racism

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, Waugh's writing, a "theatre of cruelty" (qtd. in Lane 103) in Stannard's words, is split into two eras: his early works which are mostly satiric, comedic and a kind of social criticism with a "bitter wit" (8), and works after his conversion in 1930. In fact, in the three novels under discussion in this study – *A Handful of Dust*, *Black Mischief* and *Scoop* – he chooses satire as a means to write a colonial text where the ideas of gender, race, class, ethnicity and nationality all come together to put on display an absurd view of human life. As his novels offer, he attacks mostly the individual woman than, to use his own phrase, "a rabble of women" (Ibid.).

That is, he does not deal with women *in general*; he is rather concerned with individual women *in particular* situations and locales. In fact, unlike the male heroes who are often defeated in their journeys, or those who could not be satisfied by the ways of life, the women act differently in these novels and by assuming different roles and positions assert their agency and individuality. However, it is important to note the way Waugh, as a segregationist, treats his female characters.

Here a consideration of the differences between the colonized and the colonizer women and the way Waugh characterize them based upon their differences is necessary. A close reading of these novels is undertaken in what follows to see whether Waugh gives his sexed subalterns a voice or not.

Therefore, regarding the documents proving that Waugh was not a defender of any particular policy or political line, it could be suggested that his concern with colonialism and imperialism and also his Orientalist thinking in fiction is indeed born out of his adventure-loving temperament and his racial and gender-conscious attitudes.

One should remember that behind all these works set in a colonial context there is a general 'satirical attack' on the European modern world, men, and specially, women. To see whether Wauvian women — whether white or non-white — can speak in the colonial context of these novels the present research uses a postcolonial feminist approach as well as Spivak's notion of the subaltern.

Postcolonial feminism is neither a subset of postcolonialism nor a variety of feminism. It is an "intervention" that brings many changes in both of these trends. According to Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park, postcolonial feminism is an "exploration" of colonialism and neocolonialism and their preoccupation "with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivity, work, sexuality, and rights" (53). Likewise, Teresa de Lauretis claims that a feminist theory is not possible save in relation to "postcolonial mode". Postcolonial feminist critics attack both the Third world feminists and the First World feminists because of their biased attitudes. They are, actually, interested in the examination of the roles of women in "freedom struggles" (qtd. in Rajan and Park 54). These critics are also fond of investigating the way the "colonial modernity's reformist legislations" have affected women from different classes, races, communities and castes (61).

A Handful of Dust, *Scoop* and *Black Mischiefs* provide the reader with a good context to investigate the condition of subaltern women. In a harsh criticism of the western feminism, Spivak puts forward the question of female sex through her groundbreaking article "Can the Subaltern speak?" As Spivak points out, the gendered subaltern is "doubly shadowed" and the preoccupations of the "Subaltern Studies Group" are so essentialist to consider a space of "autonomy" for the underclass non-white women (Louai 7). For Spivak, the subaltern is the oppressed woman of the Third World context whose agency and individuality is manipulated by the imperialist project. One can see in these novels that Waugh's racist attitudes often lead him to prefer white women to the women of other races, or in Yegenoglu's terms, the "sexed" subalterns who have no "space" (10) to speak in such discourses.

However, there are controversial ideas regarding Waugh's definite attitude toward humanity in general and women in particular. For example, Hitchens regards him a "celebrated misanthropist" and an "obvious misogynist" (*Essay on Modernist Angst; Misogyny in Satire* 2).

He believes that in the works of the British modernist writers like Evelyn Waugh, women are portrayed as "heinous individuals" who control the male figures and "make men women" (Ibid.). On the other hand, some believe that Waugh enjoyed socializing with women. According to Selina Hasting, Waugh lacked the confidence, especially a sexual one with women. He "constantly" fell in love with women who would not accept his propositions (Ash 3).

2. DISCUSSION

There is a large body of criticisms and commentaries on the central male characters of *Black Mischief*, *A Handful of Dust* and *Scoop*. However, a lot has been left unmentioned about the positions and roles of women (colonized/colonizer) and the related ideas of gender, sexuality, class, nationality, race, etc. in his fiction. The present study tries to fill this gap by focusing on the female figures of these novels in terms of their new roles in the colonial context. Using the postcolonial feminist approach the objective is to look at the characterization of women and the roles they could play in accelerating or slowing the imperialistic projects. Examined are the different ways the Wauvian women are depicted in terms of their class, race, nationality, and social status as well as the way these figures partake in the colonial context.

In terms of Spivak's idea of the symbolic clitoridectomy, it could be suggested that even the author as a western man living in the colonial context of the first half of the twentieth century, clitoridectomizes some of the female characters. The French Feminists view of clitoridectomy is another issue that Spivak is preoccupied with. Indeed, while the French Feminists call clitoridectomy a repressive ritual in the primitive Oriental societies, Spivak argues that throughout history, the "symbolic clitoridectomy" was always a kind of oppression for the "female sexuality" regardless of their class, race and culture (Morton 83). She also calls it the general condition for the women's economic and social oppression all around the world. So this could not be restricted to a specific region, culture, class or race. Black Bitch and Mme. Youkoumian in *Black Mischief* are two examples of the characters who are symbolically clitoridectomized by the author.

They are deprived of their voice and rights in different ways. However, one should also note that Waugh is sometimes cruel to his white female characters too. Prudence is a case in point; she is a figure whose sexual desire seems to be her hubris. She is punished for her sexuality and her adulterous affairs with William and Basil and at the end the cannibals eat her. Generally, there is no female quester in Waugh's novels. In this sense, Waugh is regarded as a misogynist. In fact, even the opportunities he provides for his female characters could not make a heroine of them. However, while the Oriental women like Rosa, Jenny, Black Bitch and Mrs. Youkoumian are always defined through their relation with their husbands, the white women are more free and independent.

Actually, clitoridectomy refers to the "symbolic effacement of women's non-reproductive sexual desire as a way of reproducing patriarchal dominance" (Ibid.). In the three selected novels of Evelyn Waugh, there is no reference to the notion of childbirth. Wauvian women, mostly the western colonial women, remain reluctant to traditional roles of motherhood, wifehood and this is why they have more power than the other group of women, i.e. the raced subaltern. According to McDonnelle, mother figures are "inhuman" in Waugh's fiction. There is hardly any happy and united family. Mothers are either childless or with few children. (*Evelyn Waugh 2*).

There is no reference to the children of Rosa, Black Bitch or Youkoumian. Besides, whenever the author talks about children, there is a problem in their relationship with their parents, particularly their mothers. In fact, the only women who are loveable are the nannies, like John Andrew and William Boot's nannies. In his diary Waugh writes that he had spent his life in "joyous conformity to the law of two adored deities: my nurse and my mother" (qtd. in McDonnelle *Evelyn Waugh 2*). Cynthia's indifference to Basil is an evidence for modern upper-class English women's lack of concern for the familial relations and responsibilities. Mrs. Beaver's benefiting from her son as a predator is another case.

Another example is Brenda Last whose reaction to her son's death is surprising. However, there are some critiques that condemn Waugh for his misogyny as an act of revenge. For instance, in Boyd's opinion, Waugh's description of Brenda Last in *A Handful of Dust* is "so bleak as to be unbelievable"; it is also a revenge on his failed marriage with She-Evelyn (Evelyn Gardner), Waugh's first wife (Wilson 11).

Apparently, Waugh is never afraid of arousing his reader's rage. He usually associates women with animal imagery in his novels. The Chimpanzee-like girls in the ship, putting Mme. Youkoumian's with mules, and accompaniment of women and livestock in *Black Mischief* are examples. Another interesting example is Tony and John's treatment of Brenda's friend:

"Where's mummy gone?"

"London."

"Why?"

"Someone called Lady Cockpurse is giving a party."

"Is she nice?"

"Mummy thinks so. I don't."

"Why?"

"Because she looks like *a monkey*."

"I should love to see her. *Does she live in a cage? Has she got a tail?* Ben saw a woman who looked like a fish, with scales all over instead of skin. It was in a circus in Cairo. Smelt like a fish too, Ben says". (emphasis added, *HD* 44)

However, it is suggested that Waugh does not treat women in a totally misogynistic way. At least, in comparing the colonized women with the colonizer women, it could be shown that most of the times he prefers his racial preferences to the sexual ones. Indeed, despite being famous for his misogynistic ideas, none of his novels, at least the three novels discussed here, could be completed without the central female figures. Although Waugh uses men as his heroes most of the time, there is no actual hero or heroism in his novels.

Through the changes in self-representation in the 20th century, women's position whether in the real or fiction changed too. In classic male travel writings like *Odyssey* or *le Morte d'Arthure*, women like Penelope and Guinevere are indeed "objects of desire or destination points rather than active co-travelers" (qtd. in Moffat 74). However, in the case of Waugh's travel writing, at least in these three novels, women are split into two groups. One could not be certain that Waugh has drawn a definite line between the white or non-white women in this sense. For instance, in *Black Mischief*, Prudence and her mother as the wife and daughter of an important man in Seth's empire are mere co-travelers and have no active roles (unless one regards being eaten by the cannibals as an active role). While Sarah and Mildred, as two white activists, distinguish themselves from the other female characters of the novels. Here Prudence is stereotyped as a white upper-class young lady fond of reading romances and novels. The other major female figure here is Black Bitch, Connolly's wife who is highly passive and is depicted as a simpleton. Mrs. Youkoumian is another subaltern woman whose voice is overtaken by her inhumane ambitious husband.

Black Mischief was severely attacked by the anti-colonialist Europeans. For some, this book is the story of an attempt to impose "alien morals and manners" on a primitive society (Brown 18). However, Waugh regards his aim in writing this novel presenting "a black and mischievous background against which the civilized and semi-civilized characters performed their parts" (qtd. in Brown 19). One of the main examples regarding author's racialist description of the native women is the scene where Basil travels to Azania by ship and "the

four dancing girls huddled together in the corner like chimpanzees and chattered resentfully among themselves” (*BM* 90). Actually, these women are most of the time a “target for the eroticized male Western gaze” (Moffat 13).

Once again in *Black Mischief*, in Birth Control Gala, Mme Fifi, the famous Azanian prostitute, of whose charm the French Minister “loudly” boasts “throughout the evening with a splendour of *anatomical detail* which was, fortunately, unintelligible to many of the people present” (emphasis added, *BM* 134), is at the front of the crowd which includes the Azanian women as the models of modernity. Therefore, what could be seen in Waugh’s fiction and their dominant colonial context is more of a *gendered* violence than a *sexual* one. With the exceptions of Black Bitch and Mrs. Youkoumian in *Black Mischief*, and Jenny Abdul Akbar in *A Handful of Dust*, there is no harsh treatment of the women in form of violence. It is rather a gendered-based issue that stems from the patriarchal context of these novels where women are considered to be the second sex and are treated most of the times based on the male dominant prejudices, as subhuman. It is the very ‘double shadow’ under which these eastern women are doomed to live in such texts.

One of the best examples of this racism and sexism is General Connolly’s wife who is a native called Black Bitch. According to Showers, Seth and other Azanian people are “bit players, flat characters, and comic stereotypes” with the exception of Black Bitch (51). According to Greenberg, Waugh’s *Black Mischief* not only provoked catholic readers’ rage, but also continues to anger the contemporary readers, in particular because of the racist attitude toward the African people, like Black Bitch. Of course, Waugh uses one of the oldest defenses of poetry, that is, “The prose nothing affirms” to justify his satire by its “fictionality” (Greenberg 121). It should be pointed out that, as Stannard notes, many of Wauvian characters are based on the real people he knew and met. Among them are Cyril Connolly and his wife — the model for Black Bitch — that, as Sykes notes, was of “relatively dark complexion” (*Ibid.*). Throughout the story she is called by this name even after her becoming the Duchess of Ukaka.

The picture Waugh gives of this woman, like the other colonized women of these novels is a foolish woman who easily forgives the others’ mistreatments, whether women or men. Indeed, she is the best example of the act of “othering” (McEwan 7) a person by the author. In other words, she is an important epitome of the Wauvian raced subalterns who cannot speak even in front of the woman his husband has affairs with. Seth, who is *just* “*Seth to Connolly*” and nothing else (emphasis added, Showers 53) makes Connolly the Duke of Ukaka, *asks* him to call his wife a respectful name from then on. In fact, nobody can force Connolly to call his wife in a respectful manner even the puppet Emperor. Of course, it should be noticed that the only reason for Seth to do this is to save his face in front of the European agents and not a little bit for the sake of the women of his tribe:

“Don’t you think that when she is a Duchess, it might be more suitable if you were to try and call your wife by another name? You see, there will probably be a great influx of distinguished Europeans for my coronation. We wish to break down color barriers as far as possible. Your name for Mrs. Connolly, though suitable as a *term of endearment in the home*, seems to emphasize the racial distinction between you in a way which might prove disconcerting.” (emphasis added, *BM* 43, 44).

However, the General’s answer is “I’ll try and remember when we’re in company. But I shall always think of her as Black Bitch, somehow” (*BM* 44). Here it is obvious that even Connolly has highly racial and gender-based biases against his wife. He not only betrays her

and starts an affair with Madam Ballon of whose accompanying in the party Black Bitch is so proud that she cannot control her excitement, but also does not try to be more polite with his legal wife even by calling her a respectful name. Besides, Seth's idea of calling the Duchess, Black Bitch *at home* as a matter of intimacy is very ridiculous. Although Connolly says he loves her, he treats her savagely and sometimes "thump her soundly on the head and lock her in a cupboard for some hours" (BM 135).

Actually, Seth's proposal is at the service of his own benefits. Moreover, Waugh uses "a term of endearment" as a satirical phrase to ridicule both the way Seth as an Emperor treats his people and specially, women; and also, the way a black woman is endeared by an Irish husband through being called a racist and inhuman name like "Black Bitch". The General accepts Seth's advice only in the meetings. That is, political issues are preferred to the racial ones. In fact, for Seth Black Bitch or the dignity of his people and his race is not important at all. He only wants his people to *look civilized* in the eyes of the Europeans. However, there is no distinction between calling the woman Black Bitch in public or at home; either ways she is the victim of a racial and gender-based tendency.

Again in the day of the Victory Ball, Connolly, as a matter of habit or indifference, introduces her as Black Bitch and says: "hasn't she got an *ugly mug?*...But she's a good *little thing*" (emphasis added, BM 107). Objectified and disrespected by her husband, she foolishly appreciates this statement as a compliment that turns the night to "a glorious night for her" (Ibid.). When she learns about Madam Ballon's party and her being invited as the Duchess of Ukaka, she becomes surprised: "Oh, My! Me dine with Madame Ballon! Oh my, that's good" (BM 134). Also the behavior of *Duke* Connolly to his wife on the verge of Madame Ballon's party is so inhumane. On the whole, the picture that Waugh gives of Black Bitch is that of a silly woman with no tact and discretion. This is highlighted when Connolly lets her know about Achon as the legal successor of Amurath and warns her "keep your silly mouth shut" but the next day she gives the news to Dame Mildred (BM 165). One could conclude that Waugh not only tries to differentiate between the western women and the raced subalterns, but also tries to portray them as foolish people that could not play any role other than being prostitutes like Mme. Fifi who, the town courtesan, or a mere simple-minded sub-human whose place is among the mules like Mme. Yokoumian.

In addition to all of these, one could refer to the methods the other women, the subalterns try to "strategize" in the colonial situation in order to keep their status firm or find a voice for themselves, however, it endangers their dignity and honor. Mme. Fifi, the Azanian whore is among these subalterns who seem to find her voice in this position. "The patriarchal bargain" a term used by Deniz Kandiyoti, explains the way the oppressed women like Fifi in the patriarchal societies "strategize" to "optimize" their security and life condition (McEwan 2). While the European women in Waugh's fiction are represented as active and to some extent independent people, the women of other races are the subalterns who lack the voice the other women have. While Brenda, Mrs. Stitch, and Prudence are described through their new roles and activities, the other women like Black Bitch, Mrs. Youkoumian, nannies, Rosa, and Jenny are the raced and sexed subalterns who reflect Waugh's racial and sexual attitude toward the Oriental and colonized people. In *Scoop*, for example, one faces Mrs. Stitch who is a very active woman who can do different works like doing crosswords, reading Virgil, decorating, and seeing the charity works simultaneously. She is another New Wauvian woman. Regardless of her political and social power and status, she is a rebel to some extent. For instance, she drives with no regard for the rules and only obeys her own "whims and fancies" (Blayac 3).

However, there are some instances where the author attacks the western women for their absurd activities. These women whether satirically or not are free to speak. They possess some

qualities like European race and nationality, social class and education that enables them to speak and do what the colonized women or the women of the last era could not. Education along with the notion of heredity is the major element that distinguishes the two groups of women. Waugh's lack of concern for providing his Oriental women with education and modern training is another reason through which one can prove his racism. Throughout these novels, the only example of these *other women* — though not academic — is Rosa who has a basic knowledge of English because of her European husband. Therefore, there is no space for such subalterns to speak, because the writer himself is not willing to represent the two races and the two genders as equal at all. Nonetheless, there are some instances where the author attacks the western women for their absurd activities. For example, there are no real fans of the heroic actions of Dame Mildred Porch and Sarah Tin; William and Percy confer that Sir Samson has decreed, "just see that those tiresome old women are safe, but on no account bring them back here" (*BM* 197).

Regarding Waugh's racial prejudices, it is interesting to make use of Christopher Hollis's notion of "real" characters (10). According to Hollis, the "unreality" of characters like the Azanian people leads to one's lack of sympathy for them. For instance, one does not cry when faced with the death of characters like them. In other words, the reader is also unsympathetic to the Azanian people and their "bad end" because s/he is not familiar with these people and there seems to be no "sufficient human emotion" in these people that can convince the reader to think of them as "humanbeing" (*Ibid.*). Actually, *Black Mischief* is written primarily for the western readers who normally do not appreciate the non-white heroes. Hollis here points out to Waugh's racist attitude toward this people and his hostility in characterizing them as savages. However, one should note that Waugh's main reason to write the novel is to ridicule the savagery of the European man rather than that of the Azanian. Moving back to the discussion of the reality of characters, it could be argued that Prudence is to some extent an exceptional character in *Black Mischief*. The "silly" daughter of Sir Samson moves the reader to tear with her unfortunate end, while the other women who may have a worse condition like Black Bitch or Youkoumian's wife do not receive enough attention (*Ibid.*).

Thus, the only European dead in the novel, who used to read the "absurd" book *Panorama of Life* and pursue silly romances with William and then Basil, is in fact "real, if ridiculous" (*Ibid.*). The focus on the white women — Sarah, Mildred and Prudence — distracts the reader's attention from any further exploration of the condition of the aforementioned subalterns. This merely leads to the reader's shallow pity for the colonized women who have no voice of themselves. Besides, neither Mrs. Youkoumian nor Black Bitch are named properly, as if they do not have a birth name. While the white women are not only named properly and fully, but also each have their own special titles that is one of the main concerns of Waugh in writing. However, there are other views about the believability of Wauvian characters. In *Scoop*, *Black Mischief*, and *A Handful of Dust* the characters that are mostly selected from the English upper or middle-classes are "believable but absurd" and as Dugan claims, this absurdity is essential to this "believability" (317).

The three novels could be examined in terms of the Orientalist issues too. Usually, the female subjects in Orientalist discourse are regarded as "mysterious yet untrustworthy, sexually arousing yet not quite clean, intriguing and yet uninteresting" (Nagy-Zekmi 2). These issues are visible in Waugh's novels. Jenny Abdul Akbar and the other Eastern women Tony meets are exotic and appealing, yet they lack something. Jenny is not able to seduce him, while she is a beautiful exotic woman employed to do so. The other examples are the nannies of the novels, especially John Andrew's nanny in *A Handful of Dust* who is disrespected by the child for whose life and death she is the only woman who truly cares. The boy's rude treatment of

his nanny by calling her “silly old tart” reflects that of his idol, Ben, who regards women, black and Jewish people as subhumans (*HD* 20). The other figures are Rosa and Jenny who are endowed with some liminal human qualities. In giving the oriental attributes to Jenny, Waugh acts somehow as a racist misogynist. Yet, regarding the misogynistic attitudes of Waugh and his satiric skills and goals, whenever he gives voice to his female characters, whether white or non-white, he has a satiric purpose that is to ridicule humanbeings’ follies whether male or female.

Jenny Abdul Akbar, Brenda’s friend who becomes a princess by virtue of marrying to a Moroccan Sheikh, is presented as an Oriental woman who is “not black but married one” as Brenda emphasizes in her telegram to notify Tony (*HD* 82). She embodies promiscuity, exoticism, sexuality and the East in the eyes of the Western subject. These Oriental qualities of Jenny are actually the main reason for Brenda to choose her for seducing Tony. Obeying Polly Cockpurse, ‘the monkey-woman’, Brenda gives “the girl a chance to get down to it” and to persuade Tony and make him forget about Brenda and their former life. Jenny is described by some exotic images that make it clear that the author has intentionally chosen a semi-Oriental woman in order to portray sexuality and promiscuity. “She licked the rouge from her finger with a sharp red tongue” (*HD* 84). Furthermore, Waugh describes Jenny’s flat in London to provide the “cultural amnesia and incoherence” (Lobb 141) of the character and the land she came from: “The princess’s single room was furnished *promiscuously* and with truly *Eastern disregard* of the right properties of things” (emphasis added *HD* 114). Here, Waugh regards the idea of proportion and decorum as exclusive to the western culture and attacks the supposed Eastern disregard for it.

Also, he uses the adverb ‘promiscuously’ to describe Jenny’s eroticism and emphasize his portrayal of the Oriental woman — truly *orientalized* — by referring to the Senegalese “phallic fetish” she keeps in her room (Ibid.). As Stannard observes, this descriptive paragraph, which is a mixture of secular and religious phenomena, reflects the second part of *The Waste Land* where the dressing-table of a woman is described. Thus it is possible to think of this room as a “brothel” and Jenny like the woman in Eliot’s poem can be either a “queen or a whore or both” (*In Search of a City* 198). In this sense, regarding Jenny’s title as a prince and the Oriental and exotic qualities Waugh uses for her, Stannard’s view seems convincing. More pointedly, Waugh tries to focus on the Oriental primitivism by naming only one elementary modern instrument, the “radio set” in her room (*BM* 114). Comparing the portrayal of the author of Jenny’s room and affairs with that of Mrs. Beaver who is an *interior designer* and Brenda who goes to London pretending to study economics, Jenny is very much ‘Orientalized’ and primitive. In comparison to the room of the non-Oriental women like Mrs. Stitch in *Scoop* or Mildred and Sarah in *Black Mischief* —whose attaché-case and room are described as comprising books, letters of credit, accounts, and writing stuffs — Jenny’s room is very primitive. In fact, although she is a white woman, she is taken to be an Oriental by the author. By the way, Jenny is a comic figure who despite having the most terrible scars from her ex-husband’s abuse explains her “frightful nightmares” to “near-strangers” (Greenberg 355).

By describing Jenny’s “promiscuous collection” (O’Keefe 134) Waugh also tries to ridicule the woman’s *narcissistic* and silly affairs. When she hears John Andrew’s death Jenny says that John’s death is her “fault” because a “terrible curse” hangs over her (*HD* 115). Furthermore, as O’Keefe points out, there are things in her flat like her photographs of herself, the ‘phallic fetish’, shawl and cosmetics that point to her “untrammelled and narcissistic sexuality” (*BM* 128). In addition, when her friends ponder whether she is a Jew or not, she tells them about the Moroccan Moulay who as O’Keefe suggests, could be *non-real* and in fact, a product of her imagination.

The other raced subaltern is Mme. Youkoumian whose husband tries to leave her behind and save his own life. He constantly abuses her — calling her “my flower”, “fool” (*BM* 20) and “slut” (*BM* 34) — and thinks only of his own life and ambitions. While the European women are safeguarded by their family or government, the native women are in the second level of priority as like as the mules. The mischievous Armenian man betrays his wife because there is no “room for her in the boat” and without letting her know about his plans, he orders one of the corporals to lock Mme. Youkoumian in the loft (*BM* 26). Even after returning home and watching the poor wife who is “trussed like a chicken on the floor of her bedroom, dribbled through her gag and helplessly writhed her bruised limbs”, he does not loosen her hands and goes to sleep (*BM* 27). Once again he betrays his wife when he meets Basil for the first time in Matodi and asks him two hundred rupees in order to give him Mme. Youkoumian’s seat and let her stay with the mules. Actually, this time he sells her as if she is a slave. In fact, the pictures of this woman and Black Bitch are very much overshadowed by the author’s patriarchal and Eurocentric biases. “Mme. Youkoumian squatted disconsolately in a corner of the van clutching a little jar of preserved cherries which her husband had given her to compensate for the change of accommodation” (*BM* 99). Waugh provides the reader with childlike female figures who are mostly the people of the other races and are not able to assert their basic rights. These are the silenced subalterns that Waugh subjectively chooses from the women of the non-European races.

It could be interesting to investigate the role of Wauvian women in the colonial and political trend of the novels. One of the important roles that Waugh gives to her women is their role as financial supports. In *A Handful of Dust*, the ironic use of the name John Beaver is evident in relation to his nature as a “scrouching” man, a parasite who always waits for others to pay his bills and offer him something (Biedermann 6). He is completely under his mother’s influence and calls her “Mumsy” or “Mummy”, just like the way John Andrew calls Brenda. According to Firchow, he is “the archetype of modern man, bored, boring” and “bestial” (qtd. in Biedermann 6). Conversely, one should notice the power and influence of Mrs. Beaver on his son. Like Basil’s mother in *Black Mischiefs*, Mrs. Beaver has a domineering personality and tries to dominate her son. By describing her as an interior designer, Waugh aims to convey a plurality of things. She is a designer who actually designs people’s lives and destinies and is powerful enough to ruin people’s marital lives — e.g. Brenda. This could be seen in her attempts to provide flats and rooms for women to spend some times with their fiancés in. So, in this sense, in comparison to Mrs. Stitch in *Scoop* and Cynthia Seal in *Black Mischiefs*, she is more powerful and successful. She completes her plans so artistically and deceitfully that she never fails. While Basil’s mother and Mrs. Stitch both make mistakes, Mrs. Beaver is conscious of every move she makes. Hence, these three women are to some extent comparable.

As Jean Ward observes, the very first conversation between John Beaver and his mother creates the dominate tone of the novel which depicts a world of “commercial” and “instrumental” attitudes to humanity (681). In his survey of *A Handful of Dust*, Ward uses the expression “like mother, like son” (Ibid. 682) to point out their affinity in terms of their love for money. John Beaver is also a parasitic figure. Brenda, quite unconventionally, buys him a ring as a Christmas present. Once she pays the expensive bills at Espinosa’s bar and says: “You can’t think how exciting it is for me to take a young man out. I’ve never done it before” (*HD* 47). Furthermore, the main reason for Brenda’s decision to demand divorce and Hetton’s money as her alimony is Beaver. However, Beaver leaves her with the help of his mother after finding out about her loss of money. The very choice of studying economics for Brenda as an excuse for leaving Tony is another case where Waugh associates women with money and the dirty and immoral modern world of the novels. One of the reasons for which Beaver stays with

his mother is to save money. Brenda pays the bills as if she is *honored* and says: "I'm a year older than you and an old married woman and quite rich, so, please, I'm going to pay" (*HD* 46).

Women like Cynthia Seal are people of high power in society with manipulative instincts. Like Mrs. Beaver, Cynthia is very much concerned with the life and affairs of his son. Though she is not as successful as Mrs. Beaver and her son is "*so unlike the barrister of her dream*", she uses her power and relations to arrange his future. She refuses to fund Basil's journey to Azania because she thinks by doing this and helping him again she betrays Basil's brother, Tony. When Basil asks her for money, she talks about her plans for his future by affirmative sentences like "it's all arranged" and "it's all decided" (*BM* 84, 85). Throughout his life, Basil depends on his female friends and acquaintances mostly for their financial supports. From his mother and sister to his friend, Sonia, and his ex, Angela, he always asks money from people. Actually, the women are treated mostly as the money-making machines that have no importance or use for these men other than financing them. The scene in which one of the chaps asks money for his date, from Basil and he passes him on to Sonia is a good example. Disappointed with Sonia and his mother, Basil goes to his ex, Angela, and using the phrase "*You're a grand girl*", next used for Prudence in Azania, gets the money he needs for his colonial journey (emphasis added, *BM* 87). Later, the reader and Cynthia learn that he has stolen the emerald bracelet. Another case of women's role as the source of money for family or friends is Dame Mildred who sends a "cheque for another month's household expenses" via letter to her husband, Stanley (*BM* 156).

Additionally, the women in *Boot Magna* are actually the heads of the house. The money is exclusively in the hands of these women whose chief is William's widowed grandmother who "was said to own *the money*. No one knows how much she possessed; she had been bedridden as long as William's memory went back" (emphasis added, *Scoop* 18). The richest woman is Nanny Bloggs who has been bedridden for the last thirty years. By referring to the wealthy nannies and old women of *Boot Magna* Waugh actually tries to mirror the decaying aristocracy in English countryside. However, there are some rare exceptions when the Eastern societies give power to women like the time after the death of the Great Amurath, when his daughter, Seth's mother, becomes the Empress. Generally, the women in these novels, surely the Europeans, are powerful in terms of wealth and are sometimes the people who support the male figures' colonial journeys.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Evelyn Waugh's colonial novels with their satiric overtones provide the reader with a harsh attack on modern European life. *A Handful of Dust*, *Scoop* and *Black Mischief* are split into two halves of Europe and the colonial lands of Demarara, Ishmaelia, and Azania, respectively. Actually, by doing this Waugh tries to obviate any distinction between the western and eastern savagery, and to make a connection between the two versions of barbarism in the two cultures that are supposed to be completely different from each other. In truth, one could hardly face a real hero or heroine in Wauvain fiction. The characters are generally divided into two distinct groups of either the bored Londoner products of the modern era, or the Oriental sub-humans that are always categorized as *Others*. Often, whenever there is a heroic feature like a colonial adventure or a heroic quest, the male characters are Waugh's first choices. Additionally, regarding Waugh's misogynistic attitudes along with his racial tendencies, it is not surprising to see that the main group of *savages* he portrays in these novels is women.

Nonetheless, there are many instances in *A Handful of Dust*, *Scoop* and *Black Mischief* where Waugh attributes some modern and heroic features to his female characters that either are European or belong to the upper classes. In other words, there is no real space and significant role for the Oriental women in this regard; they are often victimized or, to use Spivak's terms, clitoridectomized through the racial prejudices of the author which most of the time overcomes his misogynistic attitudes. In fact, whenever there is an active feminine role it is the western woman who is qualified enough to play it; while the Oriental woman is always characterized by features like promiscuity, exoticism, primitivism, foolishness and repression. In this sense, it is sometimes unbearable for the modern readers to read such a racist author's texts. Therefore, Waugh acts as a misogynist as well as a racist who tries not to conceal his biases even on the expense of being a loathed author in the eyes of many readers. Thus, through the lens of postcolonial feminism, one can consider Waugh's fiction as highly patriarchal and Eurocentric where there is no space for the raced subaltern to speak.

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