

“Me? I detest itReggie sold our house.”

These words are quoted from “A Handful of Dust”, a novel written by Evelyn Waugh. Throughout the novel, Waugh tries to discuss one of the most important and serious themes which is the lack of morality. The novel is mainly about the changes that take place in which the English society falls into as a result of disintegration of morality. For this purpose, people lose faith in everything even in God.

In the extract, Brenda addresses John Beaver during his visit to Hetton. Tony Last travels to London and meets John Beaver. Tony invites him to drink together and before he leaves he invites him as well to come and see Hetton. Depending on his phrase, Beaver takes the chance and goes. During his visit, Tony and Brenda show him the house which is one of the historical abbeys in England and then Tony leaves. Brenda talks about Hetton and shows her hatred towards it. In other words, she hates it and describes it as an ugly house and that if she has the chance to leave, she will. Yet, Beaver likes the house and tells her that it is wonderful and has fine things.

On the one hand, John Beaver seems unconcerned about everything. He sits beside the telephone waiting for anyone to invite him to dinner. While visiting Hetton, he meets Brenda and falls in love with her. Moreover, he accepts to have an immoral relationship with her. This reflects that he has no dignity. He does not care for destroying her family but he has cared only about his own fun. This shows that morals mean nothing to him.

On the other hand, Brenda Last does not like Hetton, the symbol of morality. She hates Hetton and that if she has the chance to leave, she will. Even though she has an immoral affair with Beaver, she does not love him. She does such a thing just for fun. Moreover, when she knows about her son’s death, she thanks God for losing her son not her beloved. This shows her lack of morality.

In the extract, the idea of lack of morality is clear in the relationship between Brenda Last and John Beaver. Brenda accepts to have an immoral affair with Beaver. This shows that the lack of morality prevails among the society. This also reflects the deterioration of the society where everybody thinks that the relationship between Brenda and Beaver is not a strange one. On the symbolic level, Hetton represents morality. Tony Last is the only one who clings to it tightly while the others are bored of it. That shows the lack of morality in the English society. Furthermore, the use of words like “detest” and “ugly” in Brenda’s speech shows that she hates Hetton and also morality. Waugh is very successful in his usage for such words to show her own feelings.

Towards the end, the names of the protagonists of the novel are significant, for instance, Tony Last is considered to be the last person in the society who still believes in morals and traditions. In addition, Beaver is a name of a parasite creature who is actually a parasite person who lives on invitation from other people who can pay for his food and joy. This reflects the character of John Beaver.

To summarize, Waugh is very successful in conveying his themes and expressing Brenda's feelings towards morality which leads to the deterioration of the English society.