

MORAL ELEMENTS IN THE NOVELS OF
JOYCE CARY

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

William Ewing MacDonald Lindsay was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on March 19, 1915.

He has been granted the following academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts (University of Toronto, 1943); Master of Arts in English (St. Patrick's College, University of Ottawa, 1949); and Specialist Type "A" Certificate in English (Department of Education, Ontario, 1958). His Master's thesis in English was entitled The Future of English Studies in the Secondary School.

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INTRODUCTION

1. AIM

Morals and morality are concepts used in common speech with a wide variety of meaning. In this thesis an attempt will be made to define these terms exactly; the moral aspects to be found in the novels of Mr. Joyce Cary will be ascertained, defined and explained. The broad moral basis upon which Cary worked and lived along with his views on private and public morals will be investigated.

The thesis will also show Cary's approach to the novel by means of the trilogy. In the two trilogies there are three main characters, one woman and two men. In each of the novels of the trilogies one character looks at and comments upon the characters of the other two. This innovation gives the novels a new depth.

The novels fall into an obvious division e.g. the novels of Africa, the novels of childhood, the chronicles, the first trilogy, the second trilogy and the unfinished novel. Each group will be examined and assessed with regard to its concern with the morality of Cary. It will be pointed out that there are similarities and differences in the morality of Cary and other great moralists who wrote in the great English tradition.

The thesis will show that in religious matters Cary adopted an attitude of wide, non-sectarian Christian freedom. He was a Protestant who really did not protest. Mr. Cary's enthusiasm for his work and for life in general peeps through all of his writings. His various tasks seldom became odious to him. In each of his occupations as student, artist, soldier, civil servant and writer the same exuberant enthusiasm is ever present.

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Along with his enthusiasm will be seen a great optimism for himself in particular and for life in general which formed the centre of his own philosophy. Mr. Cary did not weep, moan or complain; he accepted life as it was and did his best to make the world a better place in which to live for those who follow him.

Along with optimism we find also a modified rationalism which exhibits a cause and effect relationship of sin, no disillusion, and a poetic justice which does not allow sinners in the world to go unpunished. Mr. Cary is a realist yet he is not obsessed by realism and naturalism as ends in themselves. Lurid and vivid descriptions of the seamy side of life do not appear in his work. Cary shows a great deal of sympathy for the sinners and for the sorrows of man, yet he does not approve of wrong doing. A great deal of humour is seen in his characters yet Cary does not excuse their sins on this ground.

A general discussion will be given over to the moral aspect of Cary's characters. Many of the traditional types of character are found along with several original ones. Morality appears in many of the novels. Cary makes much of people in a moral situation. It is in the trilogy of Herself Surprised, To Be a Pilgrim, and The Horse's Mouth that we see the best and most original of Cary's moral types.

Finally an attempt will be made to assess Cary as a novelist in the great English tradition of writers. He was a novelist, a humorist and a 20th century Protestant non-conformist who was a writer close to the tradition of Defoe, Fielding and Dickens.

The purpose of the thesis then is to assess the moral elements in the novels of Joyce Cary. The questions

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may be asked: "What have the moral aspects to do with a literary study?" The answer is that the moral element is a major and fundamental issue in Cary's work. It forms the major theme for all his novels. The novels as such only will come under consideration -- the poetry, literary criticism, and political treatise will be omitted.

Besides examining the novels with the object of trying to define the essence of Cary's thoughts on morality and of relating that essence of his work as a unit, this thesis has one other secondary objective. Cary's works (the novels) are almost impossible to secure. In searching for material the Ottawa National Library, the Ottawa Public Library, and the libraries of the University of Toronto, St. Patrick's College and the University of Ottawa did not have many volumes to offer.

The writer had to wait patiently over a period of several years and was finally able to track down one copy of each of the novels and to purchase these from an English publishing house. It is hoped that this thesis will be of some use to a University library. It is hoped that it may serve as a launching basis for other students who may be interested in the work of Joyce Cary.

The novels will be treated not chronologically but rather in a thematic manner under the general headings of introduction, private morality, public morality and general conclusions. It is hoped that this thesis may assist in drawing the attention of many students to the work of a man whose work merits a great deal of attention.

The purpose, then, of this thesis will be to gather together his religious or moral views into a systematic and orderly arrangement.

CHAPTER IMORALS AND MORALITY

The British novelist, Joyce Cary, was born in Londonderry, Ireland, of a Devonshire family settled in Ireland since the 17th century. He was given for first name, according to a common Anglo-Irish practice, his mother's surname of Joyce. The boy's mother died when he was eight, and although he was educated in England, he spent much time in Ireland, "shuttling from house to house and living in a tumble of relatives." His first schools were Tunbridge Wells and Clifton College. At sixteen, with an independent income and an even more independent spirit, he went to Edinburgh to study art and later moved on to Paris. He soon realized that he could not express himself in art (although he became a fair painter) and entered Trinity College, Oxford, taking his degree with an apparent minimum of effort in 1912. A college friend, John Middleton Murry, claimed that he "never saw him do a spot of work."

Soon after leaving Oxford, Cary volunteered for duty with a Montenegrin battalion in the Balkan War of 1912-13.

"I didn't think there were going to be any more wars," he explains, "and I didn't want to miss it. And of course I did have some idea about this sort of freedom stuff." He went to the front with a British Red Cross party, and was later decorated by the King of Montenegro. Upon his return to England, Cary studied Irish Cooperation under Sir Horace Plunkett, and in 1913 joined the Nigerian Political Service. He fought in the Nigerian regiment during World War I and was wounded at Mora Mountain. On returning to political duty as magistrate and executive officer, he was sent to Borga, a remote and isolated

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district where he was the only white administrator in a primitive and rebellious native community.

His war injuries and ill health forced him to retire from the African service in 1920. He returned to England, settled in Oxford, and with characteristic determination and enthusiasm, set out to become a writer. Cary was much dissatisfied with his early writing. "I couldn't control it. I had immense invention, but I hadn't decided what I meant." What he needed, he decided, was not so much a literary technique as a new education in philosophy morals, history and politics. His apprenticeship was therefore long and painful. His first book, many times rewritten, did not appear until 1932. It was Aissa Saved -- the story of a primitive African girl converted to Christianity. The book took a long time to finish, Cary has explained, because it kept on raising questions which he had not properly considered before and he felt that as a professional writer he ought not to deal in problems to which he had no answer. This first book sold badly; the second did no better. It was not until 1936, when The African Witch became a Book Society choice, that Cary received any real financial compensation for his work. But success was still slow in coming. Mister Johnson, a rich and exuberant study of a native African clerk sold only some 5,000 copies when it was first published. American readers were not introduced to Cary's work until after World War II with the publication of his trilogy -- Herself Surprised, the story of a cook who marries her master and rises in the world; To Be a Pilgrim, concerning this woman's employer, an old conservative who hates change and yet knows that it must come; and The Horse's Mouth about an artist who seduces this same woman and abandons her.

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With the publication of Prisoner of Grace, Cary was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as one of the most distinguished of contemporary novelists and probably the only living English novelist writing in the great tradition of a former age. His penetrating and absorbing study of Chester Nimmo, the self-made politician who rises to a cabinet office, and of his straying and thoroughly human wife, fully demonstrated his remarkable ability to project warm, breathing life into his varied and colourful characters. Whether Cary writes of the rich or poor, the English, the Irish or the Africans, the assimilation is quick, delectable, sometimes profound. Mr. Cary gives further and becomes the person. He is no "historian of five consciences", and his prose is more vigorous than refined. The novelist Elizabeth Janeway has pointed out that there is -

no one like Cary writing today -- "no one who is at once so unsentimental, so rational and so perceptive; no one who can combine, as he does, the toughest-minded realism with mood and insight and character-drawing that is like a lightning flash."¹

From the time of the death of his wife (the former Gertrude Ogilvie) in 1949, Cary lived alone in Oxford. He had four sons. In spite of a lifetime of poor health, he was spry and wiry, took long daily walks, and in every way reflected the heartiness and lively spirits of the characters he has created. According to Times magazine:

1 C. Janeway, Joyce Cary,
New York Times Book Review,
Oct. 12, 1952.

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"He writes his books in bits and pieces, may drop one section to tackle another, and sometimes drops the whole thing to work on something else. He had schemes for at least eight more novels."2

In his writings Joyce Cary is a man set apart from his contemporaries. He has no axe to grind, he is neither for nor diametrically opposed to any of the 'isms'. Cary depicts most of the common types to be found in 20th century society; he does not overlook their fancies and foibles but deals with them in a sympathetically paternal fashion. For Cary, life is to be lived and enjoyed yet he realizes that we must pay for our transgressions.

You will find that all the time, at the very centre of your preoccupation, a moral judgement is at work, inquiring, comparing, discovering. 3

Cary is most conscious of morality and especially of that morality which seems to permeate the entire world and to become a part of all mankind.

2 Time Magazine, Oct. 16, 1950

3 Cary Joyce, 'Art and Reality' p.150
Cambridge University Press,
London, 1958

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At a certain primitive level, all men agree. The Australian blackfellow and the university professor still find a common good in morality. Courage, duty, affection, loyalty, self-discipline, truth, these are fundamental values for both of them. They differ only about their relative importance. ⁴

The 20th century writers thus far have shown no one distinct trend or approach to contemporary life. There is no one dominant school. The contemporary novelists tend rather to explore diverse paths in artistic expression. There are two important approaches to artistic expression, one is a realistic exploration of society and men and the other a reaction against external objectivity that is an exotic form of symbolism.

When one surveys recent literature in the United States, one is apt to find the emphasis on realism or naturalism. Ernest Hemingway in The Old Man of the Sea (1953) and John Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath (1939) both tend to portray man and life as they actually exist. These authors at times exhibit a clinical frankness when dealing with humanity and bodily functions. Joyce Cary does not follow this school of writers.

Looking at England proper one sees authors who tend towards 'isms'. Walter de la Mare in O Lovely England (1953) tends towards Platonism and delves into the ether-eal, the fragile and the simple. Christopher Fry in Venus Observed (1950) exhibits a dramatic approach quite novel -

⁴ Cary, Joyce, 'Art and Reality' Cambridge University Press, London, 1958, p.153.

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modern people in the Elizabethan Age. George Orwell in Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) tends indirectly to champion individualism, the rights of the individual against all others and the contemporary lying and imperialism of the three biggest nations. T.S. Eliot in his plays and poetry seems to lean towards Anglicanism -- for him a return to reservoirs of religion is the only hope of this age. Evelyn Waugh feels that Catholicism holds the key to salvation. In Brideshead Revisited we see him attacking the dissipation of the upper classes in Britain. Christopher Isherwood in such works as Goodbye to Berlin (1939) is immersed in abnormal sexuality coupled with modern spies in modern Germany. Joyce Cary does not fit into any of these categories.

Joyce Cary is really a catholic writer. By 'catholic', is meant universal. For Cary, all ages, all classes and all people are grist for his mill. Cary embraces all the world and all peoples neither praising one nor condemning another. Most of Cary's novels have England or Africa as a locale yet one finds all nations represented in one place or another. Cary is himself an individual. He preaches no 'isms' except, of course, individualism.

Cary depicts life as it is without the great stress on realism or naturalism found in many 20th century novels. His characters are many, they are individuals and do not represent whole classes but rather individual exceptions to some great general rule. Of Ojo Cary says:

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"He was a Yoruba boy, once a trader's servant who had spent most of his life in prisons and hospitals. His ambitions had always urged him to take short cuts to glory and honour. He was too impatient to save and so he stole and swindled. His passions were not mixed with calculation, and so he had seized the first woman available and the nearest drink."⁵

Cary does not view one side of life only. In his novels he presents to the reader the good and the bad; he neither exalts the one nor lowers the other. All of his characters are a mixture of good and bad; it is only the proportions which vary. Cary is a realist in a moderate way; he never oversteps the bounds of morality, balance and decency. Cary does not attack the moral problems of life in a Puritanical manner. He sees the humour in all people in all situations. Even in sin Cary does not condemn his people too severely -- one sins and one must pay for the sin yet there is a humorous side to it all.

From his earliest childhood Cary was a lover of freedom. He did not rebel against established authority but he did chafe under the rules and regulations of parents and school masters. Even as a small child it was evident the Cary could not be a 'yes' man.

As he grew older this spirit of freedom grew with him. As an adult he was a great exponent of political freedom. Cary believed that it was the basic right of every man to vote for whom he pleased. Tyrants and dictators had no appeal for him. For men such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, Cary had nothing but contempt.

5 Cary Joyce, Aissa Saved, Michael Joseph, London, 1959, p.16.

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He was proud of the heritage of freedom which was his and indeed was the gift of all Englishmen.

In politics Cary had no axe to grind as mentioned previously. He never used his art as a medium for the advancement of any political ideology. For him it did not matter how an individual voted just as long as he did vote. None of the prominent political parties could boast that Cary was one of their supporters: Cary was a lover of freedom for himself, and for all mankind. Freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom in religious worship were cornerstones of his philosophical thought.

"Joyce Cary perhaps deserves a place apart because his recent death has sealed up his work and because his reputation appears to be both eminent and controversial."⁶

Cary wanted to see freedom established for each person in the United Kingdom, freedom throughout the British Commonwealth of Nations and especially freedom in the world.

Cary was a man of peace. He hated war. If all mankind were to adopt his philosophy, war would end at once. Cary in this respect was comparable to Washington and Lincoln. Joyce Cary was brought up to attend the Established Church of England. As he grew older he

6 E. Legouis and L. Cazamian,
A History of English Literature, London,
J.M. Dent, 1964, p.1384

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resented the strict teachings and the ritual of the Anglican Church and began to worship God as a Christian but as a non-conformist. Here again on religious grounds Cary spoke for no one group. He was a Christian -- this much can be said -- but he favoured no one branch of the Christian Church over any other. Cary felt that each Christian had the right to worship God as he saw fit. For some people the ritual of the church was fine -- but for him it had a cramping effect. He did not want any one to do his thinking for him. Cary did not preach, however. In none of his work does he try to entice anyone from the church of his birth or choice. He was called a Protestant yet he protested against nothing in the realm of religion. Each man, he felt, should be free to make up his own mind without pressure from any source.

In many ways Cary had set and firm principles. He was violently opposed to war as such yet entered the Balkan conflict for the value of the experience. He feared that this would be the last of the great wars and that if he did not enlist he would never be able to experience the real life of a soldier.

Cary was not a politician in the sense of being a party member. He was a government official who served under different political parties. He did not think that the British system of government was perfect but he thought that it was the best political system which had been created so far. We might consider him a pro-Britisher who had his mind open for change of the right kind.

As an author, Cary exhibited the same principles of freedom for each person. Cary wrote as he wished; he did not lend his pen to any cause except for the progress of humanity in general. The welfare of the most humble African negro, for example, fascinated him.

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He was a real citizen of the world.

For all things Cary had a child-like enthusiasm. What he did was done with a full heart and a bountiful enthusiasm. As a student he worked hard. When studying art he gave all he had. As a soldier he did not hold back. As an administrator in Africa for the British government he dedicated himself completely. As an author, his energy and enthusiasm knew no bounds.

Cary never went into any project with reservations. In each of his many endeavours he gave his all. His last novel cost him his life. As he wrote he knew that each word brought him nearer to his life's end. No man could do more. He was always a dedicated soul.

The pressure of external reality, of which he had concrete experience - he did not come to literature until the age of forty-four, after an administrative life in Nigeria and some time in the Army - far from leading this born novelist to turn inwards upon himself, drove him to create a highly complex fictional world, peopled by characters of astonishing diversity and resulting in a transmutation of the author's subjective experience. 7

Joyce Cary was a man of extremely wide general interests. For him education was of prime importance for all people. Cary saw that the best and safest way to freedom for the common man was by means of a liberal education.

7 E. Legouis, and L. Cazamian, Op. Cit., p.1384

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As will be seen in detail later on, Cary maintained an optimistic view of things with regard to man as an individual and to life in general. Even in the face of death he worked fearlessly. Cary had a great love for life. For him life was a good thing to be enjoyed by all people. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak -- all were entitled to enjoy this wonderful world which was a gift to use from a benevolent God -- all, that is, except the intolerant. Cary was a most Rationalistic person. He did not seek for an escape or a dream world as did the Romantics. Cary was not disillusioned as are many modern writers. Cause and effect were for him real, simple and direct. He was a writer of simple grace and honest opinion. Cary was no hedonist and yet he was understanding and sympathetic to the follies and vices of people. In his work one finds sin but no bitter condemnation of sin, but rather a paternal wish for amendment in the future. Cary was a father confessor to all his characters in the sense that he heard and understood.

Since the topic of this thesis is morality not much will be said of this morality at the moment. Let it suffice to say that Cary can always see the moral side of a person or of a given situation. Cary was a profound moral novelist in the 20th century.

Before proceeding further, the terms 'morals' and 'morality' must be defined exactly. In general 'moral' means something concerned with good and bad or right and wrong. The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives this meaning to the word 'moral':

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Moral a. and n. Concerned with character or disposition, or with the distinction between right and wrong; m. sense, power of distinguishing right and wrong; (of literary work etc.) dealing with regulations of conduct, as m. science; m. philosophy, ethics; m. law the requirements to which right action must conform; (of rights etc.) founded on m. law; capable of m. action; m. courage, courage to encounter odium, contempt etc., rather than abandon right course; morally good, conforming to rules of morality; virtuous as regards general conduct; moral maxim or principle (point a m. illustrate or apply it); (vuly) the very m. (exact likeness) of; (pl.) habits, sexual conduct; - fall. Hence morally² adv. (f.L moralis) (mos custom pl. mores, morals - AL). 8

The word 'morality' will be used in this thesis to mean the study or science of right and wrong doing. The Oxford Dictionary defines this term as follows:

morality, n. Moral science; (pl.) moral principles, points of ethics; particular systems of morals, as commercial m.; moral conduct (esp. good); moralizing; (Hist.) kind of drama inculcating moral lesson popular in 16th c. (f.F moralite f L moralitatem (moral, - tr) 9

The terms 'morals' and 'morality' naturally lead to one fountain or source of morals which, for all Christian people, is the Bible. In the Bible there are definite rules of conduct set down for all Christians. God gave the following instructions to Moses:

8 Fowler, H.W., Fowler, F.G.,
The Concise Oxford Dictionary
 Oxford University Press, London, 1946, p.737.

9 Ibid., p.737

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And God spake all these words saying,
I am the Lord thy God, which have brought
thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the
house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days
may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God
giveth thee.
Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not bear false witness against
thy neighbour.
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house,
thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,
nor his manservant, nor his maidservant,
nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that
is thy neighbour's.
And all the people saw the thunderings, and
the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet,
and the mountain smoking: and when the people
saw it, they removed and stood afar off. 10

The New Testament of the Holy Bible also brings
into sharp focus the morals by which all Christians must
live. Jesus reduced the Ten Commandments of the Old
Testament to the Two Commandments of the New Testament.
These were given as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with
all thy heart, all thy spirit. The second is like unto it.
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Lord's
Prayer also forms an integral part of Christian morals.
Jesus spoke thus:

10 The Holy Bible, Exodus, 21,
King James' Version, Collins Clear Type Press,
London, 1945, p.98.

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Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen. 11

When considering morals and morality, the word 'ethics' often arises. This term again deals with morals, morality and the evaluation of human conduct. One encyclopedia defines the word 'ethics' in this way:

ethics, study and evaluation of human conduct in the light of moral principles. Historically, various theories have developed as to man's conscience and responsibility for his actions. The intuitionists (e.g. Rousseau) hold that conscience is innate and instigates moral action. The Empiricists (e.g. Comte, Locke, John Stuart-Mill) instead explain it as a by-product of experience. Source philosophers seek an absolute ethical criterion in religion. Idealists (e.g. Plato, Kant) see basis of ethics in metaphysics. Some (e.g. Hegel, Marx) teach that the state is the arbiter of morals, others (e.g. Dewey, Felix Adler) that the individual controls. 12

11 Ibid., Matthew, VI. 8-13, p. 9.

12 Bridgwater William, (Ed.)
The Viking Desk Encyclopedia, Vol. 1.,
 Viking Press, New York, 1953. p. 398.

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These definitions, therefore, of the terms morals, morality and ethics must constantly be kept in mind. It is with the above Christian definitions in mind that these terms are applied to Cary and his novels. None of these terms ever seems to be far from his mind as he weaves plot around character and situation.

Morality is often closely associated with poetic justice or nemesis. Macbeth seemed to escape nemesis for a long time yet as the play advances one sees retributive justice gradually closing in on Macbeth bringing all the punishment which he so richly deserved. Cary brings the same justice to the characters in his novels. Even in the rare case in which the justice of this world seems light or even absent there is the haunting suggestion that the mind or conscience of Cary's characters is not the less demanding of retributive justice. The mind judges the soul; no one escapes free. Even Aissa, who does not seem to know right from wrong, is stung by the thoughts and memories of her own short-comings.

In assessing the worth of Joyce Cary as a novelist most students mention his deep political insight, his swift and clear delineation of character and in some places his humour. All of these elements do indeed appear in his work. Morality and religion are often mentioned by critics in passing. However, here one will view and gather together Cary's religious views or morals into a systematic and orderly arrangement. The questions then arise: "Does Cary, in his novels, uphold the concept of ethics? Does he adhere to the Ten Commandments? Does he follow the Two Commandments?" In other words does he write, live and think within the Christian framework of ideas? To all of these questions an unequivocal "yes" must be given.

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Elizabeth M. Kern supports the above assertion that Cary is primarily concerned with morality.

"In the same Preface, to the second trilogy Cary explained that his plans for a third trilogy on religion had to be given up because of his age and health." 13

Cary's novels, for example, The Horse's Mouth, show that he is a great narrator with a purpose. This novel is the most humorous of all his works yet even it displays Cary's strong sense of morality.

"His narrative reflects his sense of being a man of destiny -- with confidence in himself fortified by such a conviction -- his deeply religious feeling, and his evangelical eloquence." 14

Some critics have referred to Cary as the Protestant answer to Graham Green. This seems to be an exaggeration of the truth -- however, the implication that he is a Christian writer is a valid one.

"He denies that he spoke as a demagogue to buy votes in advocating social legislation but maintains, and quotes as evidence a letter to Nina at the time, that he 'spoke as a Christian and a Protestant,' believing that 'it is only in family life that the freedom and dignity of a respectable citizen accords with his religious duty.'" 15

13 Kerr, Elizabeth M., Joyce Cary's Second Trilogy. University of Toronto Quarterly, University Press, Toronto. P.311

14 Ibid., P.312

15 Ibid., P.313

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With regard to Cary, W. Allen has this comment to make:

"Cary has been described as the Protestant answer to Graham Greene; it would be as true to say that he is the English retort to the Existentialist writers whether Christian or Atheist." 16

G. Rainbird gives high praise indeed to Cary's The Horse's Mouth in the following manner:

The Horse's Mouth first published in 1944, is now acknowledged to be one of the major novels in English of this century: perhaps of our literature. 17

16 W. Allen, Joyce Cary,
Longmans Green & Co.,
London, 1953, p. 29

17 G. Rainbird, On Cary,
G. Rainbird Ltd.,
London, 1957, p. 40

CHAPTER II

PRIVATE MORALITY

In chapter one the terms 'moral', 'morality' and 'ethics' were defined. The title of chapter two 'Private Morality' limits the concept of 'morality' by adding the term 'private'. It is meet, therefore, that the term 'private' be defined exactly. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'private' as follows:

Private (-it) a and n. (of personal) not holding public office or official position; p. (soldier), ordinary soldier without rank or distinction; p. member of House of Commons (not member of Ministry); kept, removed, from public knowledge, as the matter was kept p., had p. reasons; not open to the public as₂ p. door, (n.pl.) = p. parts. Hence privately² adv. f.l. privatus, orig. p.p. of privare deprive. 1

The meaning, then, of the term 'private morality' as used in this chapter will be the sinse of right and wrong as seen by any one individual at a given time and with regard to any given act or thought.

At the beginning of his research, a thesis writer on Joyce Cary feels bound to answer an objection or two which he assumes his readers may put forth: is not your work unnecessary, since some critics have already dealt with Cary? Is it not too soon to evaluate Cary? Is he not too close to us in time? As this thesis expands, it is to be hoped that such objections will lose their validity. Before continuing, it might be well to mention what some of the critics have had to say about Cary.

1 H.W. Fowler, and F.G. Fowler,
The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University
Press, London, 1940, p. 914

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There can be no doubt that as time goes on Cary will occupy a more important position in literature.

With regard to Cary and his moral stand, W. Allen has this comment to make:

Cary has been described by a critic as the Protestant answer to Graham Greene; it would be as true to say that he is the English retort to the Existentialist writers whether Christian or Atheist. 2

Moving to the criticism of R. Davies we find that he has this to say of Cary's novels with regard to "school" or "movement" or "philosophy".

Joyce Cary is not a fashionable novelist. He is not in any particular "movement" and he does not build his novels upon any of the fashionable philosophies of our day. 3

Mr. Schorer pays Cary a simple yet sincere tribute in the New York Times Book Reviews when he states:

Mr. Cary's work makes us wonder as it makes us live. 4

Finally D. Reid makes this comment of Cary's humour:

Fortunately the author is equal to the occasion - he tosses off one picaresque incident after another, all of them funny. 5

2 W. Allen, Joyce Cary, Longmans Green & Co., London, 1953, p.5.

3 R. Davies, Saturday Night, Aug. 6, 1955.

4 M. Schorer, New York Times Book Reviews, Oct.7, 1951.

5 D. Reid, Books, Ap., 1950.

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Since Cary is a modern writer there has not been a great deal written about him from a critical standpoint. The present thesis will attempt to illustrate the principles which seem to have guided Cary in his treatment of morality.

When possible, the characters which Cary created in his novels will be used to demonstrate the various aspects of morality.

The study and perusal of any novel written by Cary is a most rewarding and exciting experience. The novels will last and will pass the test of time because Cary dealt with many problems which have always faced man. Here lies the universality of their appeal.

With regard to Cary one might continue to apply the general praise to the particular. Cary's novels are good novels and are of great interest to us for this reason, but above all they are ethical.

One finds in all the novels of Cary that each person who does wrong realizes that he or she is transgressing against his own particular type of private Christian morality. They sin but they know that they are doing wrong and do not expect to escape the consequences of their own wrong doing.

He made use of everything: his Irish birth, African contacts and the intuitive vision of modern times. Cary has a profound belief in the impulsive force that inhabits the best among us, enabling them to make an imaginative adventure of their lives. Hence, apparently, the resilient character of his favourite heroes: the child so keenly aware of things that he cannot conceive the passing moment as exterior to himself; the aboriginal who, like the artist is radically subject to present emotion; the onlooker who does not see himself change with the passage of time, but remains immobile at the heart of his truth. 6

6 E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Op.Cit., p. 1384.

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Nina and Nimmo, in Prisoner of Grace, both do wrong but are quite aware of their own sins and expect to be punished for them. She is involved with two men simultaneously

Despite her lack of love for Nimmo, she is deeply aware of the spiritual bond which she cannot break, even after she has married Jim. 7

Nimmo himself a sinner and in many ways a wicked man nevertheless does not sin in the belief that all will be well nor is he really ever very far away from a personal sense of Christian ethics.

Except The Lord recounts the story of Chester's struggle against poverty, his loss of belief in his family's fervent religion and his adoption of Marxism as a faith, and his disillusionment in Marxist leaders and labour unions. Through the selfless love of his family, especially his sister, he experienced a conversion which was the basis of his faith as a lay preacher and later as a Protestant political leader, convinced that 'Except the Lord build the house their labour is lost that build it.' It was years, he said (p.273) before he grasped the full significance of that truth. 8

That Cary is concerned with morals, morality and ethics is seen in all of the characters in each of his novels. Even Nimmo, one of the most sinful of all Cary's characters, believed in God, religion and all that these meant.

7 Kerr, Elizabeth M, University of Toronto Quarterly, Joyce Cary's Second Trilogy, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, April, 1960 p. 315.

8 Ibid., p.315.

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The drama of his conversion convinced Nimmo that he was chosen by the Grace of God to be a Christian leader, and his phenomenal success strengthened that conviction. When the Liberals went down in defeat after World War I and society reached the state of corruption described by Nina, Nimmo tried to regain power in order to serve his country again in 'the crisis of civilization'. Except The Lord is an appeal to the religious common people who had been his first supporters. 9

Jim and Nimmo, both sinners in many ways, have their own personal sense of morality and do not hesitate to judge and condemn the wrongs of each other. Jim sees corruption in Nimmo and Nimmo sees the same quality in Jim.

Although all three novels, including that narrated by Nimmo, develop the theme of the corruption of society and government, Jim considered Nimmo part of that corruption. He accused Nimmo of hypocrisy in saying that Georgina 'brought him back to God and a true idea of freedom which was to know good and willingly to do it.' (p.23). Jim however, sounds exactly the same notes as Nimmo does. In his hand-out after his first attempt on Nimmo's life, Jim summed up the evils of the state of the nation (p.31) 'the destruction of family life, and the policy of shameless jobbery and double-dealing in high places, only for personal ambition.....And family life which is the life-blood of an honourable and sound-hearted nation mocked at as too much trouble and going down every day. 10

9 Ibid., p. 315

10 Ibid., p. 317

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Nimmo, while having a deep sense of private or personal morality, does at times seem to have a most peculiar interpretation of some of the Ten Commandments. His concept of adultery seems to be somewhat strange.

An allusion to a drive in a cab makes her remember an incident in which Nimmo used 'the joy of the Lord' to refer to this sexual relationship and in which despite the circumstances he was carried away by his passion. 11

Nimmo seems to have the peculiar idea that many of his errors and sins may be justified by one or more random quotations from the Bible.

Nina also has her own personal, peculiar brand of morality. She is almost a hedonist who lapses into an amoral state which arouses in the reader pity or contempt.

Nina is disarmingly frank about herself, admits that she is unstable and pleasure-loving, that she will do anything for peace. She denies that she demands the finery Nimmo provides but concedes that she enjoys it. She even admits that, like her son Tom, she became a bit lax in her principles and drifted into a kind of moral no man's land in the friends and amusements they shared after World War I. She is fair to others and consistently denies that Nimmo was a hypocrite, saying that unless he was sincere he could not 'put himself over with effect' (p.170). She notes, however, that Nimmo could make himself believe that he wanted to (p.166). (Wright describes him as 'a pitiable figure by the very profoundness of his self-deception'. 12

There is a personal morality in Chester Nimmo which cannot be far from the principle that the end justifies the means.

11 Ibid., p. 317
12 Ibid., p. 318

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Nimmo is a time-server and is not above adjusting his own private morals to meet each new situation as it arises. If God, Christianity and the support of the Christian voters can put him into office then he upholds the Christian party and the Christian code of morality.

Nimmo, in paying tribute to his sister and his God-fearing parents, is trying to regain the support of labour and the religious groups in the lower classes in order to avert what he considers to be a crisis in civilization. 13

Nimmo, although morally bad, is not lost; he does not pretend that he can sin without punishment. He is aware that finally he must come to the morality, not of himself, but of the Lord.

The structure of his narrative follows the familiar and popular pattern of the drama of the soul: loss of faith after two disappointments in the Second Coming of Christ, substitution of belief in the brotherhood of man as preached by disciples of such people as Proudhon and Bakunin, followed by a period of Marxian socialism and activity as a union leader. After enjoying the power of his position, he was disillusioned by the lies and violence he had become involved in and was the cause and dupe of it. His final conversion was due to his dying sister's faith in him: 'She was consoling me and it broke my heart -- I felt then an indescribable shock of anguish and exultation. And instantly among the turmoil of my senses a darkness fell away, great presences were revealed, things absolutely known and never again to be obscured, grief that I knew for love, love that I knew for life, joy that I knew for the joy of the Lord.' (p.274) 14

13 Ibid., P. 318

14 Ibid., p. 319

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Cary shows his deep and catholic comprehension of the inter-relationship of the sons of man, by his delineation of the personal morality of Nimmo. Man cannot live in isolation. As Christians our fate is linked with the fate of every other creature of God in the world. Even Nimmo, bad as he was, had some vague appreciation of this fact.

Such a drame, told in these terms, with the skill of oratorical style contrasted with blunt and graphic pictures of the life and suffering of the poor, with religious and political motives finally joined in his liberal creed, had a telling effect upon those with whom Nimmo identified himself. 15

Cary never for a moment forgets that sin and wrong doing invite nemesis or retributive justice. Nimmo himself feels akin to one group yet seeks the support of the opposite group. The corruption which sets in to Nimmo's soul does its deadly work.

But Nimmo also had come to identify himself with the upper classes, rather than with the people, and his policy of expediency to regain control has a Machiavellian touch. Joyce Cary pronounced his own verdict: 'Dishonesty in any form corrupts, and..... a double standard of morality in politics can never serve as a valid motive or excuse in political action. Neither man is the unsullied defender of truth and honour he claims to be. Both show evidence of the very corruption that goes deeper than manners and social customs and seeks to establish love and spiritual bonds on deceit and betrayal. 16

15 Ibid., p. 319

16 Ibid., p. 323

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Nimmo and Jim both judge each other on their own moral grounds. Each condemns the other yet each realizes in his own mind that he is equally guilty and cannot escape the punishment due to him.

For Cary, all novels are but a means for the novelist to express moral values. The only real and final judgment of any action in the individual must be the moral judgment.

Since it was Cary's conviction that 'all novelists are concerned from first to last with morality' and that 'the novelist addresses his meaning finally to the moral judgment,' the total meaning of the trilogy seems to be, on the plane of private life, that respect without love, or love without respect leads to violation of integrity and to corruption and that to build on deceit is to build on sand; on the plane of public life, that sacrifice of private integrity in the name of public welfare is but one aspect of the corrupting effect of power. The basic reality, to Cary, is 'human nature, incessantly striving towards a personal achievement in a world which is essentially free and personal.' His second trilogy gives us 'people who are free moral agents deciding their own actions in a world of incessant vicissitude, a world as far as possible removed from the consistency of a machine, a world in which every moral problem is in itself unique.....'. But this world is morally consistent in that moral error committed by free moral agents brings disastrous consequences: not only the murderer but the murdered ones are guilty. 17

17 Ibid., p.315

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The strong main action, the double action -- private and political - completely fused in the third novel, emerges. The dramatic suspense makes Cary's second trilogy, in sustained interest and structural excellence, in contrasting moods and tempo, and in creation of complex characters: most interesting. Cary achieved success in creating a world which considers but does not preach what he believes.

What I believe..... is what Nimmo believes, that wangle is inevitable in the modern state, that is to say, there is no choice between persuading people and shooting them. But it was not my job to state a thesis in a novel, my business was to show individual minds in action and the kind of world they produce and the political and aesthetic and moral problems of such a world. In short (in the trilogy) the political situation as I conceive it in my world of the creative free individual. 18

With the novel Mister Johnson we again see Cary dealing with the problem of individual morality. It is an excellent novel which views the moral values of a young African.

But Cary's own favourite among his books is Mister Johnson, a novel about an imaginative, teen-age native clerk in Nigeria who rollicks through life as if it were improvised African free verse. 19

18 Ibid., p. 325

19 Time Magazine, October 8, 1951, p. 86

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Johnson goes on from one petty crime to another in a completely amoral way. His standard is that if he wishes it, then it is all right. Cary does not allow him to escape; he pays for his sins with his life. He accepts the punishment as an individual.

He is soon fired again, and when he sneaks back to dip into the till, his ex-boss traps him. In the scuffle, the storekeeper is killed and Johnson is sentenced to hang. Bamu deserts him, of course. But Johnson's last request is granted. Rather than hang he asks the District officer to shoot him. 20

We see in Johnson Cary's judgment of an amoral personality. Even if one is genuinely amoral and transgresses the moral law -- even in ignorance -- the individual must pay for the crime just as if he were a moral Christian.

In the novel The Horse's Mouth one finds Gulley committing various sins and crimes. He is aware of his wrong-doing and is never surprised when he is caught and punished. Cary studies Gulley, notes, sympathizes but does not condone. He is sorry for Gulley but Gulley must be punished.

It is wrong to state that in The Horse's Mouth incident is everything. Repeatedly one senses the puzzlement, indeed anxiety, never totally eradicated from Gulley's mind: 'I'm an optimist, 'he reminds us. 'I get a lot of fun out of fun, as well as the miseries.' His war against 'the miseries' possibly only with the weapons of laughter, makes his story one of the major fictions of our century. 'We can sympathize with each other,' Joyce Cary wrote in one preface, 'be fond of each other, but we can never completely understand each other. 21

20 Kerr, Elizabeth M., Op. Cit., p. 86

21 The Commonwealth, October 25, 1963, p. 151

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Not all writers and critics agree on the merit of Cary nor upon the purpose behind his novels. The New Yorker makes several attacks on Joyce Cary's Charley is My Darling. True, Cary does not tackle the problem of private morality with the earthiness of Steinbeck. Cary is, after all, an English, Christian gentleman who does not use smut or slang, if correct, decent English will fit.

With regard to Charley, the New Yorker, for example has this to say:

What we later learn is that the ribbing is a determinant factor in the transformation of an agreeable and fundamentally decent boy into a criminal. 22

The character analysis of Charley is of course wrong. Charley is not agreeable; he is an egotistical thug. He is not decent; he is a young delinquent who chose to go against all the rules and regulations, both social and moral, because they did not suit his own ideas of personal behaviour and morality which were certainly not based on Christian morality. Cary allows him to err and to suffer for his wrong-doing. Again one reads the following in the New Yorker:

Nothing can now prevent a swift slide down the primrose path from car theft to burglary, from contribution to the delinquency of a minor, and on to a life of crime as an outcast with a record. 23

22 The New Yorker, New York, April 30, 1960, p.170

23 Ibid., p. 173

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The writer tries to say that Cary has set this boy on this decent into crime because some child called Charley 'Baldy' after his hair was cut short. This was not the cause of Charley's choice of crime. He had never obeyed his parents, his teachers or anyone representing authority. It was his own innate resentment of any kind of restriction which drove him away from society. All children have been called names; not all children become criminals. Charley did not want to ~~pay~~ the game according to the rules and regulations set down by a Christian society. What was more natural than his having to pay up for anti-social conduct?

When the novel was first published in England, several reviewers pointed out that it showed an extraordinary lack of acquaintance-ship with its subject matter. 24

That several reviewers took this stand proves only the old academic law that the minority, the educated and thinking few, is usually more discerning than the masses. The subject matter was England, a boy, World War II and morality. If Cary did not understand these, he could not have produced the many great successes which are his. These critics fail to say how and where Cary was inadequate as a novelist.

The book has the great defect of all Cary's novels: it isn't about the matter with which it claims to deal. 25

24 Ibid., p.174

25 Ibid., p.176

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When one reads such a statement about Cary's novels one can only assume that the author is jesting or that he has not read all of Cary's novels.

Cary did an excellent job in the novel Charley is My Darling; he was able to tell a good story according to the moral law. Charley does wrong; Cary does not judge him cruelly yet he most assuredly sees to it that Charley is punished.

The late Joyce Cary was no sociologist, no judge; he was a superb storyteller, and his portrait of misbehaving youngsters in this 1940 novel (published in the U.S. for the first time) is both sympathetic and accurate. 26

In Charley is My Darling the personal morality of Charley is ever to the fore. That is what the novel is about. The characterization is crystal clear and the philosophy demonstrated by Cary is moral and optimistic.

If it lacks the weight and ironic wisdom of some of his later work (The Horse's Mouth, Herself Surprised), it nevertheless shows the famous Cary virtues: a clear and economical style, a sharp wit, and a joy in human existence. 27

The private sense of morality adopted by Charley is not an unusual one; he tries to win popularity by liberality, which has as its source wrong-doing. This Robin Hood morality, no matter for what good cause, is still wrong.

26 Time Magazine, January 18, 1960, p.72

27 Ibid., p.72

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But Charley tries harder than he might have done to win followers -- by passing out candy and soda pop, then by stealing a car and leading an expedition to the cinema in a neighbouring town. 28

For Charley the problem of a wrong set of moral values is almost one of confusion.

The boy is good-hearted and values her friendship, but it never occurs to him to stay out of trouble. He is not amoral, except from an adult point of view. 29

Cary is most penetrating in his understanding of the moral problems which confront young people. He sees their wrong-doing and understands the reasons for it yet he does not forgive them and allow them to escape punishment due to his own sentimentality.

His touch with children is just as sure; their cruelties, independence and single-mindedness are as transparent to him as they are incomprehensible to most adults. 30

28 Ibid., p. 72

29 Ibid., p. 72

30 Ibid., p. 95

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The reader must decide for himself whether Chester Nimmo was the complete hypocrite his wife believed him to be, or simply an ambitious man who could believe anything if he could get the Lord into it. There is no doubt that he married her for her money and that he loved her in his own ruthless way, though he would never admit that two of their three children had been produced by her lover. 'Sex to Nimmo.' she had said in Prisoner of Grace 'was the joy of the Lord. All Chester's feelings seemed to run into each other; his religion stirred up his politics, and both of them stirred up his affections and his imagination, and his imagination kept everybody else in perpetual turmoil.' It was a generous estimate of one of the most intriguing and stimulating characters in modern fiction. In the opinion of this reader, Mr. Cary has let the old man off too easily. 31

The highest value and the most thorough attention are here given to Cary's two trilogies. In the first, which centers around Gulley Jimson, Tom Wilcher and Sara Monday, Cary tried to show us these characters as they see themselves and one another. In the second, the political trilogy, involving Chester Nimmo, Jim Latter and Nina, Cary tried to show in a more complex and fluid way their mutual modifications and adulterations. 32

In the novel The Captive and the Free we see another man, Walter Preedy, who has his own warped set of private morals. He is a liar, a hypocrite and a lecher who is strongly reminiscent of Chester Nimmo.

31 Smith, Harrison, The Saturday Review of Literature, November 14, 1953, p.28

32 Barr, Donald, The New York Times Book Review, January 25, 1959, p.4

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He is another type who tries to use the Bible to excuse his own sins.

In his moral fearlessness and his intuitive faith in God, as spellbinder and mast of the art of bluff, Walter Preedy, the novel's central character, is remarkably like Nimmo. Like that slippery-tongued rogue, Preedy too is an evangelist, but he is also a faith healer, running a shoddy London tabernacle known as the Pant's Road Mission. Needless to say, Preedy is no saint. He has a 'past'. Indeed, he is a self-confessed criminal as well as the seducer of Alice Rodker, a steely nerved nymphet with whom, despite his dramatic conversion at Hyde Park Corner, Preedy continues to have intermittent relations long after the horrible Harry Hooper of The Morning Argus has boosted him into fame as a worker of miracles on the sick. 33

Preedy is an opportunist who tries to keep a nice balance between his conduct and his income.

Because Preedy looks upon the press as his bread and butter, where the church stands matters considerably less than where the influential Argus stands. And where the Argus stands is, in the last resort, where that paper's chief shareholder, the formidable Old Lady Rideout, chooses to stand. Most conveniently for Preedy, however, Lady Rideout has been taken ill. Hardly is she in the hospital, attended by her doting daughter Joanna, when Preedy, sniffing an egg of swanlike proportions of crack, comes barging into her room. At once swords are drawn and there ensues a battle of quite astonishing violence and sordidness in which every warrior but one behaves as though All-Shall-Be-Fair-in-Love-and-War were one of the Ten Commandments. As for the sole exception, he is the Rev. Mr. Syson who, for his pains and his church, loses his faith, his wife, and his liberty and very nearly his sight. For on

33 Stern, James, The New York Times Book Review, January 25, 1959, p.1

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having completed his six months in jail, this mild but hasty little clergyman breaks into a smile, for which he receives from some 'true believer' a broken bottle in the eye. 34

Cary does not let Preedy off without censure. Possibly the censure is too mild and generous in the case of Preedy.

Had he lived, would Cary have made Syson's finding of his 'truth' more convincing, his own attitude toward religion less enigmatic? It is doubtful. It was not for nothing that Cary felt obliged to write a preface to each of his novels as they reappeared in the British Carfax edition of his works. Unfortunately these essays are often just as enigmatic as the novels they treat. Of Preedy, Cary would probably have paraphrased the provocative lines he devoted to Nimmo: That Preedy was not meant for a phony, that he was a man not very scrupulous in his eloquence; but the modern faith healer needs to be a spellbinder, and 'poets have never been very scrupulous in getting their effects'. 35

That Preedy is a scoundrel Cary does not attempt to conceal. He allows a letter sent to Syson to damn Preedy in the eyes of all.

Why was Syson smiling? Because while in prison he had had a letter from a woman-follower of Preedy whose child had died. The woman thanks Syson for having tried to save her child, asks him to forgive Preedy, and tells Syson that he is mistaken: God can do miracles -- 'for He has given me forgiveness and peace.' On reading this letter Syson is 'suddenly moved to understand ---- the miracle of God's love in the world. 36

34 Ibid., p.1

35 Ibid., p.45

36 Ibid., p.1

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It is left to the reader to assess Preedy and to account for his few successful miracles on the grounds of good luck, coincidence or auto-suggestion.

Of Syson's final religious views Lord David Cecil expresses the belief that they come very close to those of his creator, who was 'convinced that man's apprehension of beauty and human love was inexplicable on any purely rational or material terms.' Which does not explain, as Cecil is the first to admit, on what grounds Preedy's successful miracles were performed. Nor does it help us to understand Syson's sudden revelation. 37

It is obvious that when judging such people as Sara Monday, Gulley Jimson, Preedy, Nina, Chester Nimmo and the rest, Cary has the Ten Commandments and the Two Commandments in mind. It is against the moral fabric of these laws that his characters are assessed. True, Cary may in places be lenient yet most of his sinners pay for their errors in this world and the tone is such that the reader assumes more will follow in the next.

Joyce Cary is not a fashionable novelist. He is not in any particular "movement" and he does not build his novels upon any of the fashionable philosophies of our day. 38

37 Ibid., p. 45

38 R. Davies, Op.Cit. p.25

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Finally D. Reid makes this comment on Cary's humour

Fortunately the author is equal to the occasion - he tosses off one picaresque incident after another, all of them funny. 40

39 M. Schorer, Op. Cit. p.27

40 D. Reid, "Books", Op. Cit. p.30

CHAPTER III

PUBLIC MORALITY

The second chapter of this thesis has attempted to discuss private morality as seen in the novels of Joyce Cary. Chapter three will move on into a discussion of public morality. Before continuing let us examine the term 'public' -

Public, a and n. Of concerning the people as a whole, as p. utility, offence, holiday, (Parl.) p. act, bill; done or for, representing the people, as p. prosecution, prosecutor, assembly; openly, publicly. (F. f. L publicus, earlier poplicus populus people, earlier populus, see 1c.) 1

Public morality then will be considered with these definitions of public (as opposed to private) in mind. The morality of the public then may be considered as private morality was as it affects the people in general along with the morals or ethics of the people in general.

The questions will then arise as to how close public morality approaches the Ten Commandments? Does it remain constant? Does it vary? How does it vary? Why does it vary? These questions form the problem to be answered by Cary's characters and their relationship to public morality.

The function of the novel is nothing less than to make men and women contemplate and understand themselves, not only as rational beings but as experiencers of values. One might ask what is the meaning of the first trilogy? Who is the real Sara Monday? Is she the pious and eternally penitent woman of the self-portrait in Herself Surprised? Or is she the devoted housekeeper and mistress,

1 Fowler, H.W., Fowler, F.G., The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed., 1932

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the possessor of natural grace, whom Wilcher depicts in To Be a Pilgrim? Or the predatory female drawn by Jimson in The Horse's Mouth? Of the second trilogy the same kind of questions can be asked. Who is the real Chester Nimmo - the man as seen by his wife, or by himself, or by his rival Jim Latter?

The novels of Joyce Cary are from one point of view clockwork frescoes. That is why they have been linked with the central heritage of English picaresque, why Herself Surprised has evoked memories of Defoe's Moll Flanders, of Dickens and even of Fielding. But along with that tick-tock which rhythmically punctuates the action we can hear the surge and agitation of eternity. 2

In The Horse's Mouth Jimson is a humorous character partly due to the fact that he is different, he is a non-conformist. It is this fact, surely, which Cary dramatizes so convincingly in all his novels, not least in The Horse's Mouth. It is true that Gulley Jimson is defeated in the conservatism of the academy, that the bourgeois society of which he is inescapably a part rejects him, that he is eternally and fatally at odds with his environment. But it is equally true that Gulley would be as violently at war with any system, any formalization of the social structure -- just as he is at war with form in his own art. It is impossible to imagine any Arts Council, however liberally constituted, that would satisfy him. Yet Cary, though entirely sympathetic with Gulley, does not himself embrace the anarchist's faith. He states that "underneath the chaos of events, there are laws". 3

2 E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Op. Cit., p.1385

3 Cary Joyce, Art and Reality, Cambridge University Press, London, 1958, p. 6

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In the African novels we see moral characters; but along with the moral is the tragic. The childlike African and the childlike adolescent -- they are almost of an age -- are in the throes of creation, seeking desperately and comically, but finally disastrously, to shape worlds satisfying to themselves.

In viewing each of Cary's characters, one errs if one sees only the comic; it is there but not in isolation; it is comic plus all the human emotions common to us all; above all it is moral.

In the Carfax preface to Herself Surprised Cary asserts the primacy of character in the construction of the novel. Writing of the first trilogy, he says that the centre of the plan was character. The characters of the three leading persons in relation to other characters and the characters of their times emerge. The shape of things and feelings are given, which perhaps have to be so, or nothing would exist at all. The books had to be soaked in character. This is why, he says, his scheme did not come off as planned; he could not allow Sara to talk about art and history because he found that she lost something of her quality and force; the essential Sara was diluted, and in such a dilemma, whether to stick to his scheme or stick to character, the character as felt and known in the book was his problem. He stuck to the rule which placed character first.

But, although as a novelist Cary is a rich -- indeed a prodigious -- inventor of characters, his depth is severely limited. He is often compared to Dickens, and rightly so, but Dickens draws a whole gallery of individuals because for him idiosyncrasy is the distinguishing aspect of man; Cary portrays again and again the same

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three people because for him it is the commonness of the human dilemma which is so compelling. The man who must create, the man who would preserve, and the woman who as female resembles both the one and the other but also differs from either -- these are the types to which Cary mainly confines himself because, for all their singularities, they constitute in Cary's world the limits of human possibility. Each of these three in his own way is at times comic due to absentmindedness or to some machine-like or mechanical quality. Sara sins not once but with clock-like regularity.

The author identifies himself with each of his characters, lives in them with a kind of vehemence, impregnates each fraction of a second with his breath, establishing with the reader a direct and permanent bond which destroys the impression of divine omnipotence inseparable from the fiction of a Thackeray or a George Eliot. ⁴

All the scenes and characters, all the events in the book, must contribute to the total effect, the total meaning. ⁵

⁴ E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Op.Cit., p.1385

⁵ Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p.5

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The first and most interesting type is the man who rejoices in freedom: the anarchist, the artist, the man who destroys in order to create, the man who ignores all claims but his own. He opposes public morality. There is the megalomaniac District Officer of An American Visitor who resists all authority, who wishes to rule his district as absolutely as Kurtz in Conrad's Heart of Darkness, and who suffers the same fate. There is Louis Aladai, the Oxford-educated young claimant to the Rimi Throne in The African Witch; he begins by trying to introduce European standards into his native land, and ends by ordering his sister to take away all his European clothes. In Castle Corner, the free man is fragmented into several characters; and fragmentation is the fatal flaw of the novel. In the novels of childhood there are Charley Brown and Evelyn Corner, both swimming with the revolutionary tide because in revolution is self-discovery and creation of the new. Finally, and culminatingly, there is the artist, whose very vocation is to foment revolutions in thought. The artist is sketched out in the Mr. Lommax of Charley is My Darling, in the holiday tutor Pinto of A House of Children, and in the superb rogue Dick Bonser of A Fearful Joy, the endlessly inventive entrepreneur whose imagination makes bright worlds. In Gulley Jimson and Chester Nimmo, the one a politician in art and the other an artist in politics, Cary's characterization of man as everlasting artificer becomes fully and triumphantly realized.

Opposed to the revolutionary is the man attached to the past because there can be found certainty, continuity, civilization opposed to the revolution because in creating, it destroys, but condemned like Tom Wilcher to be a

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pilgrim. If the artist most truly represents the first of Cary's types, the lawyer and the soldier, those guardians of heritage, most adequately represent the second. Gore in An American Visitor tries endlessly to reconcile the claims of a sound government with the aims of Monkey Bewsher, or rather he tries to reconcile Bewsher to obeying the rules. Cock Jarvis, the patriotic young soldier of Castle Corner, is the young brother of the fanatical Jim Latter; the Latter of Not Honour More is simply young Cock Jarvis become middle-aged, disillusioned and desperate. Bill Wilcher, the soldier, and Thomas Wilcher, the lawyer, of To Be a Pilgrim represent two facets of the conservative mind, the one accepting the world and doing his duty, the other entrapped by the past and sentenced to the dutiful life.

The world fashioned by Joyce Cary is coherent. One might even say that despite craftsmanlike refinement of form and careful ornament it is relatively simple. Its law is the revelation of free will, starting from responsibility. This rather obvious truism, repeated in one work after another has tended to make the central characters of the plot somewhat tiresome spokesmen, occasionally ostentatious symbols of the entire race struggling in the snares of freedom rather as the Catholic Graham Greene's protagonists flounder in the toils of grace. 6

6 E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Op.Cit., p.1385

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In all of the novels Cary avoids taking sides and yet he finally does unconsciously take a stand. He chooses the creative man, This is why Gulley's defeat is a triumph, and Wilcher's pathetic; this is why Chester Nimmo's defeat, for all that Cary makes us despise him, is a tragedy, and Jim Latter's fate is sordid. Gulley is so completely removed from the normal pattern that he is comic; Nimmo and Latter are so close to the pattern of their respective groups that they also are comic. All three are immoral in a different way and they all oppose public moral standards.

Mediating between these two opposites is the female. Cary draws heavily on Blake for his idea of womanhood. The feminine principle is the completing and at the same time the destructive principle. Cary's women perform the creative rites of temptation and seduction; having done so, they build nests and try, as Gulley says to Sara Monday, to domesticate their men. Aissa, the heroine of Cary's first novel, is so fully engaged in the war between Christianity and paganism that she has little time for domestic pursuits, but she understands Christianity only in exclusively female terms: her first communion means so much to her because she supposes that Jesus is making love to her; and when there comes a test of strength between the Christian doctrine to which she adheres fanatically and the female nature which calls her back to her lover Gajere, she does not hesitate to rejoin Gajere. Marie Hasluck of An American Visitor is to a certain extent de-sexed by her intellectual emancipation, but she succumbs at last to her female nature. She becomes the mistress, then the wife and finally the widow of Bewsher,

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from whom she learns that what she thought about life was simply thought about inexperience. Elizabeth Aladai, the African witch herself, is no doubt the most formidable of all Cary's women. She is so strong that she domesticates even her own brother, the young man with the English education, and she destroys one male after another in her insatiable greed for domestication of the male to her female needs. In Castle Corner all the women know and cherish their function as mistress, wife, and mother, the Corner women no less than the Irish peasants and the African woman who becomes the some-time wife of Felix Corner. In the novels of childhood, three girls stand out especially - the deaf and stupid Lizzie Galor, who know simply by instinct that to love and succour Charley Brown is her role in life; and, in A House of Children, Frances and Delia, the one an easy, cherishing, mother and wife from her first maturity, the other, more vital, sparked by the imagination of Pinto with whom she elopes. And are not the women of Cary's later novels all of a piece? Comical Sara Monday, the eternal Eve, the perpetual nest builder, the triumphant mother: the woman whose symbol and home is the kitchen; Ella Venn, of a different class, whose affirmation of sexuality is an affirmation of her female nature, even in an age which stresses duty at the expense of nature; Tabitha Baskett, possessed of greater intelligence than either Sara or Ella, but condemned as both of them were to make very much the same pilgrimage, though over different ground and at a faster pace; and finally Nina, the brightest and most complicated of them all, imprisoned by grace to a man whom she detests, imprisoned equally by a life-long love for a man whom she cannot respect.

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It is the man of culture, the scholar, who really simplifies his life. It is only very wise and learned men who have the freedom of a quiet mind, and they do not achieve it by running away from civilization, and denouncing its culture and its scholarship. 7

Cary is one of the giants among 20th century novelists, but he did not become so until he invented the novel of the triple vision; nor, having made this discovery, was he at his best when he abandoned it -- as he did in The Moonlight and in A Fearful Joy. He began like many other artists, conventionally; and, despite Mister Johnson and A House of Children, he did not reach his full stride until the interconnected and humorous Herself Surprised, To Be a Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth. But seven novels precede the first trilogy. For what Cary discovered was that his genius for impersonation exactly meshed with the idea which animates but does not always bring fully alive his earlier works. Impersonation as Felix Krull discovered, has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. So when Cary wrote The Horse's Mouth he was besieged with letters written from the supposition that Gulley Jimson and his creator were the same; Not Honour More was not translated into German until Cary wrote a preface explaining that he was not Jim Latter; and a girl who came to Cary's house to be a housekeeper almost changed her mind when, by way of preparing herself for her job, she read To Be a Pilgrim.

7 Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p.38

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As scientists tell you, even a bad doctrine is better than none at all. 8

By the end of the 1920's Cary had worked out, very largely by himself, the idea of the world which is at the centre of all his novels. But, as his early work shows, he could not embody that idea fully because he could not make the novelistic form yield the kind of result which he sought. He had seen and understood but he could not create the characters who would embody, nor could he control the structure which could contain, his vision. Indeed, it is fair to say that the first four of his novels are all, as novels, unsuccessful experiments. In his fifth, Mister Johnson, he produced a small but considerable masterpiece. However it would be wrong to assert that thenceforward Cary worked with the cool certainty of having found an adequate form for his own intuition. He never stopped struggling and he never stopped failing: the trilogies are separated by a brace of novels, The Moonlight and A Fearful Joy, which simply cannot compare to the best of his works; and the forms of the two trilogies themselves, though they have the inevitability of great art, were painfully and uncertainly arrived at before they were seized upon.

Aissa Saved is dominated by Aissa and there appears in that work no one man who can represent what always needs to be represented in a Cary novel -- the creator, the artist, the revolutionary: the free man, making a free world for himself in spite of public laws and morals.

8 Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p.42

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But there are fragments of this man in the missionary Carr, who more than half-stupidly but also kindly will impose a picture-book Christianity upon the Africans: in the District Officer Bradgate who plunges himself into the enterprise of building a bridge; and, above all, in the young African boy Ali who is en route by way of education to freedom. In fact, Ali was the germ of Aissa Saved. In the Carfax preface Cary records having known such a boy. He walked a hundred and thirty miles without sleeping, to help Cary make a map. This journey, which nearly killed the boy was striking as "the effect of education on this rather shy and not very clever boy..... I was anxious to contrast Ali's standards and ideas with those above him. This, of course, involved questions of local ethics, local religion, the whole conflict of those ideas in a primitive community; and also the impact of new ideas from outside." But, in the course of writing the book, "Aissa gradually became the heroine because she was more central to a deeper interest, that of religion." Actually Cary did not know how to handle Ali, who does not appear at all until nearly half-way through the book, and whose role is very small. Ali, who is sixteen, is the son of the local Waziri -- that is, the prime minister -- and he has been to the government school. He explains to his fellow-countrymen, who are anxious to make a sacrifice to the goddess of mountains and fertility, and who wish to put Aissa to death because they think she is a witch, that "witches had no power over rain which fell from the clouds when they were made cold, and besides all knew very well that it was a wrong thing to condemn anybody without a proper trial before judges."

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Ali indeed has his moments, but they are few. The most effective occurs at the riot, when he is reduced from a man of high moral dignity to a frightened boy. Ali will impartially save the life of a pagan as he has formerly saved the life of the Christian Aissa, because it is matter of right; when he is struck down, he is so frightened that he crawls away saying, "Don't tell them -- don't tell them." But Ali, sandwiched among some seventy characters in a very short novel, is given little opportunity to become more than a sketch for a portrait.

In An American Visitor, that uncomfortable juxtaposition of violence and apathy, the creative man is represented not by an African but by the District Officer, Monkey Bewsher. He is a reckless, enthusiastic man in his forties, in love with the district over which he rules by the sheer force of his personality; or rather like Conrad's Kurtz, he is in love with the power which he can exercise so freely in a remote district of Nigeria. He is motivated by no disinterested benevolence: he treats the natives like naughty children who must be subdued by the power of his imagination and the enlightenment of his superior knowledge. He prefers that they remain subdued.

It is typically the most intelligent and sensitive of the young who become revolutionaries, destroyers. 9

9 Ibid., p.77

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In order to maintain his dominance he must out-smart not only the natives themselves but also the whites. He subdues Marie Hasluck, the American reporter, by communicating to her some of his own imaginative vigour; and she succumbs so far as to become his mistress and then his wife. He subdues the Governor by ignoring his urgent orders. He subdues a party of prospectors, despite their exclusive prospecting licence. 'There's no reason on earth why they should come to Birri and smash up my whole show.' He subdues or tries to subdue the missionaries by proposing, among other things, that the pagan thunder god Ogun be transfigured into the Christian saint of electricity and vital energy. He flaunts public morality.

But Bewsher is doomed, as are most megalomaniacs, to defeat. He is killed by the very Africans whom he has ruled with such magnificent skill. Indeed before the fatal battle he recognizes that there has come a term to his sway. This is shown by his willingness to shoot at the Africans, over whom he has ruled without force of arms. But Marie hides his pistol and he goes out to meet them armed merely with a pair of scissors. And his end has no tragic force. "Bewsher's own feelings as he lay on the ground with two or three spears in his body, though, of course, full of official indignation, was not empty of a kind of amusement as if some part of his mind were remarking to him, 'Well, old chap, the joke is on you. You're not going to get away with it this time.'" ¹⁰ How near this is to the lightly uttered but equally despairing remarks of Gulley Jimson when he and Nossy Barbon flee in the rain to Sussex, toward the end of The Horse's Mouth.

¹⁰ Cary Joyce, An American Visitor, Op.Cit., p.229

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How near and yet how far. For Gulley's vision is so much more vast than Bewsher's megalomaniac dream; and Gulley lives to begin, though not to finish, his last and greatest painting in the face of public morality as upheld by the police.

In Cary's third novel, still another kind of man comes to represent the creator. He is Louis Aladai, brother to the African witch. Intelligent and well educated, his ambitions are not for himself but for his people. He says to the lame sometime don, Judith Coote, whom he knew in Oxford, 'Rimi civilization. Do you know what it is? -- ju-ju.' He tells Judith that none except a small handful, is educated in Rimi. 'It's too absurd -- a million without schools -- and Rimi civilization. Rimi. No, I love Rimi, and it is because I love it that I want to give it something worth called a civilization'.

He soon discovers that there is nothing simple in the task of imposing European civilization on his countrymen, and he learns eventually that the call of his own culture is much stronger than the call of Europe. Thus one of his supporters, the Reverend Selah Coker, is a Christian whom Louis despises. Coker's "key word was blood, but it appeared in different connections: blood of Jesus -- blood of sacrifice -- blood of the wicked man -- blood of the sinner -- the baptism of blood." All of Louis' civilized instincts are revolted by the man; and yet, near the end of the book when Coker has made a sacrifice of the Schweitzer-like Dr. Schlemm and has put his head on display Louis feels the power and the temptation of this emphasis on religion.

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We see that confusion every day in the conduct of people who do live by the maxim, the slogan, whether political, artistic or religious. 11

He becomes confused, and his confusion is not lessened by the immoral behaviour of most of the whites at Rimi. He longs for civilization, for good talk; and one night he joins the company of the whites, all of whom depart and leave him sitting alone -- even Judith Coote leaves, having been summoned by her fiance Captain Rackham. The only person beside the Resident who treats him well on this occasion is, ironically, the athletic Dryas Honeywood, a girl whose reflexes cause her to be polite, but who in fact despises all the natives.

The die is cast late in the book during the crisis about the emirate. Tempers are frayed. In public, and therefore in especially humiliating circumstances, Captain Rackham, who regards Louis as a "trouserred ape", the more despicable because he has been educated, hits him and flings him into the river. When he is rescued, he is taken to his sister's house, where he orders Elizabeth to take his European clothes away and burn them. For now, as he says, "I am a Rimi man." And he is killed in the riot, or war, which his sister foments.

At a certain primitive level, all men agree. The Australian blackfellow and the university professor still find a common good in morality. Courage, duty, affection, loyalty, self-discipline, truth, these are fundamental values for both of them. They differ only about their relative importance. 12

11 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p.155.

12 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p.153

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What Cary does in his first three novels, therefore, is to explore the possibilities of delineating the hero as creator, and he moves in the direction of complexity. That Ali becomes Bewsher and Bewsher becomes Louis Aladai, indicates a progress in the development of this character, and this is a great achievement. But Cary's next novel, Castle Corner, fails just because complexity becomes diffuseness. The creator becomes several characters, all of them minor. Indeed there are no major characters in this long and populous novel, intended, as Cary has said, to be the first volume of a trilogy.

In Castle Corner, the free man appears in such fragmentary characters as John Charles Corner, whose entire artistry is expended -- charmingly but trivially expended -- upon a tandem race from the castle to the village and back again; in Theodore Benskin, the South African millionaire; in Robert Porfit, an ambitious lay-preacher who appears briefly. Above all, this type is shown in Felix and Cleeve Corner, father and son.

Art has its immense power for good and evil because it deals always with fundamental passions and reactions common to all humanity. 13

Felix Corner, the elder son of the patriarch of Castle Corner, is a fine piece of satirical portraiture.

13 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op. Cit., p.146

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Imposing in physique, devoted to talk, utterly foolish in pseudo-wisdom, "his good sense, his wide knowledge, almost as much as his imposing figure and large beard, his bass voice and spectacles, made him respected wherever he went." He has the temperament but not the single-mindedness of an artist. He lays waste his life in a number of footless schemes, the most absurd of which is his involvement in the Mosi Trading Company, a West African enterprise which he is certain will make all the Corners rich again. When Felix goes to Africa he writes Utopian reports to England, but before long he becomes entirely indolent and the Mosi Company becomes moribund. And so splendid is the ego of this man that when he is persuaded by his native concubine to marry his step-daughter, he does not suppose that he is going native. In short, Felix Corner is an artist without an art. He upholds neither African nor European morals.

Felix's son Cleeve is more interesting. His disorientation is more fundamental, because his mother and father have travelled incessantly around Europe, and so he has missed the security of a centre, of a home. Yet this allows him to develop in more fruitful ways than either Felix or John Chass, more fruitful also than the other two boys of his generation who play prominent roles in the novel: his cousin, Cock Jarvis, who becomes a soldier; and Philip Feenix, a neighbour of the Corners whose surrender to the idea of landlordship involves a crucial surrender of freedom that drives him to suicide, an act loathed by public morality.

Economy of means, clarity of statement, concentration of function, and subtlety of detail all imply moral as well as aesthetic intuition. 14

14 Cary, Joyce, *Art and Reality*, Op.Cit., p.144

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Having left his public school and returned to Ireland as he thinks forever, Cleeve tries unsuccessfully to write a novel about a Roman youth called Manlius -- he comes to feel that Castle Corner is a backwater. He longs for Oxford, for London, for the season, and he makes his escape, a very young man hungry for experience of life. When at last Cleeves goes up to Oxford he attaches himself to a succession of styles all of which enable him to explore the shape of the world. He becomes first a dandy in imitation of his friend Cabden Charley, then an ardent reader of philosophy, until he is carried -- to his father's disquiet -- beyond Kant who is the fashion to more controversial philosophical standpoints. Cleeve Corner is clearly destined for a life in which intelligence will play a commanding role, and there is every prospect that this career will be more successful than his father's, for Cleeve's liberation is not the half-way house of apostasy. But whether Cleeve will fulfil his destiny is a question left unanswered at the end of Castle Corner, the longest of Cary's novels, and paradoxically, the least developed.

Conscious of his failure, Cary returned to Africa for the setting of his next novel, Mister Johnson, a little masterpiece owing its force to the brilliant simplicity with which it is constructed. Mister Johnson does indeed sing -- and principally through the characterization of that irresistible young African, Johnson himself. In portraying Johnson, Cary for the first time discloses the scope of his great novelistic talent.

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"But Bamu, you silly girl, don't you understand - this is great honour come, I'll show you. You will feel quite different when you have put it on." Johnson pushes Bamu down upon the chair, catches her left leg and tries to put it into the leg of the drawers. Bamu suddenly gives a scream and at once two brothers, an uncle and her mother come rushing in, laughing. They are astonished at the scene and stand gazing. 15

Here we find a comical character worthy of Dickens' Mrs. Gamp or of Pickwick.

The book begins with a falling in love which is for the most part a construct of Johnson's lavish imagination, an imagination nourished by his youthful and poetic experience of English civilization as he knows it through the colonial officers for whom he works. "The young women of Fada, in Nigeria, are well known for beauty. They have small, neat features and their backs are not too hollow." So begins this enchanting book, and Johnson falls in love with Bamu the ferryman's daughter, not only because of her beauty -- "What pretty breasts -- God bless you with them" -- but because he has dreams of grandeur. He will make her into a government lady and in so doing will help to complete his idea of himself as a government gentleman. The relationship with Bamu is, however, less than half the story; the other, more important relationship is between Johnson and Harry Rudbeck, the Assistant District Officer. He treats Johnson, "his first clerk, with the ordinary politeness

15 Cary, Joyce, Mister Johnson, Michael Joseph, London, 1958, p.42

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which would be given to a butler or footman at home", and Johnson adores him in return.

His meaning is aimed at the whole character of man, his soul. 16

The pathos and humour of Johnson's position are indicated by his extreme precariousness, which is of course only a heightened version of the precariousness of the human situation. Johnson has the ability to forget which the reader is later to find in Sara Monday. His remorse, his despair -- 'Oh, Gawd, oh Jesus. I done finish -- I finish now' -- are real and agonized and short-lived. He immediately forgets his troubles when he starts to copy a report, for he delights in making capital S's. Indeed Johnson's destiny becomes the more radiant as it becomes more uncertain. In difficulty with his creditors, he is charged with embezzlement. Furthermore, Bamu's brother, finding that Johnson cannot pay an instalment due on his sister, fetches her back to the ferry village. And, seeing the image of himself in the process of destruction, the boy gives himself to a suicidal despair. At last he is shown a way out of his difficulty: he becomes a paid spy for the Waziri. The role becomes possible, even desirable, because it is dangerous and therefore exhilarating. In order to get at the confidential files, Johnson must steal the key from underneath Rudbeck's pillow: when he has successfully done so, and when he has delivered to the Waziri the information

16 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op. Cit., P.165

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desired, Johnson is so delighted with his new role as successful thief that he can hardly contain his joy.

So goes Johnson's splendid career from joy to sorrow and back again. It is a great piece of artistry: and, like all artistry, doomed in the very nature of things because it can be appreciated only by a few people. His last great act is the greatest act of all, that of murder -- it is a murder which he does not mean to commit but which he is, in a way, trapped into committing. He kills Sargeant Gallup, who finds him stealing money from the cash desk of Gallup's store. And since Gallup is a white, there can be no question about Johnson's punishment. Once again he opposes public morality.

If you don't believe this examine your reaction while you read. You will find that all the time, at the very centre of your preoccupation, a moral judgment is at work, inquiring, comparing, discovering. 17

His trial is a tragic-comedy, because Johnson, observing Rudbeck's kindness toward him, is cheerful, indeed exuberant, in giving testimony. Rudbeck puts together a statement, to which Johnson agrees -- he would in his gratitude agree to anything -- that the killing was unpremeditated. Johnson, is however, ordered to be hanged, and Rudbeck must do the hanging. Rudbeck feels so defiant, and so torn with friendship, that he does not, until pressed, execute the order. When he weighs Johnson,

17 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p. 150

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the young clerk guesses his fate. He begs Rudbeck to shoot him rather than hang him. "Oh, say, you my good frien' -- my father and my mother -- I pray you do it -- I think perhaps you shoot me." And this in fact is what Redbeck does. He tells his wife Celia -- it is the last line of the book -- "I couldn't let anyone else do it, could I?" It is a cry of anguish, a tragic awareness no less moving than Captain Vere's awareness in 'Billy Bud' of the conflict between personal and public loyalty, and morality. But Mister Johnson is not Rudbeck's book; it is Johnson's. The young African's intense and endless imagining, his creation of a glorious destiny, require that we rejoice in his triumph while we lament his defeat.

In his characterization of Mister Johnson, Cary moves in a new direction: he explores the destructive as well as the creative aspect of the free man. It is fair to say, in fact, that his novels improve as his idea of the world matures. The shape of the world clarifies as Cary's world develops the shape which is a realization in both senses of the word. At any rate, from Mister Johnson onward the hero as creator is also, though in varying degrees, a rakehell: the genres of these artists vary, but each ruins himself for his art.

This is certainly true of Charley Brown, the cockney adolescent who is the hero of Charley is My Darling. His adventures in the village to which he has been evacuated are disastrous and destructive. He paints a picture in which he is the hero-adventurer; so compelling is the self-portrait that he is led from theft and burglary to the destruction of a great country house in his efforts to create a world. As an artist he is a failure because he, like Mr. Johnson, is only half-educated to life's

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possibilities: but, like Mister Johnson, he learn of the route to community. It is the route of love which Johnson feels toward Rudbeck and which Charley Brown feels toward the deaf Lizzie Galor. At the end of the book, Charley escapes from a remand home and collects Lizzie. But they are caught by the police. Before they part, Lizzie says, "it's bin so lovely, I wish I could die." Indeed their parting is a little death, but it is not an annihilation: Charlie Brown and Lizzie Galor have discovered separately because they have discovered together the bitter secret of human loneliness as also they have discovered the sweet secret of human joy..

They give us people who are free moral agents deciding their own actions in a world of incessant vicissitude, a world as far as possible removed from the consistency of a machine, a world in which every moral problem is itself unique, in which the law courts spend millions of money and years of time assessing separately each individual charge. 18

In Charley is My Darling is Cary's first sketch of the man who is to become Gulley Jimson. In Charley is My Darling he is called Mr. Lommax. He enchants the evacuees by his wild demeanour. When asked to conduct a drawing class for them, he reluctantly assents. "Ah'll show em what it's about, if you like. But it won't do any good, you know, not a bit. They'll never learn anything. No one ever learns anything." The boys are

18 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Op.Cit., p. 157

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tantalized. As new-fledged leader of the gang, Charley explains that Mr. Lommax "ain't a teacher, see, e's a real artist." And he continues to enchant. He is untidy and tardy and unconventional. He praises Charley's drawings only when they become scatological.

When Charley is later put on trial for theft, Mr. Lommax agrees to testify in his favour, for Charley is artistic. But, since Lommax thinks that all children are artistic, it follows that he would testify for any other young miscreant. "Can I say," asks the earnest young woman in charge of evacuees, "that you think him promising as an artist?" To this Mr. Lommax makes an altogether Jimsonian reply: "Ah will come and swear it, if you like -- perjury has no terrors for an artist -- he is damned already." In Charley is My Darling, however, Cary, had not yet learned, at any rate, he did not attempt -- to draw the shape of this damnation. For Lommax public morality means nothing.

The other novel of childhood A House of Children, is a special case just because it is autobiographical. The central figure is the narrator Evelyn Corner, writing of the time when he was eight years old. Evelyn is Cary's alter ego: but it is a measure of the difficulty of translating life to art that Cary invents another character, Harry, to bear a part of the burden of recollection.

I realized by some instinct (it was certainly not by reason), that the two together as a single character would be too complex for the kind of book I needed to write: a book full of the clarity, the large skies, and wide sea views, which belong to the vision of my childhood. 19

19 Cary, Joyce, A House of Children, Michael Joseph, London, 1955, p. 7

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Harry, the elder brother, the other aspect of Cary's alter ego, abandons art itself after the disastrous production of a play, a fact surely of great interest to those who would unlock the puzzle of Cary's own personality.

But Harry and Evelyn remain, at the end of the book, too young to have achieved even what Charley Brown achieves. Nevertheless, the free man appears in this book in the shape of Pinto, the holiday tutor, whose real name is actually Freeman. Pinto occupies a central position on the stage of their lives. Bored with teaching, quick-tempered, witty and imaginative, he appeals to their instinct to rebellion, their impulses to freedom. He speaks nonsense, which the children recognize as nonsense - for instance that policemen were the cause of crime and that the English had ruined India by stopping the widows from being burnt alive. But this nonsense is part of his sense, his shape of life. He is a Utopian socialist, after William Morris; he is an artist and an artist anarchist, eternally at war with organization. He is interesting in this book not simply in himself but also as he prefigures Gulley Jimson as an opponent of public morality.

There is, for instance, a simple rehearsal in Pinto's story told against himself of pawning everything in a friend's flat, of Gulley Jimson's invasion of Sir William Beeder's flat. Pinto, the narrator tells us, "is an artist in description", and the story he tells is understandingly simple: "he described how he had been left to take care of a friend's, an artist's, rooms in London, but without money. The friend forgot to leave any and he had none. He therefore pawned a clock in order to telegraph for funds.

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But the telegram did not find its addressee, and no answer came. Meanwhile, according to Pinto, he had been obliged to pawn pictures, the cutlery, and at last the chairs and tables, till suddenly, while he was still hoping for funds to take everything out of pawn again, the friend himself had walked in and found him sleeping on a bare floor in the empty rooms.

The outline here follows almost exactly that of Gulley's occupation of the Breeder's flat. But in The Horse's Mouth the incident is much elaborated. Gulley gets possession of the flat by a trick. He remains -- for he is real artist -- to paint a wall, and he pawns all the furniture and fittings not so that he can eat or rather not exclusively for this purpose, but so that he can paint. And when the owner returns, Gulley is sleeping on the floor, and must make an escape. While Pinto is "an artist in description," Gulley is an artist in fact.

However much admiration one may feel for Joyce Cary, whose contribution to the English novel has been considerable, one must admit that his work is remarkable for its unevenness. It possesses such elasticity, such a surplus of creative power, that one is not really surprised (especially when one recalls that he was writing not one but several manuscripts at one time) that his ardour sometimes betrayed him, for example The Horse's Mouth, where carried away by his inspiration, he sins by superabundance of success. 20

20 E. Legouis and L. Cazamian, Op.Cit., p.1385

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After Pinto comes Gulley Jimson himself -- Gulley at least as he is seen by Sara Monday: A House of Children and Herself Surprised were both published in 1941. And in the development of Gulley's character Cary delineates more fully than ever elsewhere his idea of man as creator, although in Chester Nimmo he embodies this idea with an impressiveness nearly equal to that of his realization in Gulley. These two characters, the heroes of the trilogies, must be treated separately, as the culmination of Cary's creative powers. Two works were published between the two trilogies. They are The Moonlight and A Fearful Joy, both cast in the form of a chronicle, and each failing, as has already been suggested, for a different reason: The Moonlight because it had no central figure, A Fearful Joy because it had attempted to chronicle too many of the revolutions in art and politics from the 1890's to 1940's. These novels fail also because they do not give Cary scope to explore the character of the free man. In The Moonlight there are only Geoffréy Tew, a young poet of the nineties who is an unsuccessful suitor of the romantic Ella Venn, and Ernest Cranage, somewhat weak, artistic in temperament, who is a science demonstrator and also Ella's seducer. The roles of these two characters are very small. In A Fearful Joy, however, there is an important free man, the rogue Dick Bonser who is the heroine's tempter, seducer, husband and finally charge. He has, for Tabitha, real imaginative vigour. She cannot live without him, for she comes to recognize the need in herself of the sheer liveliness which he provides. At the end of the book, after his death in a Paddington brothel -- even after this -- Tabitha acknowledges what she owes the man. 'He brought me to life again; it was like a resurrection from the dead.'

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In fact, she reflects, Bonser, "that danger and burden, has also been the ground and the sky of her life." But Bonser, for all his pyrotechnics, plays a role in A Fearful Joy altogether subordinate to that of Tabitha; and this, it strikes one, is the wrong way round. Besides, Dick Bonser's artistry consists neither in the creation of works of art, like Gulley Jimson's paintings, nor in the creation of a government, which is Chester Nimmo's political ambition: Dick Bonser is a mere rogue, and after some hundreds of pages he becomes to the reader, if not to Tabitha, a bore and a clown who respects neither personal nor public morality.

Although Cary sets over against the free man another type of character, the man attached to the past, to stability, to achievement rather than to experiment -- although Cary does this, he is not simply juxtaposing opposites in order to exalt the one and depreciate the other. Cary is, without any question, on the side of the free man; but he is extremely sympathetic to the gallery of conservatives who people his novels. For, besides recognizing the fact that this type exists, Cary acknowledges not only the appeal but also the necessity of such a temperament in a world blessed or doomed -- 'as you please' -- with freedom. Furthermore, he manages to show that these contrasting characters are not opposite at every point. Even the most rooted of Cary's conservatives must do battle in their own souls with the impulse to create -- and some of these characters actually do create, within certain limits. So Cock Jarvis in Castle Corner romps enthusiastically into a forbidden territory, and precipitates an international crisis. And the most fully realized of all the conservatives, Thomas Wilcher in the first trilogy, comes to acknowledge that creation and

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preservation, though always at war with each other, go hand in hand, willy-nilly.

Of course, it is true that all Cary's novels turn upon this war, but it is frequently fought out in terms that do not require the figuration of the conservative man. Thus Aissa Saved centres on the liberation -- and this phrase is no tautology -- of the free spirit, in religious terms. For Aissa this means a pull in opposite directions: toward her pagan lover Gajere and toward the Christianity taught by the missionaries. But there does not appear in that novel any substantial character embodying the conservative spirit. Furthermore, Cary often chooses to dramatize his theme in the more purely Blakean terms of male versus female. The Moonlight and A Fearful Joy are both of them altogether too schematic in this dramatization. In The Moonlight it is Rose who resists, and Ella who succumbs to the creative impulse; and in A Fearful Joy Tabitha repeatedly comes to recognize that she cannot live without the rascally Bonser; and he for his part always returns to her because she offers his creative spirit a completion equally necessary.

But in the best of the novels -- in Mister Johnson and the two trilogies -- the conservative character plays a prominent role. Indeed, there are two kinds of conservatives in the action and each is given an ultimate characterization in the trilogies. There is the conservative by intellectual and spiritual commitment figured in the lawyer Thomas Wilcher, and there is the conservative by instinct figured in the soldier Jim Latter. But the line crosses; these are not pure types worked out according to a grand preliminary plan. They are, on the contrary, discovered in the course of writing a number

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of novels. In Cary's early work one finds sketches and half-portraits of these conservatives.

There is, first of all, Harry Gore in An American Visitor, an intellectual who has found his way to Africa. Nicknamed the Stork "because of his long thin legs, his long neck and long face and long beak," he resembles even in physique the character who is to become, ten years later Thomas Wilcher. Gore's role as a colonial officer is to forestall, mediate and arrange. Everyone else in the book is passionately committed to a positive course of action: Marie Hasluck to militant pacifism, Monkey Bewsher to assertion of his authority, the prospectors to pressing their claims, the Africans to maintaining their authority and identity. Harry Gore's role is simple preventive. In order to keep the peace he lends Marie money, attempts to maintain intercourse between Bewsher and the prospectors, urges the prospectors to press their claims tactfully, and endeavours to avoid a war between blacks and whites. Gore is accused by one of the prospectors of playing at life, and so thoroughly does he understand the other man's nature that he rather sympathizes with the prospector. At the end of the book, he realizes that all his management has not prevented alteration in the status. He becomes gloomy and pessimistic. "For Gore the world was going to the devil." A dark age of persecution, superstition, tyranny and general wretchedness impended. Glory and loveliness stood on their last legs. And thenceforward the book becomes a kind of essay by Cary on the necessity of recognizing the fact that the world is always in a state of revolution. An American Visitor becomes a thesis and thus ceases to be a novel. And what is interesting in a man like Gore is not so much what leads up to his

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disillusionment as what afterwards impends. Perhaps, therefore, it was necessary for Cary to write Harry Gore into a novel before he could make him into Thomas Wilcher.

But as with civilized man everywhere in the world of cash values, his good nature, his sympathies had increased with prosperity and he was everybody's friend. As he made his way towards the river bank, the usual rendezvous of the ninth and seventh class, he was stopped every few yards by a shout of greeting from the little groups of men or the shrill laughing cries of women coming up from the waterside with pots for the rest house. "Welcome, Lord Henry, are you well?" 21

The other conservative -- the soldier who becomes at his best Wilcher's loyal and simple-minded brother, Bill, at his worst the paranoid Jim Latter of the second trilogy -- is prefigured variously in the early novels. The first appearance of this man is in The African Witch in the person of Captain Rackham, a young Irishman who is Assistant Police Commissioner in the Nigerian district of Rimi. He is full of gaiety, bounce and charm. He has an old-fashioned devotion to duty and he closes his mind to the political movement in Nigeria. He supposes his duty to consist in maintaining British supremacy in the colony, and he therefore resents such a man as the claimant to the Rimi throne, Louis Aladai. Rackham, indeed flings him ignominiously into the river. This act spells the end of Rackham's career, the end of his engagement to Judith Coote and the end of his residence in Africa. The narrator tells of the young man's departure for England,

21 Cary, Joyce, An American Visitor, Op.Cit., p157

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where he is to keep a training stable in Berkshire; and there surely he will become, though the book does not say so, embittered for the same reasons that Jim Latter becomes embittered when he retires from Africa. To see in Rackham an early version of Jim Latter is to be reminded of the sympathy which Cary would invoke even for that murderous man. For Rackham is not unattractive; his very real quality is indicated in the nature of his response to the lame and sensitive Judith Coote, to whom he is for a time betrothed.

Aladai was a young man and his nerves were still quivering with the excitement of a princely ovation and a woman's homage. In England, Judy's friendship had meant little to him. Prettier and more distinguished women had received him. But in Africa already, as if the political atmosphere were a real aerial fluid affecting its inhabitants by mere absorption, he felt towards her the respect, gratitude, and admiring affection due to a princess by one whom she has deeply obliged. 22

In Castle Corner both kinds of conservative appear -- the soldier in Cock Jarvis, the intellectual in Philip Feenix. Jarvis' destiny is that of empire-builder. From a boy he displays the soldierly virtues of solemnity, reckless courage, simple patriotism. When he is infatuated with a seventeen-year old girl, he takes long walks with her, in the course of which he expatiates upon "the ruin of the world and the need for loyalty and self-sacrifice to save it." Jarvis is a romantic. "To see an old custom

22 Cary, Joyce, The African Witch, Michael Joseph, London, 1959, p. 38

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die was for him like seeing an old and glorious hero leave the world! His career therefore has a certain splendour. As an enthusiastic officer in the West African Frontier Force, he subscribes to what the narrator calls "the master feature of the age; the idea of the struggle for existence; the survival of the fittest; the idea that some power in nature itself, a scientific providence discovered and proved by Darwin, has ordained progress by universal war." It is thus perfectly natural that he should, against government orders and against private orders, invade the Daji emirate, and thus precipitate an international crisis. His enterprise requires not only great daring but great endurance. But his spirit is invincible, and his soldierly intelligence superb. And though no one knows how to take the news of his victory, he comes back to England a hero: his triumph coincides with the Boer agitation, and chauvinism is the style of the hour.

His moments of eclipse are almost always due to the fact that the allegorical scheme inherent in the characters temporarily supersedes their vitality. However, in his better moments Cary, at once meticulous and robust, stubborn and unexpected, whimsical and flexible, gives the fullest possible impression of genius. 23

23 E. Legouis and L. Cazemian, Op.Cit., p.1385

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But since the Castle Corner trilogy remains unfinished, Harry Jarvis' career is not fully detailed. The career of Philip Feenix, however, is ended by suicide at the close of Castle Corner itself. Son of a colourless Protestant clergyman and nephew of a domineering and doting uncle, he is doomed to the pathos of mere failure. Tied by the strings of responsibility and love to his dynamic uncle James Slatter, he surrenders again and again his chances for freedom. His uncle intends him to possess Castle Corner, and for years awaits the opportunity to take it over from John Chass, so that he can give it to his beloved Philly. But the opportunity never comes, and in the meantime, Phillip passed by the opportunity to go to Cambridge, or to go away from Ireland and become a missionary. He acts as Slatter's agent and secretary, and without knowing the cause of his dissatisfaction with life, turns to drink, lethargy and finally torpor. He places himself beyond the bounds of public morality.

To do myself justice, I did not mean to write crude social philosophy into Castle Corner. I meant to create characters and leave them to act; characters conceived with those springs of action which seemed to me most important in all character, working out their fates in a world charged throughout with freedom and individuality, and the consequences of that inescapable freedom, where moral principles must be like those of an army on the march, inventive, flexible, for ever balanced between the immediate circumstances (this man's nature, this crisis) and an ultimate end (the good, the true, etc.) and a final judgment is final only in the sense that it is the best (however bad) solution of an immediate problem. 24

24 Cary, Joyce, Castle Corner, Michael Joseph, London, 1952, p. 6

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His last chance is to marry his cousin Constance, and the account of their wedding journey to London is deeply touching. The couple are accompanied by Slatter, who refused his nephew money hoping to keep him sober. On their first night in London, there is a moving scene between the embittered groom and the loving bride. She offers to get drink for her husband. "aw Philly," she says, "I'd do anything to make ye happy." She does get him drink, and it mollifies him. "He drank with great dignity, sitting at the dressing table, and as he raised the tooth glass to his lips, he said, 'Not that I need the beastly stuff, but why shouldn't I have it?' He looked grandly at Coe, who had crept quietly into bed. "This won't save you." But Phillip remains a drunk, and at last in a rage of despair he kills himself, thus again disregarding any sense of public morality.

In Mister Johnson there are two conservatives, Harry Rudbeck and Sergeant Gallup. Rudbeck like Gallup, is only lightly sketched out, for the book is almost entirely Johnson's. But Gallup must be dealt with here. He is an old soldier, a cockney with a sense of order who has built a good business in Fada. He is a man with a murderous temper, but he quickly forgets his anger. He likes Johnson, and the boy, perceiving this, likes him in return. Besides, Gallup is a man of imagination. On Sunday afternoons he gets drunk and becomes a philosopher. He talks about England and the regiment. "Gallup has the usual hatred of the old soldier for the rich and their women, and in fact for all those who live easy and self-indulgent lives without risk or responsibility, that hatred which has made all countries with conscription inclined to violent revolution." He is an empire man,

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a sort of working-class Jim Latter whose passionate luridness Johnson responds to without understanding it. As an alcoholic he opposes public morality.

Finally -- for the novels of childhood do not deal with the conservative temper except as it is potential in the children themselves -- there are conservatives in the two trilogies. In the Thomas Wilcher of the first trilogy (complemented by his soldier brother) and in the James Latter of the second are the penultimate embodiments, and they are first-rate characterizations altogether. But the ultimate embodiment is Chester Nimmo, who in the course of his career is transmogrified from the free to the unfree man: so tantalizing, so difficult, and so repellant that Cary tried in The Moonlight and in A Fearful Joy to do without this kind of man. He did not fully succeed, for the life-defeated James Groom of The Moonlight and the life-defeated son of Tabitha in A Fearful Joy belong to this type. But partly because they are sketchy, the books are sketchy. Cary's map of the world requires a map in depth of the conservative man. Such a man is to be found in Wilcher in Jim Latter and in Chester Nimmo.

In every single one of Cary's novels there is a woman of impressive moral stature -- impressive because she recognizes by instinct if not by ratiocination a role in life of some considerable magnitude. Generally, the moral stature of these women is matched by physical beauty; the outward and visible sign of their specially female grace. And all of them possess the splendid vigour which stems from certainty. This is not to say that they are unperplexed. Indeed -- to take the most complex of them all -- Nina, in the second trilogy, becomes from time to time so perplexed that she tries to take her own life:

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she becomes perplexed just because she is so certain that her role in life is to be Chester Nimmo's spouse, and she can hardly bear it. Above all, the Cary heroines exist not independently but dependently -- upon the men whom it is their destiny to cherish; and when, as in The Moonlight female sexuality is denied, the female nature becomes contorted. Cary draws women well. His skill derives in part from his thoroughly masculine comprehension of what is, despite all emancipation, still the opposite sex. In fact, Cary's women are often better than his men.

So it is Aissa who saves Aissa Saved; she who redeems it from mediocrity, she who makes it a first novel of promise. Among the central figures in Cary's novels, Aissa is certainly the simplest. Less educated even than the Ali who was originally meant to be the hero of this novel, Aissa is neither so intelligent as the Elizabeth of The African Witch nor so sophisticated as the almost entirely unsophisticated Sara Monday. Aissa's character can be drawn only in bold relief, because she is elemental; and she is therefore no doubt an excellent choice for the heroine of the first novel. Her ultimately fatal effort to create a life out of the materials given her is recorded with Cary's altogether characteristic sympathy for the human impulse to love, to create, to fulfil and to remain within the bounds set by public morality.

Aissa's devotion to Christianity springs initially from gratitude: she has come to the Shibi Mission as a refugee from her native village, and she makes Christianity into a substitute for what she has already discovered by instinct to be the foundation of her life: Christ becomes the father of her child and even, as she supposes when she is taking the sacrament of the Lord's supper, her husband.

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Such perplexity as she often feels is instantly resolved when imagination and actuality meet: Aissa breaks off her singing of a hymn when she spies her husband Gajere, and she runs to his embrace. Nor will she return to the mission while she and Gajere can be together. Much of her life is spent protecting her child, who is more important to her than belief, more important than life itself. Toward the end of the book, reunited with Gajere after a long separation and after a number of frightening experiences, Aissa asserts very practically, "I do plenty good for Jesus Jesus, he do plenty for me. Good-bye now -- all done finish." But when, having been dragged off to the ant's nest to die, she is forever separated from Gajere, she turns to Jesus again, as substitute husband. "Jesus....had taken her, he was carrying her away in his arms."

The heroine in An American Visitor is, though extremely ignorant and naive, more sophisticated than Aissa. Marie Hasluck, the American visiting Nigeria, is an anarchist; she has a faith, but it is an educated faith. As a newspaperwoman who has come to Africa to write a series of articles on native culture, she wishes to substantiate her prejudices in favour of what she takes to be noble savagery; and the book is a record both of her disillusionment in this respect and of her discovery of a faith differently based, a faith based on a truer apprehension of her own nature and thus of human nature altogether. At the beginning she is thought to be a very dangerous agitator. This is because, as one of her prospectors explains she is "teaching self-determination to bare-assed apes." Another replies that if he "was an American girl brought up on Freud and the fourteen points

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mixed in with Valentino and turned loose in a wilderness of notion salesmen and ward politicians, he'd be Bolshy. But the fact was the poor bitch didn't know what she was or what she wanted. That was the trouble." This is indeed Marie's trouble, although she does not discover the fact for some considerable time. At first, and despite evidence contrary from the beginning, she reads Africa through the eyes of Jean Jacques Rousseau who also flaunted the public morality of his own era.

The common ground which Marie and Monkey Bewsher find is a mutual distrust of civilization. For different reasons each dislikes the "encroachment" of civilization on native culture. On the evening after both of them have nearly been killed by natives, they argue with Frank Cottee one of the prospectors, while Gore attempts to make conciliatory remarks to both parties. Cottee attacks Marie as an anarchist, and Marie is secretly frightened;

She was liable to these fits of doubt and dreaded them. They had a physical effect upon her nerves. She felt sometimes as if the actual ground had wavered and sunk beneath her. It was for a moment as if the most solid objects were illusory, as if there were nothing secure, nothing fixed, permanent and trustworthy in the whole world; no peace, no refuge. 25

There is indeed no refuge in the beliefs which she has brought as baggage to Africa with her. But she finds her way confusedly and certainly to the female destiny of

25 Cary, Joyce, An American Visitor, Michael Joseph, London, 1952, p.94

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wife to Bewsher; and shedding the impedimenta of anarchism she attaches herself to him in such domestic dependence that she can as easily dispense with ungrounded faith as Aissa herself. It is not simply the fact of Africa that overturn Marie Hasluck's beliefs: it is the overwhelming fact of female life.

With his customary daring, Cary makes Elizabeth Aladai, the African witch, the moral centre of his third novel, Tall, bulky strong, this woman of "monumental dignity" is a ju-ju- priestess and she dominates her brother Louis Aladai; dominates Judith Coote, the lame and lively don who has come to Nigeria because she is engaged to the equally lively though not so talented Assistant Police Commissioner Jack Rackham; dominates the Reverend Selah Coker, whose idea of Christianity centres on sacrifice; dominates the Mohammedan claimant to the throne -- and even causes the most powerful white man in the area, the Resident, to walk several miles because she has declared a woman's war.

Burwash then gave a little talk upon democratics principles, and the importance of allowing people to have a voice in their own government, and ended by enquiring if the Emir would not, perhaps, agree that the people should be consulted about the succession. He was not, of course, suggesting (leaning forward and speaking very earnestly) that the Emir was to be bound by anybody's suggestions. But did he not think that a consultation of public wishes might throw a light on a difficult problem? 26

26 Cary, Joyce, The African Witch, Op. Cit., p.76

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Her first appearance is especially impressive. She comes to the door of her ju-ju house, and she "almost filled the opening which frames her with sunlight streaming into the yard behind. She was a woman who seemed, in her height and proportion, bigger than the largest and most powerful of men. In fact she was probably about five foot ten in height, and fifteen or sixteen stone in weight -- fat, but of bone and muscle." She conducts a trial to decide why the babies of the local woman become sickly and die. Having listened to the evidence, she gives herself to the ju-ju spirit "and now she felt that spirit swelling and spreading through her whole body. She released her muscles -- her arms hung like bags of lead on the aching hands of the girl -- she softened her legs, bending them at the knees, making her flesh soft for the penetration of the spirit." At last she fixes upon a girl named Osi. When Osi says she has no ju-ju, Elizabeth orders fire to be put to her.

Elizabeth is powerful not only in her own realm, the ju-ju house and its surroundings, but within the entire scope of the novel. The plot of The African Witch turns on a struggle for the succession to the emirate of Rimi. The two chief contenders for the throne are a Mohammedan leader named Ale and Elizabeth's brother Louis, who is a Christian. Since Ale's accession would threaten her because it threatens ju-ju, she supports her brother's claims, not because he tolerates ju-ju, but because he is "a fooly boy." She could manage Aladai at any time.

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The boy was found guilty at once. It had been unnecessary to torture him, because the method of witchcraft was known. He had no secrets or ju-ju objects hidden. He had been put into the cell and left there to die. He had been there eight days. 27

Elizabeth's greatest triumph is the women's war, of which she is instigator and commanding general. She undertakes it because she wishes to support her brother's royal claims. At one point she is saved by her female nature. She is captured and is imprisoned. When she refuses bribes, her captors feed her poisoned chicken and put her into a hole in the bush to be eaten by hyenas. In such circumstances a more ordinary mortal would die. But not Elizabeth. She is rescued, taken back to the compound, and delivered of a baby. Before long the women's war is resumed, and although it is brought to an end quickly when the troops are called out by the Resident, Elizabeth herself is not defeated. Indeed she has her complete triumph of all when her paramour Akande Tom, who has tried to escape from her and who is attempting with the help of Judith Coote to "learn book," returns to her in misery and terror. Elizabeth works her ju-ju on him and he crawls to her on all fours. He is whipped "and he no longer tries to be a white man, or to learn book."

27 Cary, Joyce, The African Witch, Op.Cit., p.59

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Elizabeth Aladai is perhaps the most stunning of Cary's females, and female she is. She is woman triumphant rather than woman subdued. She acts out the role described in The Mental Traveller for she binds iron thorns around the heads of her men, and conquers them. Because she is stronger than any of the men within her orbit she succeeds to fail: the process described in Blake's poem requires a man to send up his manacles. Elizabeth, therefore, is Sara Monday or Nina Nimmo victorious; the two Englishwomen are luckier in that the material with which they have to work is adamant, and so their female destinies are, paradoxically, more thoroughly fulfilled in submissiveness.

Cary, Arthur Joyce Lund (7 Dec. 1888 - 29 March 1957) novelist, born at Londonderry, was educated at Clifton and Oxford, and studied art in Edinburgh and Paris. In 1913 he joined the Nigerian political service, and from 1915 to 1916 he served with the Nigeria Regiment in the Cameroons. Resigning in 1920 for health reasons, he settled in Oxford and after a long apprenticeship as a writer became a highly successful novelist. 28

28 D.C. Browning, Everyman's Dictionary of Literary Biography, London, J.M. Dent, 1962, p. 123

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Castle Corner and the two novels of childhood mark a transition from the nakedness of Africa to the complexities of the English scene depicted in The Moonlight, A Fearful Joy, and the two trilogies. In Castle Corner Helen Pynsant is an arresting woman, a not altogether respectable fashionable woman who is in a way a sketch for the Tabitha of A Fearful Joy, although Helen is a colder and less sympathetic figure. In Charley is My Darling there is Lizzie Galor, the adolescent girl to whom Charley becomes attached, a girl whose devotedness is as deep and instinctive and complete as that of every other Cary heroine. And there is in A House of Children the general favourite Delia, a sixteen-year-old girl the very violence of whose personality grips the imagination. "Even when she was sitting still, she had the air of intense activity within; of rapid and concentrated thought or vigourous feeling or both." Against her the phlegmatic Frances, who marries early and respectably and not for love but for motherhood, is a fine contrast. But none of these females is realized in the transitional novels as well as they are elsewhere.

But the Corners and Stella performed these duties as a matter of course. At Bellavista they were discussed at every meal; they were regarded as the most important things in life; and everyone who came to the house seemed to take the same attitude towards life, that it was a field of political and religious endeavour. Everyone had a feeling of responsibility towards the world, and even when Lucy played the piano in the evening to some visiting preacher or M.P. the listeners had the air of performing a duty to music; a pleasant and elevating duty, but still a duty. 29

29 Cary, Joyce, Castle Corner, Op. Cit.,

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In The Moonlight female nature is the very subject. The intended commanding centre of the book is Miss Ella Venn, the seventy-four-year old younger sister of Rose and the mother (though this fact is not acknowledged until late in the book) of Amanda. It is a happy choice of view-point. For Ella both as younger sister and as mother is a mediator between the generations. Rose as a Victorian lives for duty; Amanda as a child of the 20th century lives in the atmosphere of emancipation; and Ella, who understood female nature better than either of them, tries to reconcile both her sister and her daughter to a more accurate version. Ella is inarticulate -- she is supposed by her relations to be romantic -- but she has that splendid vitality and instinctive commitment to female nature so characteristic of Cary heroines. The book fails not because of the role of Ella Venn but because of faults of construction and viewpoint: because, as a thesis-novel in answer to a thesis-novel, it forgets to be a novel at all.

Of Tabitha Baskett in A Fearful Joy enough has already been said. The daughter of a suburban doctor, she is a small, thin girl with large, too prominent eyes, a thick mouth, a snubnose, and a heavy clubbed pigtail of brown hair. And she was still remarkable for nothing but a certain violence of ordinariness. After her father's death Tabitha becomes severely and perfervidly religious. She is devoted to her elder brother Harry, because she knew that he was good, he is not an affectionate man and he lectures her; but she hates his wife Edith -- handsome, sensual, rather blowsy, fond of bright colours and rich food, critical, like a woman much loved of her husband.

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Tabitha embraces the idea of being a missionary to China, until a missionary dares to criticize ladies who ride bicycles. She then determines to become a concert pianist, and practises six hours a day for over a year. But then she becomes restless. She says to herself, 'Oh-oh-oh; if only something would happen.'

At once -- according to the rules of melodrama -- she becomes involved with Dick Bonser, the handsome young man who has been black-balled from the local tennis club; who is in debt, but who expects a large inheritance as soon, he says, as a law case is decided in his favour. Bonser tells her fascinating things about himself -- for instance, that he is the illegitimate son of a nobleman of the highest rank and a countess. He declares great love for Tabitha and a few days after proposes marriage to her. Tabitha cannot say no, and she runs away with him showing a complete disregard for public morality.

Such is the beginning of Tabitha's first adventure with Bonser, and it establishes the pattern of all the others. She is drawn because of the radiance and the fertility of his imagination. The duplicity in his character, the bombast of his speech, the fatuousness of his grandiose schemes eternally madden her, but throughout the course of her life she is vitalized in spirit by this restless, roguish, animated man. Even after he dies at a great age, the memory of the man, and the reincarnation of his spirit in his granddaughter by Tabitha, renew the old woman's life. Bonser is stronger than public morality.

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Cary's vision is tripartite, and the three figures on the landscape of his world require one another. When, as in The Moonlight and A Fearful Joy the female dominates, the whole picture becomes inadequate because distorted. The men of The Moonlight never come forward -- or if they do they are soon made to beat a retreat before the person and then the ghost of Rose Venn. Nor can Dick Bonser take his place in A Fearful Joy; the book is too thoroughly Tabitha's, and has no complement as do both Gulley Jimson and Chester Nimmo. But Sarah and Nina are both torn between the free and the unfree man, which is simply to say that their complicated female natures demand a complexity, in fact a contradiction, in response. Sara and Nina succeed as characters by virtue of their relationships. They succeed also -- and this is perhaps putting the same matter in other words -- because they can tell their own stories, which can be corrected in their own words. They are immoral.

So, the Victorian's answer to the eternal problem of sex will always have greatness and dignity. It said: Woman's chastity and refinement of sentiment are so precious to civilization, and to her own responsibility as wife, as mother, that they must be guarded from every contamination. 30

30 Cary, Joyce, The Moonlight, Michael Joseph, London, 1952, p.6

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To notice how often Cary repeats himself is not to suggest by way of derogation that he is a limited writer. Limited he surely is -- and so is everyone else by culture, temperament, intelligence, experience. Cary differs, as all artists differ, from other people in coming to have a sense of the scope of his limitation. And he differs also in that the richness of his culture, the sturdiness of his temperament, the acuity of his intelligence, the catholicity of his experience made possible the writing of novels representing something worth representation. The artist's endeavour must be to know himself. When Cary achieved this knowledge -- indeed it is no doubt more accurate to say that he came to know himself through coming to terms with his art -- he could write the trilogies.

I wanted to show the different sexual ideas of two or three generations in their relation with each other and with the final shape of things, the nature of sex itself, of the woman who serves, the woman who rebels and the woman who is taught to conform, for her own good. 31

After his years as an art student in Paris and Edinburgh, and after a period of war service, Joyce Cary became an official of the Empire of British West Africa. Out of this experience, at a date rather later than that at which most novelists begin (Mr. Cary was 44 when Aissa Saved, his first novel, appeared), all but one of his

31 Cary, Joyce, The Moonlight, Op. Cit., p.11

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first five novels came. Mister Johnson was the fifth and was published in England in 1939; it has since been reprinted in the uniform Carfax Edition, and the present first American edition reprints Mr. Cary's "Author's Note" from this recent publication.

One cannot help speculating on the impulses that turned the public servant into the novelist. One thinks of Conrad who, with no real aspirations toward literature, was waiting for a command and occupied himself with what was at first only an act of reminiscence but became "Almayer's Folly." Yet one is struck at once by a difference: Conrad's novels convince us that he could not, finally, have been anything but a novelist, that his art engaged his will as faith engages the will of the devout, and that the pain of composition of female characters, fierce for him, was like the agony of the dark night for the religious.

Their freedom, in short, like all freedom, means work and suffering, insecurity and endless anxiety of moral choice; and yet it is the most precious thing they have. It is the soul of their dignity, as modern women. 32

There is nothing in the novels of Joyce Cary to suggest such a principle. Suppose that he, too, became a novelist more or less by accident, while waiting, for example, for a change of post out there in Africa; it is quite as easy to imagine that he could cease to write novels tomorrow, or at any time he wished, with no pain, and return to that service or some other with his vastly British equanimity unruffled.

32 Cary, Joyce, The Moonlight, Op. Cit., p.9

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Preedy in The Captive and the Free, believes that public morality is easily changed by propaganda which Adolph Hitler demonstrated most vividly:

Preedy's cures are sometimes successful. Part of his technique is to take people by surprise, to 'crack the shell' which he believes every human being grows around himself in order to protect his vulnerability. Once this crust is broken, Preedy can, 'put the strength ---- into the creature's mind and soul.' Preedy, of course, also believes in propaganda. Outside his chapel, a stone's throw from the Anglican Church of St. Enoch's, he erects a huge notice: 'Do you believe in God or don't you? We do not split hairs. We give the Word that saves.' One effect of this advertisement is to split the congregation of St. Enoch's. Another is to make its curate, the Rev. Mr. Syson, a mild man with a wife and a real interest in keeping out of trouble, attempt to show Preedy up as a phony. Whereupon all over the parish walls appear Preedy placards asking: 'Where does the Church stand?' 33

Nimmo, in A Prisoner of Grace is used as a tool to change and undermine public ethics. The Church was to be the excuse for a villinous public change of ethics in order to bring about a general strike.

The plot in which he was involved was no less than to bring all the worker of the kingdom together, then to call a general strike that must end the society of privilege in England and the world. They used Chester as a tool in the plan for a dockers' strike; and when they needed a scapegoat they threw him out. 34

33 Stern, James, The New York Times Book Review, January 25, 1959, p. 1

34 Smith, Harrison, The Saturday Review of Literature, November 14, 1953, p.28

CHAPTER IV

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

In the second chapter an attempt was made to define the term 'private morality' and to illustrate the wide variety of morality to be found among some of Joyce Cary's characters. Chapter three defined the term 'public morality' and also demonstrated the presence or absence of this quality in certain other characters in the novels of Cary. Chapter four will illustrate the morals or ethics of some of the old characters along with some additional characters in a wider variety of situations. It would be ideal to isolate each and every character in all of the novels and to discuss his or her sense of morality as an individual case. The only reason for not doing this is simply that time does not permit such a project.

Cary's prose style is readily distinguishable and often distinguished, but it does not altogether perfect itself until, in A House of Children and the two trilogies, style becomes the man or the woman narrating the story being told. In his own person Cary's style is remarkable on account of a constant employment of the word 'drunk' ("sometimes they laughed so much that they appeared to be drunk," he writes in An American Visitor, for instance), the iteration of which suggests the frenzy that Cary believes to be the major mode of human life. In the same way the historical present tense, which he uses so often, suggests not merely the immediacy but also the furor of the fact of living. There is also the syntactic anticlimax which by its very irony coruscates, so that Aissa's horrifying fate, to be eaten alive by ants, is set down with Swiftian objectivity: the ants were

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especially eager to get food for their community. Altogether, Cary's is the plain realistic style of a man in a hurry who thinks the world is in a hurry. It is the style of a man who must explain the world to itself.

Nor are his characters often in repose. Even those who think deeply are hardly shown being given opportunity to reflect calmly or continuously. They are forever being interrupted by riots, murders, wars, elections, insults, bankruptcies, crumbling buildings, or summonses for indecent exposure. The prevailing tone of all the novels is one of humour and of agitation. This is not because Cary believed that man is always agitated, but because he believed that agitation is always imminent and that in agitation man characteristically reveals himself. Cary knew, indeed, that a novel is not a slice of life but a portrait from which much must be omitted if it is to tell the truth. This is not the method so much as it is the situation of all the characters in all the novels. Cary's method is to put a character into a jam and see how he fares.

No, you would not have liked him. Neither did I. But perhaps we ought not to boast of that delicacy and refinement. Perhaps we don't like him because we are small people. Small people never like great people. Small people are people who follow the fashion and live like frogs in a ditch, croaking at each other. When a real man comes near, they are all silent. If baggy trousers come in, all the small people will get into baggy trousers like that old fool Jaffery, who looks like a dwarf with elephantiasis. And if painted faces and long bobs come in, then all the little girls paint their faces and wear long bobs,

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even if it makes them look like clowns with hunchbacks. The people of character stick to the shape and colour given them by nature - to reason, and truth. 1

As a generalization it is true as far as it goes - and therefore misleading. It overlooks the point that for him all characters are in a jam, all of us are in a jam, a special and incurable difficulty from which there is no escape. It continues all our lives and affects every aspect of our existence -- we are born to freedom in a world condemned to be free, for its own good, for its own maintenance, and for its own destruction.

But in the attempts to mediate between action and audience, Cary's style breaks down. It is a familiar predicament, familiar at least since the 18th century, when writers began to have mixed audiences. The remarkable fact about Cary is the comparative ease which he exhibits in his relation to his readers whom he supposes to be cultivated but somewhat provincial Oxford. It is, however, only a comparative ease. "Gossip is the major pastime of Africa,"² he says in An American Visitor. "All books are magic and sacred objects in Yanrin where no one knows how to read them,"³ he writes in Aissa Saved. Such interpositions are common enough in the African novels, but they are almost as common in the novels whose setting are, though within the United Kingdom, presumed to be outside the experience of the Oxford reader. Thus in Castle Corner and A House of Children Cary explains Ireland

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- 1 Cary, Joyce, To be a Pilgrim, Penguin Books Ltd. 1957, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, (383 pages) p.19
 - 2 Cary, Joyce, An American Visitor, Op.Cit., p.62
 - 3 Cary, Joyce, Aissa Saved, Op.Cit., p.49

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to his audience. "A starer in Annish is much feared,"⁴ he writes in the first of these novels; in the other the whole intent is, in explaining an Irish childhood to himself, to give the experience a communicable status. Even Charley is My Darling, set in Devon, requires explanation, because Oxford has to be told about the impact of the cockney upon the west. Of Aissa's love for her child he writes: that mothers are as common in Kalu as elsewhere. That kind of love is a natural thing, as cheap as air and water, and common to cats, bitches, and hyenas. Of dancing in Nigeria he declares, in The African Witch that dancers, like Rimi people, dancing like poetry is a communication as well as an expression. They speak in movements of the body not of passion, but tenderness, sympathy -- such as an Englishman may feel and think he expresses while he treads on his partner's toes.

But when Cary can impersonate his narrator he can -- as Henry Reed points out in The Novel Since 1939 -- eliminate himself. He can suit the words to the character so justly that in the (humorous in part) novels of the two trilogies there are actually six styles: six metaphorical structures, six schemes of syntax, six kinds of interior monologue -- indeed, six worlds. They clash. But that these worlds constitute different aspects of a single world, and that this world has a "final" shape is a fact clearly to be drawn from a consideration of each of the trilogies as a whole. To write a novel in the first person may be to hide behind the mask of the narrator;

⁴ Cary, Joyce, Castle Corner, Op.Cit., p.75

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to write trilogies of the kind now to be discussed is on the other hand, to insist upon "finality", for the reader is constantly required to compare and assess the versions of the same world presented by competent but interested witnesses. The reader is forced to draw a final conclusion by himself and it must be a moral one.

When I see Ann, daughter of that gay,
that brilliant Edward, going about as
if her life were finished, I want to
stick pins in her. 5

However different they may be in other respects - and surely three more sharply contrasted characters could hardly be found than the voluptuous cook who is Sara Monday, the conservative lawyer who is Thomas Wilcher and the rebellious artist who is Gulley Jimson -- the narrators of the first trilogy have in common the fact of imprisonment. Sara of Herself Surprised is writing her memoirs for a hundred pounds, with which she will pay Gulley's and his son Tommy's bills; the penny-press is enabling her to make a virtue of the necessity of her imprisonment, and permitting her even there to fulfil what she conceives to be her role in life. Wilcher of To Be a Pilgrim is throughout the book virtually committed to Tolbrook, the house which has always been the prison of his life anyway; his bondage is not more real, it is only more obvious than ever. In Gulley Jimson in The Horse's Mouth emerges from prison at the beginning of his book; at the end, he is mortally ill in a police ambulance. As politics is the basic metaphor of the second trilogy, so imprisonment and

5 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Penguin, London, 1957, p.12

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morality is the root situation of the first. Sara, a comic character in a tragic world, is trapped between the claims of her feminine moral sense and society's moral code. Wicher, a tragic figure because he can see the anatomy of his own entrapment, is caught between the claims of past and present. Gulley, also tragic, is imprisoned between the claims of self and the claims of the institution -- any institution -- all institutions. But Sara, Wilcher and Gulley are also, and this is simply putting the matter another way, imprisoned in their own subjectivities. They are, like Snow the cat at the end of The Horse's Mouth, completely isolated. For to be free is to be alone; to be alone is to be imprisoned: freedom's lonely bondage is, in the first trilogy as always in Cary, the tragic fact of a tragic world.

Plantie is a very strong Protestant, that is to say, he's against all churches, especially the Protestant; and he thinks a lot of Buddah; Karma and Confucius. He is also a bit of an anarchist and three or four years ago he took up Einstein and vitamins. 6

It is, therefore, a paradox, but it is no contradiction that these volumes have in common a comic lavishness unknown in the English novel since Dickens, Cary is no joyful trout, if by that term sheer acceptance of life is implied; but he is able to delight in the splendour and the sordidness of man's very manhood, and thus to express his own sense of triumph over the world's idiocy. Dickens himself was no yea-sayer: and his best

6 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Michael Joseph, London, 1950, p.40

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novels are informed by the sense of the senselessness, of the injustice, of the malevolence, which underlie human motivation. This is simply to say that tragedy and comedy do not merely go hand in hand; they are very often bed-fellows.

Property, that devilish invention to which we owe every evil, envy, hatred, thievery, the police, and all the cruelty of law, armies, navies, war. 7

Sara, like Gulley, belongs to the picaresque tradition -- the sturdiest and in many ways the most centrally novelistic of fictional methods. That 16th century picaro, Lazarillo de Tormes is in constant friction with the society of which he is part. But he is no revolutionary. Indeed he embraces, he celebrates, the life which he is lucky enough to be able to live. And the whole of his book is a boast of his triumph. The convention of the journey in the picaresque novel does permit this celebration, this triumph, this boast in various circumstances and different places. Within the English novelistic tradition, the nearest book to Herself Surprised is Moll Flanders. The books have in common a narrative device, a self-justifying heroine and a series of adventures. They have also in common a rejoicing. But it is easy to go too far. Moll Flanders is a filcher, delighting in her own filchings; Sara is a prisoner of her own kind of grace, delighting in her role in life, which is that of housekeeper to the various men with whom she

7 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.77

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becomes involved. If the symbol of Moll's life can be said to be money -- and preferably money illicitly got -- the symbol of Sara's life is surely the kitchen. This fact is made plain by the associative structure of her reflections. But Sara has also a sense of womanhood which makes her home much more in common with the Wife of Bath and with Mistress Quickly than with Moll Flanders, who hardly appreciates the joys of the female flesh. Sara is the inveterate nest builder.

But of course, small-minded people
hate what is rich to the mind. They
hate the past, not because it is old,
but because it might give them something
new, something unexpected, and disturb
their complacent littleness. 8

The title Herself Surprised does of course work in both directions. With richness of the English language it permits Sara to be surprised at herself, surprised to find herself doing what she does. At first she could not believe that she was anything like the woman they made her out to be. She is wonder-struck at the picture drawn of her in the courtroom. But because of the narrative device -- she is telling her own story -- she is also surprised by the reader in the act of living. The reader, like Sara, is breathless, though not for the same reason. Sara is writing against time. She must finish her confession while she is still news; no doubt the kind gentleman from the news agency is chivvying her. And she wants

8 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Op.Cit., p.33

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the hundred pounds which she is being paid, because she has been fretting for her quarter day. But the celerity of the pace conveys also Sara's character. Sara, unlike Wilcher and Gulley, does not reflect. She lives even more obviously than they do, by her feelings, which are generous, catholic and strong. The Biblical Sara baked bread for her guests, was praised by Peter for submissiveness to her husband, and bore a son at the age of ninety-one. As an old woman, "Sara laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure." (Genesis 18,12).

The judge, when he sent me to prison,
said that I had behaved like a woman
without any moral sense. 9

The judge who sentences Sara to prison calls her a woman without any moral sense, and he has come to this conclusion because several times during the gravest revelations of her own frauds and ingratitude, she smiled. Sara herself comes to believe, to a certain extent and in a certain way, this objective view. But the books exist, for the reader more than for Sara, to explore the tension between the official and the human versions of her life. Sara's enjoinder is that some who read this book may take warning and ask themselves before it is too late what they really are and why they behave as they do. As is suitable in a newspaper confession story and at the same time

9 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised,
Michael Joseph, London, 1958, p.9

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comfortable to her own nature, piety is writ large. She claims to know herself for the first time in her life, but she does not. In the end is her beginning, all over again. On the last page of the book she comforts herself: "A good cook will always find work, even without a character, and can get a new character in twelve months, and better herself, which God helping me, I shall do, and keep a more watchful eye, next time, on my flesh, now I know it better." Sara remains true to her own nature, but this is not to say that she lacks a moral sense. Her very physique -- she is a big, fleshy, healthy country girl -- suggests a moral stature of some considerable force. Her response, inexpressible by herself, is to a morality far deeper than the Victorian code to which she subscribes: it is the morality of Eve which was obedience to God and then to Adam.

But as for my robberies, that was
another thing and I still wonder
at myself. 10

The first of the men to whom she becomes attached, the sturdy middle-class and entirely unprepossessing Matthew Monday, demonstrated this morality. Sara calls it nature. Thus, although she does not even like him very much, she yields to his proposal that they marry. And though she is much surprised at herself, she acknowledges the inevitability of an inevitable nature. She goes further: she accommodates herself to her role as Mrs. Matthew Monday -- even indeed, to the extent of falling

10 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised,
Op.Cit., p.183

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in love with him. No girl could have helped loving a man so kind in himself and so loving to her. For he is the most pliable of what Gulley Jimson calls her "victims". She teaches him to make love confidently and so improves his self-esteem. She persuades him to play golf and entertain his friends. She helps him to become a town councillor. She bears him several children. That is to say, the nest she builds for Matthew Monday is serenely Victorian; it conforms to her view of the happy home drawn from Victorian novels. Sara is content with this life for a number of years, but she would cease to be Sara if she were simply to settle forever into the routine of respectability. Her own vitality requires vitality of response; by instinct she seeks renewal and refreshment. Therefore when the down-and-out artist Gulley Jimson comes to undertake a painting for the town council, she is drawn to this man even to the extent of disobeying her husband by posing for him.

I thought, too, how often I had gone
to church only to repent of some sin,
and to keep myself from another as
bad. If Mr. W. is even as bad as they
say, I thought, he may be better than
most, having greater temptation and
a harder fight. 11

Gulley is the most of a man she ever knew: if he gives Sara more sorrow he also gives her more joy than

11 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised,
Op.Cit., p.143

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any of the other men to whom she becomes attached. After Matt dies, Sara goes off with him and lives with him as Mrs. Jimson, although they cannot marry because Gulley may still have a wife. Sara's new relationship stands in sharp contrast to her marriage with Matthew Monday, but it is not only that the man is different, it is also that Sara has learned some lessons about life. She has learned to savour her rejoicings. Her happiness with Gulley, when they are on their honeymoon -- for so she calls it -- at Bournemouth, is the deeper for being more selfconscious. Not that she really understands Gulley. All he wants, she decides on seeing his joy at Bournemouth, is a little success and respect and money, which is every man's right, to ease his mind and take it off the stretch.

This is at once her strength and her weakness in her relationship to Gulley. For she can give him ease and peace. She can take care of him. She can rejoice with him in the pleasure of the flesh. But between mind and mind there is no communication. Gulley cannot discuss art with Sara, for Sara art is pretty pictures -- the sort which hung in the morning room at Matt's house, and which Gulley caused to be removed. Nor does she understand his religion, though she reports what he says. Gulley chides Sara for going to early service, because she is making religion into a self punishment. Nor, finally, does Sara understand Gulley's politics, which are pure anarchy. In fact, Gulley comes to feel oppressed by Sara's management of himself. This is Gulley talking not only angrily but wishfully, For nothing is less true than that he can paint to order. Indeed, orders, management -- or, as he calls it -- nagging, stop him completely. That is why in agonized

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frustration he hits Sara on the nose. She cannot apprehend, as the reader must infer, the constriction that Gulley feels in his relation to her. Inevitably he leaves her, although not until they have been together for nearly five years. But she is not alone for long.

But I played fair by Sir William.
Always treat a patron well so long as
he keeps his bargain and doesn't try
to cheat you. 12

The new focus of her life is Thomas Wilcher. She goes to his house, Tolbrook, only because she cannot get a character; the master of Tolbrook is known to have got in trouble with the police on account of his advances to the female servants; and Sara has overdrawn her bank account so heavily that she gets sent to prison. Yet within a month of her going to Tolbrook, she is so well settled that she is unwilling to go to London to join Gulley, when, finally he asks her to do so. She has done for Gulley all of which she is capable. She has been both mistress and housekeeper, inspiration and servant. But their relationship came to an impasse. For Sara can only go on being Sara -- managing, tidying, wanting things to be nice, hoping the Gulley will become a regular husband, that is a conventional man. But it is just this that as an artist Gulley cannot be. At Tolbrook, on the other hand, Sara can be caretaker of a house and master. It is, as she herself comes to realize, her role. She is shocked by the

12 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.191

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bitterness of the Felbys, Wilcher's butler and housekeeper from London, into gratitude that she is not mistress of a house, but cook. Then it came back to her what poor Jimson had said about her true home being in the kitchen and that she was born a servant in her soul, and her heart gave a turnover and she felt the true joy of life as clear and strong as if the big round clock over the chimney mouth was ticking inside of her.

And if he follow the idea of the
Church he shall embrace the idea of a
universal goodness and truth, which
is the form of the living spirit.
And its name is wisdom. And its works
are love and the joy of the Lord. 13

Wilcher needs the permanence of a geographical centre. Sara does not. When she is moved from Tolbrook to Wilcher's town house she is indeed heartbroken, at first for she has grown attached to Tolbrook and she finds Craven Gardens to be a prison. "Now why I did not give notice, I don't know, for I certainly meant to, or get my lot bettered. But I think it was only my rolling way." She is partly right and also partly wrong. For though Craven Gardens strikes her as being a slice of a house, she cannot resist making even this into a nest. Without turning a hair Sara becomes a part of London life; she is even glad of the peace and quiet of the town without hens and calves waking one up at four in the morning. She likes the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens, even to the sight of an old

13 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Op.Cit., p.167

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man breathlessly chasing after a toy sailboat. That is, because Sara rejoices in life, she rejoices that others rejoice. She is herself life delighting in life. She is free. She has her own morality.

Now I have always thought that in real life I mightn't have been so patient with Mr. Underwood, having a child every year; but still I'm sure it was better for a clergyman to be a saint, even if difficult in life, and to obey God's law as he thought it of multiplying, than stay just an ordinary man and make nothing of himself or of life either. 14

Sara talks to Wilcher not of practicabilities -- such as money and his having been summoned for indecent exposure -- but of books and God and the evening sky. It was then, she recollects, she really got to know the master or it was nowhere. And he for his part reminds her that she is a religious woman. She believes that they had souls to be saved or ruined and so did he. For Sara is not, and her readers perceive the fact, a woman of words; one of the excellences of her book is that it is written in a style so plain as to make us believe in Sara's inarticulateness, even as we read what is supposed to be her words. As Wilcher sees, Sara's faith is admirably simple and strong: her works are unending, for she has a

14 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.190

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vision of herself as housekeeper, as servant; she has the will and the energy to translate her vision into action. She uses prayer for moral guidance.

Now I have to confess that I was quite confused between my conscience and my duties, and indeed I prayed one night, and cried over the whole thing, since I thought that even if mother could have been alive, she wouldn't have been able to guide me, yet all the time, I knew I would give way. 15

But she goes too far. She becomes a thief -- not of course mischievously but because, having met Gulley at a funeral, she became a part of his life again. This involved expense, and she had to steal from Wilcher in order to provide this care. And on the day before her intended marriage to Wilcher, Sara is caught. She is accused of robbery. Characteristically Sara reflects, she knew she was a guilty woman. She felt the ghost of herself, just floating along in the draft from the stove to the sink and back again. She was not even afraid or unhappy. She was only surprised at herself and her devastations. That is, for Sara, as she sees herself, to live is to sin, and to sin is to suffer punishment. The everlasting enterprise which was her undoing was also her salvation. As for the moral and aesthetic revolutions which had been tearing

15. Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.174

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other people's worlds to pieces during her whole life, she was scarcely aware of them.

Very well and that I was humble enough, and I remember the first time I saw myself in my true body. It was on my honeymoon, in Paris, in a grand shop, the grandest I had ever seen. It had big mirrors in the showroom, between pillars, like glass doors, and I was walking to the stairs in my new hat as big as an Easter cake, and feeling the swish of my new silk petticoats and the squeeze of my new French stays. I seemed to be looking into the next saloon, and I thought: 'Look at that fat, common trollop of a girl with a snub nose and shiny cheeks, jumping out of her skin to be in a Paris hat. Wouldn't you bet she was out from Dartmouth fair last week? You can almost smell the cider on her lips. What a shame to expose herself like that and her nation to these foreigners. ' 16

Dickens' Mrs. Gamp is almost the identical twin of Sara Monday as seen by her own eyes. Her morals were the elementary morals of a primitive woman, of nature herself, which do not change; and she was supremely indifferent to politics, religion, economics. She was a female artist who was always composing the same work on the same style, but it is a style which does not go out of fashion.

16 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised
Michael Joseph, London, 1958, p.220

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Then he said that no modern writer would dare to write such a book; people would laugh at it. "They laugh at everything good, or noble or unselfish. They don't seem to understand what life can be like, and that people really did feel and do fine things and lead noble lives or try to lead them, when that book was written." 17

To be A Pilgrim takes up, in time, where Herself Surprised leaves off. But reading the one immediately after the other is a shock. For, and this is Cary's intention, we are in a different world, the subjective world of Thomas Wilcher; and from the very first page of To Be A Pilgrim the reader is forced to look back at Sara, to appraise her and her view of the world once more. Sara's world is narrow; it is a world in which all women are judged against a standard of kitchenness and every man is regarded as a poor little manny, that is an overgrown boy who must be domesticated. Sara is surprised at herself because she is unreflective; there is never an accretion of self-knowledge that can enable her to see into her own heart. Her talent is for living not thinking; and she cannot think. For though she feels remorse or sorrow or sadness for a little while, the dynamics of her soul propel her into new experiences in which the past is forgotten. And actually Herself Surprised, with its patina

17 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.190

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of regret (Sara means what she says when she is regretful, but she does not feel it, and feelings are all in all with Sara), is a never-elaborate rationale of her life, an apology. For she feels, that is, she knows, her way of life to be self justifying because she is abundantly female -- generous, mothering, protecting, sexually invigorating and completing. Love must be moral.

Lucy made it for me by the power of
her spirit, which created again that
beauty. For I did not see then that
beauty must be made again and that
when love dies, the form that expressed it
is also dead. 18

Thomas Wilcher is a more complex human being, and it follows that his book must have a more complex structure. Sara, in telling about herself, moves straight through her life and with few exceptions observes a chronological order. Decades are dismissed in a sentence or two, for during periods of years at a time nothing happens. She will tell us the beginnings and endings of her relationships, with Matt, Gulley and Wilcher; but much of the middle is omitted because then the nest is built and functions normally. It is only when the nest is threatened or destroyed that life is recordable. Her moral centre is the nest.

18 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim,
Op. Cit., p.325

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Thomas Wilcher is a retired lawyer or seventy-one with a bad heart. To himself he is not a poor little manny, but a religious man with a sense of history. He undertakes a journal not in order to justify himself to the world, which is Sara's motive in Herself Surprised, but to explain himself to himself. He perceives the nature of his own tragedy, that of a man attached to the past who must watch the past being destroyed, but in his feelings he is the prisoner of his own role in life. He is bounded by a firm Victorian morality.

To revisit Tolbrook is not only to recall the past but to sort it out, to make it make sense. He knows morality.

Lucy used to call me a hypocrite.
But this was a typical piece of incomprehension. Any man who was not a brute must have pretended some kind of feeling for Julie; and since she was still a sensitive and understanding creature, the imitation had to be good. And so it was the more troublesome to me. 19

Everything at Tolbrook, every room, every piece of furniture, every view from the window brings to Wilcher's mind a memory of his boyhood. The transitions here, and throughout the book, from past to present are handled with such directness as to amount to a technical innovation of some consequence. Is Wilcher mad? His niece Blanche thinks so and would have him certified. The other niece, Ann, from Wilcher's reports, seems to be uncertain whether her uncle is in his right mind or not. In fact, the delicately handled confusion, and perhaps above all the

19 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Op.Cit., p.342

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slyness of Wilcher, are such as to make the reader know of his penchant to wander. But to call Wilcher mad is to suppose Blanche to be the same -- that is, it begs the question. What is most interesting about Wilcher is not the question of his certifiability but the central and perfectly lucid conflict in his nature. God and church are close.

When your head begins to swell
Jack Ketcher will pull your passing bell.
But Christian feet when they grow long
seek to reach the churchyard throng. 20

Wilcher recalls his father and the way he handled his family. The elder Wilcher saw things plain. He was a simple man, an ex-cavalry officer, a man of rules. His idea of religion was that of Confucius, rules of conduct, carefully taught and justly administered. From the whippings that their father occasionally gave them the children had the refuge of their mother's sitting room which was always reassuringly peaceful. It was the centre for moral refuelling.

Against this self-contained, conservative world is set the present, the creative and therefore destructive younger generation of his niece Ann, a doctor of the newest school, and his nephew Robert, a farmer with new ideas. Jaffery, Wilcher's estate agent, a man whom he hates for having a contempt of the past -- Jaffery proposes that Wilcher advance some money so that Robert can make improvements. Wilcher resists, but perceives, and thus

20 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Op.Cit., p.369

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allows the reader to perceive, Jaffery's exasperation with a difficult old man. Wilcher shouts at Jaffery and has a heart attack which keeps him in bed for two days. Here he thinks of Tolbrook and hates it. To love anything or anybody is dangerous; but especially to love things. And for the time being he longs to move on, even for an asylum. He loves Sara because she is different.

Or perhaps, to be honest, I should say that she is a bit of a Protestant and therefore a bit of an anarchist. 21

He longs for Sara because her own pilgrim soul, her living instinctive faith, saved his soul alive when his faith was as dead as his heart; and what is faith but the belief that in life there is something worth doing, and the feeling of it. Sara will be out of prison in a year; he looks forward to that as the time of his salvation. But the reader already knows that an escape to Sara, even if it can be achieved, cannot settle the moral conflict in Wilcher's soul.

For in a sense it was settled long ago -- in the sense that from a young man Wilcher made the terms of his own entrapment. To live his father's life was of course impossible even in Wilcher's own youth; but equally impossible were the courses pursued by his brothers and

21 Cary, Joyce, To Be A Pilgrim, Op.Cit., p.382

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and sister. Wilcher's faith was too deep to be abandoned for the desperate nihilism of his elder brother Edward, who gave up a promising career in the government; his faith was too complex to reduce itself to the motion of duty by which his soldier brother Bill lived; his temperament was too conservative to respond more than sporadically to the enthusiasm of his sister Lucy, who eloped with a Benjamite preacher. But by this last course he was specially tempted. How did Lucy know at twenty-one, even in her shims, what he did not know till now from all his books, that the way to a satisfying life, a good life, is through an act of faith and courage? Not happiness and comfort but adventure is the protestant secret of a protestant pilgrimage. At that time in Lucy's life, Wilcher pursued her to a shockingly ugly and dirty industrial town. He had gone to bring her back. He found her scrubbing floors; and though she admitted that she had no rest, she said, she had the joy of the Lord. It was a crisis in Wilcher's life, for he understands the force of this assertion. He felt, though he was not by any means an unsophisticated man, the magnet strength of the Benjamite faith, even though he observed at the same time the squalor, the stupidity, even the hypocrisy of Lucy's husband's life. It was as though a wave had stretched itself before him in a bright and calm night, inviting him to approach. Though he fled Lucy, and though he told Edward a scornful story of the Benjamites, his scorn was wrought out of his own anguish, his impulse to succumb.

As a man in his eighth decade he draws up a balance sheet of his life, in which he very accurately diagnoses his own failure; and his conclusion is that though he was not a good man, he need not fall into the

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vanity of supposing himself a monster. This he says not in extenuation of his failure but to prevent the luxury of those romantic ecstasies by which an Alfred de Musset make of his common and vulgar sin a special glory. He thinks of Sara, and the very thought of Sara, as usual, brings him peace. For that was Sara's quality. Not the passion of Lucy which transported the soul out of darkness; but the tranquil light like that of an English morning, which disperses shadows out of all corners.

Rozzie had a conscience; Sara had a purpose and an object in life. Rozzie was a God-fearing heathen that never went to church in case of what might happen to her here; Sara was a God-using Christian that went to church to please herself and pick up some useful ideas about religion, hats and the local gossip. 22

By the end of the book, Wilcher has come to a new point of resolution. No change but life -- a fact admitted to consciousness only when Wilcher is upon the point of death. It is a fact which Sara Monday has always known, by instinct; a fact which Gulley Jimson discovered as a young man. But neither of them has a sense of the past, and it is just this, the sense of historical Englishness, which makes To Be A Pilgrim excellent in a way different from the excellence of Herself Surprised and The Horse's Mouth. To Sara the past has no existence, not even her own -- she forgets it. To Gulley history is bunk --

22 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p.248

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unforgettable indeed, but imprisoning to the degree that it is remembered, for history is an abstraction and Wilcher himself is to Gulley -- as he says in The Horse's Mouth, summoning Blake -- "an abstract philosophy warring in enmity against imagination." Yet Gulley, like Blake, for all his insistence that the now and the particular are what count, knows that imagination must find a form; and it is just there, but only there, that he and Wilcher can meet. Fundamentally the two men are opposites; they are parallel lines which never intersect. Wilcher is not an artist.

All is opened into the deeps of
 Eututhon Benython
 A dark unknown night,
 unmeasurable, without end,
 Abstract philosophy warring
 in enmity against imagination. 23

Gulley Jimson is writing for reasons in perfect harmony with his nature. He is writing because he cannot paint. For, although the reader does not learn this fact until near the end of the book, Gulley is lying in the hospital having suffered a stroke. So he is dictating his memoir, to his honorary secretary, who has got the afternoon off from the cheese counter. Herself Surprised is at once a confession and a rationale; Wilcher's book is an inquiry into the nature of a pilgrimage; The Horse's Mouth is neither of these things: it is itself a vast painting, an epic. It is a portrait of an artist

23 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
 Op.Cit., p.180

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undertaken neither to teach nor to explain, but actually to create. It reminds one of James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in its self-searching and self-revelation. It views life from a moral viewpoint.

It made me laugh. Then I took a bottle out of the dustbin to operate the windows. But before I could do anything I saw I was going to be angry. No, old man I said, you can't afford luxuries, you're too old. It's fun to play the fool, but an old chap has got to hold on to wisdom. Yes. 24

It says something, just because it is something. The very title suggests the paramount importance of the artist in the world; the artist gets his truth straight from the horse's mouth; he is an interpreter of the vision of God to man. Gulley, the artist, is doomed to misinterpretation, to neglect, to persecution, to actual prison because of his isolation from his fellow mortals. In the face of this incomprehension and this hostility Gulley must go on creating, for he is a true artist, who can be destroyed but never defeated. And his laughter is a desperate remedy against the world which continually threatens to paralyse him.

24 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth
Op.Cit., p.117

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Gulley, at the beginning of his book, has just been freed from prison, and as he walks along the Thames in the misty sunlight he is put in mind -- by way of selling, for the visual, naturally enough is Gulley's route to both discovery and recovery -- of the first lines of Blake's *Europe*. It is Gulley's motive, as it is his style, to see small portions of the eternal world. Sara and Wilcher, on the other hand, are blind. Sara lives by her instinct, from day to day. Her intimations of immortality are only intimations. And Wilcher is the prisoner of his memory. But Gulley's world, even his own private world, is one of eternal creation, and recreation.

As I slipped out, something like a
fiery comet whizzed past my left ear
and I saw old snow land in the light
in front of me; all four feet at once.
And then with one spring, in every
joyful lovely muscle, ascend into
Heaven; or the garden wall. 25

The world of creation is a world of injustice, and injustice is a major theme of The Horse's Mouth Gulley himself is a painter inhibited from painting because he has no paints -- he must "borrow" them. Coker, the barmaid at the Eagle is physically repulsive and her young man Willy has just gone off with another girl. Captain Smith, a patron of the Eagle, has a daughter of twenty who is already going deaf. Gulley, of course, thinks of this world in visual terms.

25 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p. 282

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We walked on. And I thought,
 the professor is broke, but I like
 him. There's a kind of little lamb
 who made thee about him, which is
 very attractive. 26

But it is also a world of unsolicited loyalties, of profound and disinterested affections -- even in the Strand-on-the-Green which Cary calls Greenbank. Nosy Barbon, a grubby youth in love with art, is determined to protect Gulley. He brings him coffee and buns from the stall, and will not go away even when Gulley impatiently dismisses him. Another friend is Walter Ollier, the postman, who often gives Gulley coffee in the morning and who attends meetings at the house of Godfrey Plant the cobbler. He liked Plant's club because Plant had beer for his friends. Even Coker is a friend, and her fierceness to Gulley stems not at all from dislike or from the fact that he has not repaid his debt to her, but from an inarticulate despair at the knowledge of another fellow-sufferer from injustice.

Sympathy and affection bring people together: there is communication on that level: Coker and Gulley are together in their sympathies. But for the rest, for comprehension between human beings, it does not exist. This fact is illustrated when Gulley is visited in his boathouse by Godfrey Plant and two other preachers. It is not a successful visit, for the trouble is that though

26 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
 Op. Cit., p. 131

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all good Protestant preachers round Greenbank, including anarchists and anti-God blackboys, loved beauty, they all hated pictures, real pictures. Plant is sympathetic. That is, he has brought the preachers there and wants the visit to be a success. He explains the paintings clearly but uncomprehendingly. Gulley is cast down -- the more he tried, the worse he felt. And instead of attending to the philistine remarks of the preachers, Gulley thinks of The Mental Traveller, which for twenty pages he cites, reflects on and interprets. Of all the Blake to be found in The Horse's Mouth, this is surely the most important. Cary himself regarded it as central both to an understanding of Blake and to an understanding of The Horse's Mouth.

The angel that presided at her birth
Said, little creature, born of joy and mirth
Go love without the help of anything on earth. 27

The Mental Traveller is open to several interpretations. Cary himself suggested that the poem may be read in several different ways, but he did not offer this suggestion as a complaint against it. Gulley Jimson, however, is unvexed. He interprets the poem as recording the cycle of artistic creation. Indeed, he puts Plant and the preachers into the poem. Plant himself is one of those who "nails him down upon a rock, catches his shrieks in cups of gold." Gulley's gloss here, and it is typical, is: it means that some old woman of a blue nose

27 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op.Cit., p.123

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nails your work of imagination to the rock of the law, and why and what; and submits him to a logical analysis.

What I like about the rich is the
freedom and the friendliness.
Christian atmosphere. Liberty
hall. Everything shared because
there is too much. 28

Gulley's term for his present feeling is grief: Sara's term in her own book, for she does not understand Gulley as he understands himself, is luck. And on the occasions when Sara uses this word of him, he hits her. Walking in the open air on Greenbank to get room for his grief, Gulley thinks Sara as the female and this as both the completing and the constricting principle of his life. He recollects the story of his relationship with her against the remembered lives of The Mental Traveller, and he exposes with perfect clarity the nature of Sara as he sees her.

She binds iron thorns around his head,
She pierces both his hands and feet,
She cuts his heart out at his side
to make it feel both cold and heat.

Her fingers number every nerve
Just as a miser counts his gold;
She lives upon his shrieks and cries,
And she grows young as he grows old. 29

28 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op.Cit., p.144

29 Blake, W., Portable Blake, Viking Press,
Macmillan, Toronto, 1946, p.145

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"She", as he recollects these lines, is explicitly Sara; and Sara is the feminine principle. She is thus material as against Gulley's spirit. In order for the spirit to be expressed, material is required -- yet unless, until the spirit dominates it will be choked. Thus Gulley, like Blake in The Mental Traveller draws close parallels between sexuality and artistic creation.

Then he rends up his manacles
And binds her down for his delight.
He plants himself in all her nerves,
Just as a husbandman his mould;
And she becomes his dwelling place
And garden fruitful seventy fold. 30

Or, as the desperate Gulley puts it, but still with relish:

"Materiality, that is Sara, the old female nature, having attempted to button up the prophetic spirit, that is to say, Gulley Jimson, in her placket-hole, got a bonk on the conk, and was reduced to her proper status, as spiritual fodder. But what fodder. What a time that was." 31

For convenience and ease of reference Blake's The Mental Traveller is quoted here:

The Mental Traveller

I travell'd thro' a Land of Men,
A land of Men and women too,
And heard and saw such dreadful things
as cold Earth wanderers never knew.

30 Blake, W., The Mental Traveller, Op.Cit., p.145

31 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.146

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For there the Babe is born in joy
that was begotten in dire woe;
Just as we Reap in joy the fruit
Which we in bitter tears did saw.

And if the Babe is born a Boy
He's given to a Woman Old,
Who nails him down upon a rock,
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

She binds iron thorns around his head,
She pierces both his hands and feet,
She cuts his heart out at his side
to make it feel both cold and heat.

Her fingers numb every Nerve,
Just as a Miser counts his gold;
She lives upon his shrieks and cries,
And she grows young as he grows old.

Till he becomes a bleeding youth,
And She becomes a Virgin bright;
Then he rends up his Manacles
And binds her down for his delight.

He plants himself in all her Nerves,
Just as a Husbandman his mould;
And she becomes his dwelling place
and garden fruitful seventy fold.

An aged Shadow, soon he fades,
Wand'ring round an Earthly lot,
Full filled all with gems and gold
Which he by industry had got.

And these are the gems of the Human Soul,
The rubies and pearls of a lovesick eye,
The countless gold of the akeing heart,
The martyr's groan and the lover's sigh.

They are his meat, they are his drink;
He feeds the Beggar and the Poor
And the wayfaring traveller:
For ever open in his door.

His grief is their eternal joy;
They make the roofs and walls to ring;
Till from the fire on the hearth
A little Female Babe does spring.

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And she is all of solid fire
And gems and gold, that none his hand
Dares stretch to touch her Baby form,
Or wrap her in his swaddling band.

But She comes to the Man she loves,
If young or old, or rich or poor;
They soon drive out the aged Host,
A Beggar at another's door.

He wanders weeping far away,
Until some other take him in;
Oft blind and age-bent, sore distress,
Until he can a Maiden win.

And to allay his freezing age
The Poor Man takes her in his arms;
The cottage fades before his sight,
Their Garden and its lovely Charms.

The Guests are scatter'd thro' the land,
For the Eye altering alters all;
The senses roll themselves in fear,
And the flat Earth becomes a Ball;

The stars, sun, Moon, all shrink away,
A desert vast without a bound,
And nothing left to eat or drink,
And a dark desert all around.

The honey of her Infant lips,
The break and wine of her sweet smile,
The wild game of her roving Eye,
Does him to Infancy beguile;

For as he eats and drink he grows
Younger and younger every day;
And on the desert wild they both
Wander in terror and dismay.

Like the wild Stag she flees away,
Her fear plants many a thicket wild;
While he pursues her night and day,
By various arts of Love beguil'd.

By various arts of love and hate,
Till the wide desert planted o'er
With Labyrinths of wayward Love,
Where roam the Lion, Wolf and Boar,

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Till he becomes a wayward Babe,
 And she a weeping Woman Old,
 Then many a Lover wanders here;
 The Sun and Stars are nearer roll'd.

The trees bring forth sweet Extacy
 To all who in the desert roam;
 Till many a Cith there is built,
 And many a pleasant Shephard's home.

But when they find the frowning Babe,
 Terror strikes thro the region wide:
 They cry "The Babe. the Babe is Born."
 And flee away on Every side.

For who dare touch the frowning form,
 His arm is wither'd to its root;
 Lions, Boars, Wolves all howling flee,
 And every tree does shed its fruit.

And none can touch that frowning form,
 Except it be a Woman Old;
 She nails him down upon the Rock,
 And all it done as I have told. 32

In an attempt to protect Gulley from the police -- he has been uttering threats against his patron Hickson -- Franklin and Ollier take him down to the river, where they put him in charge of a boatman, Bert Swope, and a dwarf named Harry. These men do not understand Gulley as an artist, but they sympathize with him as a human being. But to Gulley this is, at the moment, little consolation, for he is reflecting on the agonies of an artist's life. He recollects that he never intended to become an artist: indeed he had determined never to become one. Having seen his father's work become outmoded, having seen him, a little grey-bearded old man, crying in the garden, because

32 Blake, W., Portable Blake; Viking Press, Macmillan, Toronto, 1946, (713 pages), p.145-148

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his style went out of fashion, Gulley started respectably as a businessman in the City. But one day when he was sitting in the London office on Bankside he dropped a blot on an envelope; and having nothing to do just then, he pushed it about with a pen to try to make it look more like a face. That was the beginning, the disease from which Gulley has never recovered. He rehearses the stages of his life as an artist, his continual efforts to catch, in the "Mental Traveller" terms, the maiden. The job is always to get hold of the form one needs. But the form is elusive; for the intuition changes, develops; the eyes see things very differently if the artist is not to become fatally imprisoned by one form of expression, one style -- as did Gulley's father. Now Gulley, an old man in despair reflects, he has lost sight of the maiden altogether. He wanders weeping far away, until some others take him in. The police do. It's quite time. He is getting too old for the rackety life.

A good verse carries you off to sleep.
Like a ship in full sail. Why you can
hear the water under the sides as it
sings, and as you drop off, you can
smell the spices of the cargo. Sleep
in the land of Beulah. 33

On this evening of despair, Gulley with the others meets Plant, who is full of excitement that Professor Ponting, from America, is going to address his meeting.

33 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.104

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The subject is to be "Religion and Humanity." It is a grubby meeting of grubby life -- defeated people in a bed-sitting room behind Plantie's shop. Sara appears, and she and Gulley converse in the scullery. She has sought him out. She is immensely dressed, for -- as she tells Gulley -- she hates feeling old. But the fact is, she is not well and she is afraid that Fred, the man with whom she is now living, will put her in hospital. In the meantime, and contrapuntal to the conversation between Gulley and Sara, Professor Ponting is delivering his talk; the theme is "the boundless possibilities of human happiness." It is a touching juxtaposition here, of Sara's old-woman talk and the skate-faced Ponting's rolling platitudes: a tragicomic incident altogether, ending boisterously in Gulley's and Sara's drinking too much and trying to make love in the scullery. The closing song they sing, "Jerusalem", is an ironical comment on the meeting. For it is, in Blakean terms, artists who build Jerusalem, not such people as the skates and this audience. But there is more than coarsely mirthful contrast.

So it was every night. I even made
it seem welcome to please the man,
for I thought, if I must give him his
pleasure, it was waste not to give him
all that I could. 34

34 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised,
Op. Cit., p. 93

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This episode can be seen in expanded and more explicit form in the discarded section of The Horse's Mouth called The Old Strife at Plant's which was apparently published in Harper's magazine several years ago, and also privately printed in Oxford in 1956. And it is not difficult to see why the discarded chapter was in fact discarded. For though it is brilliant, in some ways more brilliant than what appears in the novel itself, it is not germane. It does not fit into the economy of the novel. In the novel the woman is Sara, and when Gulley at the end of the evening puts her on the last bus home, he realizes what this encounter has meant to him. As she excites him she inspires him, and at a time when he stands greatly in need of inspiration.

Why did I fall in love with Rozzie?
most men fall in love because they
want to; that's why they can't be
stopped. But I didn't want to fall
in love with either Sara or Rozzie.
I wanted to get on with my work. I
was a victim of circumstance. 35

But the discarded section, besides being several times as long as what was finally incorporated into the novel, contains, instead of Sara, another ancient woman, Sukey, whom the reader never meets elsewhere. Furthermore, there is an extra dimension in the discarded chapter. While Sukey is relating a saga of her life, Bill and

35 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p.246

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Grandma and fourteen children, Gulley is making scratches on a beer bottle. The skate is meanwhile preaching platitudes much as he does in the finished version. But in the finished version Gulley and Sara really converse -- they talk to each other; whereas in the discarded section Sukey's talk is a background to the inspiration which Gulley has received, or thinks he has, at Plant's. That is, the discarded section is too schematic. Still, Sukey is an admirable creation, a nakeder, cruder, simpler Sara. At the end, the vision at the bus is more explicit than it is in the finished version.

Rozzie was a desolation. You loved
her like a ruin that has to be propped
up and railed round to keep the dogs off.
And she grew on you like the ivy and the
drink, digging out your mortar with her
great knobby roots. Loving Rozzie was a
special vice, like eating between meals. 36

Gulley is therefore wrong to suppose himself too old. He remains alive just because he can see, because he can face the world down, just because -- as Sara also says -- "he can be all serene." It is those who are blind who suffer most keenly. Nor will Gulley, like Houseman, endure a while and see injustice done; he will never surrender to injustice. This point is illustrated by his encounter with Plant some months after the meeting described above. Gulley has spent the winter in prison for theft and for destruction of Hickson's property. When he looks for Plant he

36 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op.Cit., p.253

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finds him gone. The cobbler got blood poisoning after running a needle into his right hand; he has had to have it amputated; too proud to accept help, he had gone to a dosshouse called significantly Elsinore. There Gulley finds him among a scramble of sixpenny customers, fighting with one another for the use of the three frying pans in the kitchen. In the ugly melange sits Plant, utterly defeated. He holds his stump up to Gulley in confusion. And when Plant repeatedly fails to capture one of the frying pans, when at last he is flung contemptuously into a corner by a young man he is reduced to tears.

I was glad to get away from that little black scorpion. Ringed with hellfire. I feel my hair rise still all over, where it used to be, when I think of him. No wonder they invented religion. Nothing but the heaviest dogma cast in the thickest metal can keep such demons, afreets and poltergeists bottled up in their own juice, which is the only acid strong enough to disinfect their virtues. 37

Gulley himself, well schooled in injustice, knows better than to expect justice, but his knowledge is not always or altogether consoling. He recollects with bitterness his sister Jenny running off at the age of eighteen with a married man of thirty-five. In a year she was transformed from a fresh-faced girl to skin and bones. Indeed, the story of Jenny is told intermittently throughout *The Horse's Mouth* -- haunting Gulley because it was so terribly unjust; for Jenny, having made every

37 Cary, Joyce, *The Horse's Mouth*,
Op. Cit., p. 180

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sacrifice for her husband, had to endure his leaving her.
But she did not endure it for long. She took her own life.

Some sons of Los surrounding the
passions with porches of iron and silver
Creating form and beauty around the
dark regions of sorrow.
Giving to airy nothing, a name and a
habitation
Delightful with bounds to the infinite. 38

The adventure with Sir William and Lady Beeder provides a variation on the theme -- but it is a necessary variation, because it takes Gulley out of Greenbank for a considerable period of time, into a larger or at least a different world. He is delighted with these rich and stupid patrons of the arts. And there are few funnier episodes in all fiction than the account of Gulley's afternoon and evening with the Beeders. They are perfect material for Gulley to work on. Lady Beeder paints -- a little, and when an example of her work is shown to Gulley, he is charming about it, for a moment; then his charm becomes gay malice.

"No," I said, "that's the very biggest mistake anyone can make, to get annoyed with the government. Because it's so easy." 39

38 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p. 135

39 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p. 209

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During dinner -- for Gulley remains until the Beeders must ask him to dine -- he drinks too much and in his intoxication he is transported to the land of Beulah. Lady Beeder is so beautiful, so charming, so respectful and friendly; so silly, shallow and uncomprehending. And it is precisely Beulah that describes Gulley's state -- Blake's Beulah which is a land where the doubting masculine mind is put to sleep and enclosed in a protective space by the daughters urge the sleeper to take it easy for a time and not to think (dispute), lest it think itself into a fall.

When the Beeders go off to America, Gulley takes possession of their flat. He begins quietly enough: he removes the paintings to find the right wall on which to paint the Raising of Lazarus. He then sketches feet on the wall -- big feet, little feet, young feet, old feet, Lord's feet. Next, he decides to take an advance on this masterpiece-to-be, and so he pawns Lady Beeder's teapot and some spoons. But this is only the beginning. He pawns more and more of the furnishings, and gets in all the equipment he needs for his painting. He hires models. He even allows a friend of a friend to come in and begin work on a war memorial. This man is a sculptor named Abel, whose determination and enthusiasm quite equal Gulley's. After a few weeks, Gulley and Abel have not only caused to be removed everything of value in the flat -- even the lavatory chain -- but they have ruined the floors and the walls.

"Well, you can't help it, can you.
You're as God made you, more or less,
with some interference from Daddy. 40

40 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.89

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When at last the Beeders return, Gulley flees raging against the world's injustice -- forgetting because as artist he must forget how unjust he himself has been; and after an entr'acte the last movement of the novel begins. The subject of this movement is the Creation, as it is the subject of Gulley's last painting. He has a sense that he is working against the tolling bell of his own mortality; he has a sense of his agedness. Besides he has murdered Sara, not maliciously but because she has interfered with his effort to take a painting from her flat. With the painting he had hoped to buy paints and equipment for the Creation.

Getting to work on a huge wall in the dilapidated building -- a ruined chapel, in fact, in an alley off horsemonger's Yard, Gulley is so excited that he says, that it will probably bring up an earthquake, or a European war and wreck half the town. This in answer to Nosy, who wants to have the roof propped up before Gulley begins. He ignores a representative of the council who serves notice on Gulley to get out because the building is unsafe. But the work proceeds. Gulley stays.

The green girls began to dance under
the silver porches and shake their
silver hips. A lot of impudent
hussies. 41

41 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p. 148

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When activity is at its height, Sir William Beeder and other men of influence visit the chapel. But they have come, as he discovers, not to admire his wall, and not to do anything about preventing it from being knocked down, but to ask him to accept a commission to paint a portrait of a general. From the moment this revelation is made to Gulley he forgets, or at least omits to regard, what the deputation says. And a little later from Nosy, who has set spies on the deputation, he learns that even these important patrons have been plotting against him; for, wanting him to paint portraits rather than walls, they support the efforts of the borough council to get him out of the ruined chapel.

For consolation Gulley goes to the Feathers. He talks to a cat. For Gulley, this cat, a deaf and castrated animal named Snow, provides a focus and a solace. Snow is alone. Even when Alfred the barman tickles her, she pays no attention -- just as Gulley wishes he could ignore a Feather's patron who berates him for painting muck on the chapel wall in Horsemonger's Yard. Snow is beyond such ranting, and Gulley feels a flow of sympathy for her. Gulley, equally isolated but more involved, connects the destruction of his wall with the destruction of the world: art and war.

The Professor looked like a Protestant saint when the cannibal offered him the choice of taking six wives or being boiled alive. ⁴²

⁴² Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth,
Op. Cit., p. 171

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But it is not only Snow who is alone in this room. Coker is also living in a world by herself. As the patrons talk, she looks absent-mindedly at Gulley's empty can and forgets to fill it. Her mind is on her own creation. Even a young soldier in the bar is self-contained, jealous of his own privacy: when someone asks him what his job is, he is enraged, and he walks indignantly out of the pub. The patrons of the Feathers are indeed like Snow.

At last Gulley returns to Horsemonger's Yard and ascends his wall. He is so grief-stricken at Sara's death that he can hardly paint. Nevertheless, in the combined fevers of sorrow, drunkenness, anxiety and desperation, he paints. Sara returns to him in his delirium and urges him to take care of himself, to go to bed. And in the course of this imaginary conversation, Gulley puts into Sara's mouth the quintessential truth about their relationship - he hated not being free. And, as he has always done before, he now dismisses her -- sorrowful but with finality. For he must be free. He must paint.

He dozes till daylight, when he is awakened by a policeman who has come not to arrest him for the murder of Sara -- she, loyal to the end, has described her assailant as a tall, red-haired man with a foreign accent but to assist in the eviction of Gulley from the chapel. The demolition has begun. Gulley ignores the noise, the dust, the voices below him. He keeps on painting, keeps on creating, keeps on keeping on. Until at last -

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The whale smiled. Her eyes grew bigger and brighter and she bent slowly forward as if she wanted to kiss me ... And all at once the smile broke in half, the eyes crumpled, and the whole wall fell slowly away from my brush At last, after the dust had cleared away, and after he has seen about ten thousand angels in caps, helmets, bowlers, and even one top hat, laughing at him -- all classes of respectable society laughing at Gulley Jimson the artist -- at last, alone of the swing high above the sea of faces, Gulley is finished. 43

He is flung down from his cradle, paralysed by a stroke, and hauled away in a police ambulance. When Nosy in tears complains of the injustice, Gulley replies

Get rid of that sense of justice, Nosy,
or you'll feel sorry for yourself --
and then you'll be dead, -- blind and
deaf and rotten. 44

In this wisdom, in the splendour of his isolation, in the amplitude of his own created world, Gulley can even now face the other worlds down. He can, even mortally ill, keep on keeping on. He can be all serene. For though all men are free, the artist is the most free. Liberated by a special grace, Gulley can tell the nun in the police ambulance that laughter is the same thing as prayer. Laughter, joy and happiness are the natural conditions of a person who is happy in the knowledge of obeying the morality of God.

43 Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth Op.Cit., p.289

44 Ibid., p.240

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A lot of talk was going on down below.
 There was quite an orchestra. I
 distinguished Cokey, like a kettledrum,
 Nosy like a cracked oboe, Jorky like
 a viola, and four or five of the girls
 like a glockenspiel of tea cups. ⁴⁵

The raison d'être of all the volumes of the political trilogy are especially well established. Nina in Prisoner of Grace is justifying her role by answering "revelations" that have been made about Nimmo and herself - the penny-press sensationalism which can pass for history only because it is faithful to the facts, the debunking biography which looks for clay feet, and the hagiography which exalts Nimmo at the expense of his wife and friends. Nina's brand of revision also invites some distortion: so there are several possible versions set out in Prisoner of Grace alone. But there is yet another in Except the Lord, which is also an apology, this time by Nimmo, who discovers in the evangelical background of his poverty-stricken family the source and cast of his life, both as a man and as a politician. It is a moving self-portrait, but it stops when Nimmo is on the threshold of his political career, so that the reader is forced by the act of retrospection to understand the sources of the man's motive: and, implicitly, asked to forgive. The narrator in Not Honour More is about to be hanged -- or, as he says, hung -- for the murder of his wife, or else to be certified criminally insane; and he must justify his action to himself and to a world that he wishes could be run along lines of decency and justice -- meaning by

⁴⁵ Cary, Joyce, The Horse's Mouth, Op.Cit., p.287

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these words soldier -- decency and soldier -- justice. Latter's version of Nimmo is a bitter portrait of a supple politician drawn by an inflexible soldier who is corroded by the acids of jealousy. Nina is weak morally.

This habit of Jim's of coming to my room or taking me to his did not stop till just before I was married. 46

Nina's book has the flavour of retrospect not simply because it surveys her past, but because it does so from the vantage point of what is formally, though not actually, a new phase in her life. The book centres on her relationship to Chester Nimmo, as his wife, as a prisoner of grace. But she tells her story when she has become Mrs. James Latter. It is true to say that she has always been in spirit Latter's wife -- her children are his children; but it is equally true that she can never escape from her imprisonment by Nimmo. At the end of the book he has come to her house and made his claims, which she can not refuse. So the formal device of the book clearly emphasizes the personal boundaries of Nina's life. She stands between the two men, sometimes as mediator, but always as comforter to them both. She has preferences but few moral standards.

I hated to be handled, and I hated myself naked; and even while I was shivering and spitting salt water I was hating Jim's nakedness. 47

46 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.15

47 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.13

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Nina ascribes her acquiescence to Chester's proposal of marriage -- she is seventeen and pregnant by Jim Latter -- to a tendency to dawdle. She had begun to suspect that she could reconcile herself to anything. This is a key to her character, one that fits the lock to so many puzzles in her life. But Nina, betrayed as always by her curiously involuted style, is less than fair to herself. She is not, as she thinks, adrift on a wave over which she has no control. She is loyal. At the time of the Boer War, Chester was a pacifist. At one political meeting he called the soldiers fighting the war, murderers and cowards. When he repeated this charge elsewhere, a bad riot ensued. Both he and Nina were subjected to rough treatment. But these events brought Chester into national prominence and Nina was hailed as a heroine of the course. She did indeed work hard for Chester in this period, not because she had been converted to his kind of radicalism, but because she was afraid of what would happen to her, if she came to hate Chester.

Nimmo has been called a crook.
He is not meant for a crook.
A crook is essentially a man who
is out for himself, who has no
principles. 48

But the conclusive test occurs after the Boer War, when Jim returns to England. Almost as soon as he and Nina meet, Jim makes love to her and they agree to go away together. The next morning Nina leaves Chester, as she thinks forever. But he follows her to the railway station. And here occurs the crucial scene in the book.

48 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Michael Joseph, London, 1954, p. 5

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Chester's persuasion is considerate, loving and finally irresistible.

One of the ways Nimmo had held her so long in their marriage was paying her bills and dressing her up like a London society tart. 49

'So you want to go to Jim?'
 'Won't you see I must go?'
 'I was putting the emphasis on "want".
 Do you want to go to Jim or only to escape from me?'
 'Please, Chester, don't cross-examine me - it's too late; it really is too late.
 You mustn't stop me now; you can't.' 50

He brings up an old argument that, in marrying him, she married out of her class. But this infuriates and confuses Nina. He also brings up the subject of religion, that their life together has had God's blessing upon it. Then, after further argument, Chester simply gets up and leaves.

My only wish in this statement,
 as my last say on earth, is
 to have the truth the whole truth
 and nothing but the truth, so
 help me God. 51

But one night, I say, she came running and threw herself on my bed - she said there was a creature in her room, she heard him breathing in the cupboard. So I lit my candle and took my knife and went in. Of course there was nobody. 52

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- 49 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.56
 50 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.90
 51 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.27
 52 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.71

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A good deal later in the book, when she knows him much better, Nina writes that Chester has a number of strong defences. If one did break through, one found inside always at least some part of the original Chester. For Chester at last had remembered that Jim and Tom were individual persons. This is one more crucial revelation on Nina's part; it goes a long way toward suggesting the terms of her voluntary imprisonment by grace. The original Chester, the real man, is what binds Nina in thrall of the allegiance of a lifetime. This hypnotism even makes it possible for Nina to endure, though she does so with anguish, the ruin of her son Tom, who is gifted and very sensitive, and who adores Chester, and yet is overwhelmed by him. Chester was like a drug to him and too much of it produced a reaction.

For the man with a message,
opposition, even hatred, is a
sign that he is needed precisely
in that place where the most
violent hostility is to be found. 53

The book, in justifying Chester, justifies by explaining the necessity of political manoeuvre. Having been privately warned of a possible scandal concerning his financial holdings, Chester sells more share quickly and is able to make a satisfying -- though not fully candid -- explanation in the House. But to tell the whole story would have been quite misleading ... It might have produced a great injustice, that is the ruin of Chester's career. Nina defends him strongly. She thinks that Chester was quite right, therefore to arrange his statement so that people were persuaded to believe that

53 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Michael Joseph, London, 1953, p. 15

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he was really innocent, because he was innocent. And it was true to say that he had no warning which enabled him to 'cover up' because he had nothing to 'cover up' in the sense in which his enemies used the word.

But drink, in those days, was an evil inconceivable in ours. The fearful uncertainty of life, unemployment, the appalling squalor of slums, drove millions of the weaker nerve to drink. 54

This impassioned defence by Nina is also part of the book's defence of the man. Nina is described by Cary himself in the Carfax preface as a credible witness.

"I'd like to know," says Nina, and here she is echoing Chester's own sentiments, "what would happen if nobody tried to manage people, if mothers always told the facts to children (saying to the stupid ones that they were stupid) and never took any consideration of their nerves and their fits of temper and fights and silliness." Indeed, Cary has used almost these very words elsewhere, and in his own person, do define "politics" in the widest sense. "And what I am trying to do in this book," Nina says, "is not to make out that Chester was a saint (which would be stupid, after all the books and articles about him) but to show that he was, in spite of the books, a 'good man' -- I mean (and it is saying more than could be said of most people) as good as he could be in his special circumstances and better than many were in much easier ones." 55

54 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op. Cit., p.57

55 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.301

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As for Georgina and myself, we were backsliders of the common type, and yet it was always a surprise to me to find myself a nuisance. 56

The political trilogy does turn on this plea, and within it the structure of the map which Cary is drawing in the political trilogy altogether. In the human drama Chester is in favour of wangling as against shooting; Jim, seeing the world in black - and - white terms, favours shooting to maintain his ideal of justice. And Nina is the mediator, sympathizing with both men, bound to them both. The tension of Cary's novels is always between these two poles, and the positions are not reconcilable. There is no golden mean.

The shock of reading Except the Lord after Prisoner of Grace derives in part from the fact that the novels of this trilogy are written out of order: in Prisoner of Grace Nina meets Chester when he is in his early thirties; Except the Lord deals with his childhood and youth, and it provides another kind of justification; it is written by Lord Nimmo himself at the very end of his life. The book, however, stops far short of considering the man at the summit of his powers, perhaps because Chester cannot deal with these years: the irony of Except the Lord -- not expressed by Chester -- is that for its hero lordship becomes merely an empty symbol of temporal possession. His style is richly evangelical.

56 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op. Cit., p.37

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"Yesterday, an old man nearing my end, I stood by the grave of a noble woman, one of the three noblest I have ever known, my mother, my sister, my wife. If I draw back now the curtain from my family life, sacred to memory, I do so only to honour the dead, and in the conviction that my story throws light upon the crisis that so fearfully shakes our whole civilization." 57

As Chester recalls his youth, he often shifts to the present tense, a device which in conveying a sense of the immediacy of these events to the reader conveys also the sense of Chester's own intimate relationship to them.

"I have been sent to the shop to meet Georgina, because on the Saturday, she will have a heavy bag of groceries and she is just out of bed. Georgina, though so dark and wiry, had lately had influenza, and a touch of pleurisy, and the doctor when he came to see my mother had warned us that the girl was working beyond her strength." 58

Here the juxtaposition of tenses serves the double purpose of suggesting both the vividness of the recollection and the nostalgia which it evokes. Furthermore the book is, throughout, extremely episodic. There are flashes of recollection, in chronological order to be sure, but there is not a usual kind of continuity. No doubt this is intended by the author, who wishes to show, among other things,

57 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.1

58 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.27

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the urgency Chester feels laid upon himself to explain himself to the world -- before it is too late.

It was also a chance I looked in,
to see if my wife was there, and
that I saw him, this old swine over
seventy years of age, interfering
with my wife. 59

Indeed, a sense of doom pervades the whole. This is illustrated when Chester recalls the harvest season, during which he and his brother and sister want to go to Lilimouth Great Fair. To get together enough money is an undertaking of great difficulty. There is a tin miner's strike on, supported financially and spiritually by their father. Before the fair, old Nimmo takes his two sons to a hillside meeting of the striking miners, and it is a meeting Chester never forgets, for it is a sight of appalling poverty, of men and women and children starved. Old Nimmo wants to urge -- though he does not do so directly, and he does not insist -- the children's support of the miners in their distress.

Ah, I hear you say, a typical Victorian despotism, a hypocritical theocracy in which children were robbed of all freedom and joy -- even their own earnings -- in the name of a Divine Providence that was in fact the whim of the paternal autocrat. Nothing could be more untrue; I doubt if that parent ever existed except for the purposes of professional novelists -- a not very reputable tribe, eager, as your friends in America put it, to 'cash in' on the usual reaction of every age against the last one. 60

59 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Michael Joseph, London, 1955, p.7

60 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.69

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This paragraph tells implicitly of Chester's own sense of audience as he writes, an old man now regarded as hopelessly out of date. The whole book thus is written for readers whom he knows to be unsympathetic. Having been a great man, swept from popular triumph to popular triumph, having almost succeeded in becoming Prime Minister, he has gone -- we know from Nina's story -- to defeat in two general elections, and from there to the defeat of a peerage. Death is near. And the style of this book is therefore anxious, patiently impatient, even sometimes bewildered, paranoid.

I say that, as I lie here in my bed,
an old man condemned to a double death,
of his body and his name, I am full of
faith, of hope. 61

Toward the end of the book Chester states the circumstances under which he is writing. An old man who has just had a heart attack, he is dictating to her who has been his wife in order to dispel through these memoirs a cloud of misunderstanding which has thrown so black a shade upon his last hours. The reader of Prisoner of Grace knows that Chester is in Palm Cottage dictating to a Nina who has become Mrs. Jim Latter; and taking bold advantage of her sexually whenever the two of them are alone together. He is moved to remark on the fundamental nature of women, whose politics are not that of affairs but the politics of home and hearth.

61 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.276

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In the context of Except the Lord, this reflection has a pious ring; but behind this context is that of Prisoner of Grace: the reflection is not only pious, it is also, and equally lascivious.

This book would be worthless if it did not show how men, especially young and ardent men as I was then, come to do evil in the name of good, a long and growing evil for a temporary and doubtful advantage. 62

The crisis that so fearfully shakes our whole civilization is, as the reader of Prisoner of Grace knows, what Chester has come to feel. This is the disease of the post-war generation, the departure in the 1920's from the religious principles which have animated Chester's whole life. The book, written by a man who is himself lost, is an indictment of the last generation. Chester decries the abandonment of the fundamental revelation of Jesus, of a faith in Divine Providence, of the relationships - personal, intimate, Protestant -- between man and God. Except the Lord sets out to rediscover the roots of Chester's own religion, his orientation to the world. The truly Protestant cast of Chester's narrow mind is revealed again and again in the entire trilogy, not least in his reaction to the Italian churches which he and Nina see when they are on their honeymoon. He does not like them; he finds them, Nina says in Prisoner of Grace, even worse than he expected.

62 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.252

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He meant that they were full of saints and candles. For he had a horror of the Roman religion and said that wherever it had power you found ignorance and oppression and dirt and poverty. I said that perhaps that was because miserable ignorant people need a nice rich artistic kind of religion, but this also shocked him and he said with his religious voice, 'artistic religion isn't religion at all -- how could it be? There is only one true religion -- between a man's own soul and his God'. 63

In this speech Chester himself illustrates the narrowest and most ignorant type of Christianity - Protestant or Catholic.

Chester is the son of an impoverished yeoman who is also a lay preacher; a man farming forty acres in Devonshire. Chester's mother is the daughter of a schoolmaster. Old Nimmo believes in the Second Coming and is a man of great generosity. But one of Chester's earliest recollections is that of his father refusing a man ten shillings for a drink. How cruel, thinks Chester, is that charge of the selfish against the Christian, often poorer than himself, 'You profess Christ, therefore you have no right to refuse me anything.' In fifty years of politics, he had not known worse -- it wounds so deep. Whom has Chester himself refused? The reader of Prisoner of Grace recalls that Chester has refused to see his patron and old friend, Gould, when the two men are at odds on the issue of pacifism at the outbreak of the First World War;

63 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, OP.Cit., p.28

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he has often refused to assist Jim Latter in his career, though he has helped him too; he has refused even to help young Tom Nimmo when the boy was threatened with prison. All these refusals he undertook on the summoning up of principle, an exercise which Nina finds to be convenient, self-deceiving. But there can be little doubt that these principles are most sincerely, religiously adhered to -- or revealed -- and it is in the environment of which he now writes that he has learned about God.

I heard no more from Chester after this, but, as I might have known, he was not accepting defeat. He simply changed his tactics. ⁶⁴

Chester calls the Lilimouth Great Fair central in his history. And the central experience which Chester has is the shock, the exaltation, of the theatre tent. He speaks of the vehement tremor of that night when he sees introduced on the platform the actors of the play. He knows that the theatre is forbidden. He knows that it is evil. But he is drawn by some weird irresistible force into the tent.

The play is a melodrama of seduction, or rather the rape, of a poor virtuous village girl by the villainous son of her parents' landlord.

⁶⁴ Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.366

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In the play everything possible was done to show the virtue, innocence and helplessness of the poor, and the abandoned cruelty, the heartless self-indulgence of the rich. The play, Chester says, "was decisive in my own life." The reason is that it opens doors to life's possibilities. "I have heard it said that a man's first experience in the theatre opens a new world to him -- it would be better to say that it destroys the old one." But what strikes him deeper than the theme of the play, the terrible injustice visited by a "gentleman" upon a helpless girl, what horrifies him most profoundly of all is the "fascinated admiration" which he feels for the villain. "When in his soliloquies at the front of the stage, his eyes, roving over the audience, seemed to meet mine, they set forth an indescribable thrill -- it seemed that something flashed from the very centre of evil into my deepest soul. 65

Here is the Cary preoccupation with the power of the word for good and for evil; it is the theme of his last novel, The Captive and the Free; and the reader must observe that there is no choice between good and evil here; the power of the words is a power for both the one and the other. This is a fact which Chester, by the very importance which he attaches to this recollection, recognizes.

65 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.93

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The other decisive event in Chester's life occurs some years later when, now a young man, he becomes a labour agitator and learn the meaning of violence. During a shipping strike, of which Chester is one of the leaders, an offer is made to settle the strike by partly meeting the union's demands. Chester and his cohorts turn this down. Instead they vote for more activity on picket and more private persuasion, a euphuism for a violence which, in retrospect, Chester regards with great horror. The motive, Chester now sees, in the so-called active policy was violence for the sake of violence, cruelty to make hatred, in short, class war and revolution. When the strike does become more violent, Chester himself witnesses a scene of heart-rending outrage a house wrecked and the father of a family lying wounded in the street. To his everlasting shame, Chester is cool in the face of this disaster, not heart-rent. He is almost sent to prison; he escapes that fate only by telling lies. And, Chester says, writing now, his whole life might have been ruined had not an accident occurred. He was betrayed by the strike leader himself, who, without consulting Chester, threatened even greater violence, when Chester demurred, he was thrown out, out of the union, out of his lodgings, literally into the street; spiritually sickened by his experience, and soon reduced to physical sickness as well.

And I noticed that after one of these successful assaults - (and now I did everything possible to give the man what he wanted as quickly as possible, simply - to get it over) he would seem ten years younger. 66

66 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.388

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To understand all is to forgive all, but to forgive is not to withhold judgment. If the Chester Nimmo of Prisoner of Grace is often revoltingly self-deceived, he is equally a pitiable figure by the very profoundness of his own self-deception. But even Nina cannot know him as he knows himself. The force and thrust of his own childhood do not impinge upon her judgment as they impinge upon his -- and as they impinge upon ours, when we come to know him through his own words in Except the Lord. The second volume of the political trilogy widens the boundary of our sympathy for Chester Nimmo not least because he cannot explain in his own words the events of his own political career. But a final judgment is possible only when we see him through the harshly hostile eyes of a madman.

He was bolding my hand all the time
and now he gave it a little pressure
(twisting his eyes towards Bootham),
which, at that moment, was as much
as if he had begged, "Get me away
from these gaolers." 67

Not Honour More is a soldier's story. Its theme is honour, a soldier's honour, like that of the soldier in Lovelace's poem which gives the book its title. Captain James Vandeleur Latter, the narrator of this novel, seeks justice in a world condemned to injustice; he searches for simple truth amidst a thousand indirections. And he is doomed by the very clarity and nobility of his ideas to suffer, indeed to perpetrate, the tragedy which is the murder of his wife.

67 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.374

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It has been a bitter thought to me in these weeks I'm going through hell for nothing. That I killed my darling to no purpose; that this great country is so blinded and bound, so hocused and gammoned by the bunkum boys, the smart ones, the power and the money merchants, it doesn't know where it's going or what it's going there for and it's too bewildered to care. 68

Temperamentally, Nimmo and Latter are opposites, and to display these two men in conflict is, of course, one of the aims of the political trilogy. This book shows the clash between two fundamental temperaments and these temperaments are permanent in the world. There are always millions of Latters and Nimmos and they will never agree on the ends or even the means of any political action. Latter complains that one of his difficulties in writing his book is the almost universal veneration of Nimmo.

Built up by the press as a political racket. Old honest Baldwin with his pipe was nearly as bad --- Old Baldwin, as cunning a diddler as any in the book. What do they do it for? Why do they build up these grabbers and fakers into noble souls and heroes of the nation? It's all in the game. Poor devil of a press artist has to get a job, catches the public eye. Tickle 'em somewhere. Poor devils of the mob want to think that we got a genius to look after 'em, hold off the next slump, keep out the next war. And the politicians make hay between, with their tongues in their cheeks. It's the whole system is wrong. It's the way we've got fixed. By drifting along and not asking where we're going to. 69

68 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Michael Joseph, London, 1955, p. 222

69 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.93

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It is here, as often elsewhere, that the reader must be certain that Jim Latter is not Joyc Cary's mouthpiece, but that he is a fanatical man standing condemned on his own testimony which the reader understands quite clearly between the lines of Jim's own statement. For instance, Jim alludes to his own book. "The Lugas' Betrayal" (the reader of Prisoner of Grace knows it to have been a failure in every way), to show his distrust of politicians generally. The book, written ten years before, excoriated politicians. So, Jim suggests, there is -- or was -- nothing personal in his dislike of Nimmo.

I say my Lugas were better Christians in every way, and better men than any in Whitehall. They were truly nature's gentlemen and the finest I ever knew. But since then entirely ruined and destroyed as a people by European so-called progress. 70

If there is any doubt at this point whether such an opinion represents Cary's own thinking, the reader need only turn to Cary's political pamphlets, in which he argues eloquently for the bringing of European civilization to Africa.

People think he was puritanical, all against the rich. But no one ever enjoyed splashing money about more, and Nina was just the woman to teach him how to do it. No one enjoyed more cutting a dash, giving a party, showing off a pretty wife. 71

70 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.8

71 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.175

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When the book opens, Jim Latter is in prison, awaiting, as he thinks, hanging. The book is a statement hurriedly made by a condemned man of strong temper. It is dictated at a high speed for shorthand to Policewoman Martin. The style is the man -- blunt, harsh, straightforward, passionate. The statement begins by recalling an event on May 1st, 1926, when there is an anonymous telephone call warning Jim Latter that Chester Nimmo intends to commit adultery with the woman (his former wife) who is now Mrs. James Latter. The telephone call follows upon anonymous letters suggesting such a liaison. There is in time and circumstance, therefore, a connection to be made between the end of Prisoner of Grace and the beginning of Not Honour More. In the brief interval between, the events foretold in the last line of Prisoner of Grace have taken place: Nina and Chester have been found out, and Jim has taken her life. If the public focus of the novel is the 1926 General Strike, the private focus is the triangular conflict among the three principals -- and in the course of the book the two focuses become one. Not Honour More establishes, this time catastrophically, the connection between public and private politics.

Prejudice wasn't only the biggest thing
against Bill it was the biggest thing
for Pincomb. It's no good saying courts
aren't affected by local feeling,
especially when you can hear it through
the windows making a noise like lynching.
Perhaps it didn't have much effect on
the judge but it certainly touched up
the jury. 72

72 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.202

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The book opens with what Jim intends to be an execution. It opens on May Day, 1926, when Chester goes to Shagbrook to speak on "God in Politics". Later Jim, returning to Palm Cottage, finds the old swine over seventy years of age, interfering with his wife. When Jim shoots he is knocked out by Chester's bodyguard. Awakening several hours later, he learns that Chester is not dead. Indeed, Nina urges Jim to tell the reporters and the police that the shooting was accidental. For, she says, Chester is in his heart a true, good man. Characteristically, Jim is stunned that she should defend this known crook and wrangler; loving her, he has never understood her; at least he has never understood the aspect of her nature which had made her a prisoner of grace. But Nina brings up an argument that surprises him even more. If he gets back into office, he'll go away from here and they will have peace again. For in the national crisis which has been developing, there is some considerable possibility that Chester will occupy a commanding position; he may even become Prime Minister.

He sold the woman I loved for the
girl he loved. And Nimmo tells you
God is love. Nimmo's god. A god that
doesn't need any principles, that
doesn't need to keep his word. A god
in the love racket, turning out hot
stuff for the papers. 73

73 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.189

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

Jim finds Nina's second reason so extraordinary because he does not understand now, and never has understood, the real complexity of her nature. She has always detested Chester, but she has never been able to escape from her spiritual bondage to him; she has always loved Jim, and now as a wife she adores him: the conflict is irreconcilable; it is therefore not surprising that since she cannot solve it she tries now, as she has tried before to end it. But Jim, stung by jealousy, cannot believe in her love for him because he cannot comprehend her.

The papers wouldn't print my letters.
Even so, the case was sub judice. Sub
is a good word for squashed under the
weight of the racket. The law racket.
And when I called on the law, the
lawyers weren't at home. 74

This fact is well illustrated by the news handout he gives later in the evening at a public house to which he has escaped from Palm Cottage. In the first place, he accuses Chester of interfering with his wife. He also makes in brief compass, his case against Chester as a politician. His whole case is this, that as a man or country gives up the truth, the absolute truth, they are throwing away the anchor and drifting slowly but surely to destruction. He says nothing can save but truth and the guts to take it. For truth will always prevail. When a reporter tells Jim that the sentence of accusing Nimmo of misbehaviour with Mrs. Latter is libel and must be omitted, Jim is infuriated. Another reporter asks if he is a Fascist. To this Jim replies: that is a foul lie.

74 Cary, Joyce, Not Honour More, Op.Cit., p.190

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

One knows very well he belongs to one of the oldest Liberal families in the West and has always been for the people against all oppression. His action against Nimmo has nothing to do with politics. Jim here unconsciously discloses what has been true of him all his life, that he has a kind of simplicity which makes him in both private and public politics lamentably stupid.

But the result was only that I had to slip out to see him, and he was so exasperated against me for my refusing him the house that I could not refuse anything else. 75

From the beginning of the General Strike there is difficulty and it stems directly from the fundamentally opposing views of Chester and Jim. With an abhorrence of violence which goes back to the days of his earliest political activity recorded in Except the Lord, Chester will do all in his power to prevent fighting from breaking out. He will make deals; he will, as Jim says, wangle. But Jim will shoot, not because he loves violence but because he believes that violence can both assert honour and restore order.

And when I write betray, I am expressing something beyond human treachery. It seemed to me in this disaster of my youth that I had been tricked by fate itself, by a conspiracy of circumstances. 76

75 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.362

76 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op. Cit., p.273

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

The climax comes when Jim suspects -- correctly, as it turns out -- that Chester and the Communist leader Pincomb have struck a secret bargain, to sacrifice the livelihood of three hundred families to the Bolshies in exchange for Bolshy support to Nimmo. Jim's man Manfe takes a truncheon to Pincomb, who is thereupon arrested -- and tried for criminal assault. When Jim has a showdown with Chester, the old man is furious -- and dishonest. Nina, who knows of Chester's machinations, throws herself under a lorry and is injured -- how gravely, neither Chester nor Jim at first knows. While they are waiting for the report, Chester tells Jim that he is guilty before her and before him and before God. Whatever happens, he shall never see her again. Thus Jim realizes, he records, why Nina has thrown herself under the lorry. She could not pass that door into the lies inside, more wangles, more tricks. She was through with lies.

And he misunderstood me (that is to say, he took my meaning in rather too crude, or perhaps only too masculine, a sense), and was quite astonished, and then carried away, and he tried to pull down the cab curtains, but one of them stuck and the other had an enormous tear. 77

As the book draws to a close, Jim's style becomes increasingly agitated, increasingly mad. Nina recovers; at the trial of Manfe Jim later discovers she is supporting Chester's position by suppressing evidence. To the reader of Except the Lord and Prisoner of Grace, her

77 Cary, Joyce, Prisoner of Grace, Op.Cit., p.395

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

suppression is understandable. Fundamentally she trusts Philter's judgment. But to Jim, Nina's testimony is the ultimate evidence of betrayal. Justice has not been done to Manfe, but Jim intends that it shall be done to Chester and Nina. Because of the rottenness, because of the corruption, because all loyalty was a laugh and there was no more trust.

I need not say that Pring was a Marxist. Most of the English union chiefs then subscribed to the International - they found no difficulty in combining Marxist manifestoes with constitutional tactics and devout methodism. 78

After finishing the third volume of the trilogy the reader must ask himself once more about Chester Nimmo. Is he, as Nina asserts in Prisoner of Grace, as good as he could be in his special circumstances, and better than many were in much easier ones? Or is he, as he himself asserts in Except the Lord a man who came so near perdition that his escape still seemed to him a miracle, but who has been saved by his lifelong devotion to the Protestant ideal, the Protestant faith in a man's personal relationship to his God? Or is he, as Jim Latter asserts in Not Honour More simply a crook? To ask these questions is to reveal the complexity of the man, and the difficulty of arriving at an answer which will not do Chester the injustice of oversimplifying his personality and his achievement, or rather of underestimating his tragedy.

78 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.241

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

The answer must, of course, be in political terms. What I believe, Cary wrote in a letter, is what Nimmo believes, that wangle is inevitable in the modern state, that is to say, there is no choice between persuading people and shooting them. But it was not my job to state a thesis in a novel, my business was to show individual minds in action and the kind of world they produce and the political and aesthetic and moral problems of such a world. In short (in the trilogy) the political situation as I conceive it is my world of the creative free individual. 79

So Cary ends his great career as he began it, with the theme of freedom. The world of politics is his most difficult case, because politics is the most fluid of the arts. Yet Cary insists, that lies are always lies, evil is always evil; public and private morals are governed by precisely the same law. The destruction of one life by criminal pride or folly is no less and no more a crime than the slaughter of a million. The world is not merely a flux of senseless change. Underneath all the turmoil there are certain fixed and permanent things too. In daily life there is always affection, family love and responsibility, ambition, the things people really live for; and on the other hand anxiety, loss, bitterness and danger, the everlasting dilemmas of life. Cary knew himself. He knew the world and despised it, but he knew life and relished it. Like the rest of his work the two trilogies are a presentation of life's magnificence, which leads not only to disaster, but also because of man's freedom, to glory.

79 Barr, Donald, New York Times Book Review, Cary, New York, March 8, 1959.

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

If I had admitted the truth to my
brother, I should have known that
my own life had become a lie. 80

The Horse's Mouth, first published in 1944, is
now acknowledged to be one of the major novels in English
of this century; perhaps of our literature.

With regard to a Prisoner of Grace James Gray has
this to say:

"Just when one has come to wonder if the novel
may not have become an outmoded and exhausted
art form someone appears with a work of
imagination that takes a stimulating thrust
at the intelligence. The attitudes of Joyce
Cary's Prisoner of Grace are not strictly
new; nor for that matter is the work itself.
But there is enough freshness to its hearty
cynicism to let a breath of air into the
studio where so many young writers seem to
lie huddled together in a state of lugubriously
tranquilized self-pity.

The theme of Prisoner of Grace is one that
has made familiar to us in this country by
such novels as Robert Penn Warren's All the
King's Men. This English version has to do
with the gradual corruption of an important
labour leader. The very skill with which he
turns every occasion to his own account
accomplishes his moral undoing. The slightly
feminized, thoroughly hysterical Chester Nimmo
is so fascinated by his own legerdemain that
he sees himself evolve into an artist in
treachery without allowing any damage to be
done to his self-love. He betrays his con-
stituents, his principles, his friends, his
private morality until he sits at last on the
ruin of an ideology, smug, sweet, forgiving,
and thoroughly evil.

80 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Op.Cit., p.268

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

Supporting this public pageant of corruption is a secondary account of moral decay within the intimacy of marriage. It is the theory of one of Mr. Cary's characters that human beings continuously corrupt each other and that the spiritual hazards to which one exposes oneself with wife or husband are inescapably blighting. Certainly the people involved in Mr. Cary's triangle achieve a surprising new variation on the theme of degradation. It would be unsafe to say that this is unbelievable since Freud, Krafft-Ebing, and Kinsey have persuaded us that anything can happen. But it is true to say that the presentation here of shocking matters entirely misses the impact of pity or of terror. This is in part because all the people concerned are intensely unlikable. And it is in part because the woman of the triangle, who is also the narrator of the story, wavers so oddly in her appraisal of values, seeming now as Mr. Cary himself and again as naive as a soap-opera heroine. Perhaps the difficulty is that our American civilization produces few women as utterly passive as the curious Nina of Prisoner of Grace is represented to be. No doubt the native equivalent of Nina would be equally adept in sin, but it is rather hard to believe that her resistance to a perverse authority would so closely have resembled that of crepe de chine.

From the standpoint of style, the book clatters with challenge. If the parenthesis had not existed Mr. Cary would have had to invent it, so completely dependent upon it he shows himself to be in this book. One of Robert Frost's characters once suggested that "good fences make good neighbours"; similarly Mr. Cary seems to feel that good parenthesis make good sense. He forget that they also make hurdles to jump and that these are hardly aids to smoothness.

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But clamorous as it is in the statement of a half truth, Prisoner of Grace nonetheless is addressed to the adult mind and it speaks engrossingly. This is, in fact, the book that Sinclair Lewis spent the last years of his life learning to write. He made one depressing stab at it in Gideon Planish. Had he been able to set down any such declaration of a lack of faith as Mr. Cary has managed, he might have died a fulfilled, instead of a frustrated, artist." 81

In Time magazine we find this comment made on A Fearful Joy:

This wild burlesque of English literary life is the best thing in A Fearful Joy. Cary trots out a weird but wholly likable crew of eccentrics and fakes. 82

The faith that grows from childhood into the very texture of mind and soul can give it strength and unity which nothing earthly can destroy. It has stood the utmost cruelty that man can invent, it is like the elastic steel of those tall houses which in an earthquake sway each way but will not fall. 83

That Cary was a great novelist cannot be doubted. Praise is almost always granted him:

81 Gray, James, New York Times Book Review , New York, November, 1952.

82 Time Magazine, October 16, 1950

83 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Michael Joseph, 1953, London, p.129

MORALITY IN CERTAIN CHARACTERS

His first book was Aissa Saved (1932) and one of his greatest successes was A House of Children (1941) which won the Tait Black Memorial Prize. 84

84 Browning, D.C., Dictionary of Literary Biography, Dent, London, 1962, p. 123

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

"Of course, it is not easy to point to anything that is entirely creative. In ultimate philosophy, as in ultimate theology, men are not capable of creation but only of combination." 1

Throughout this study it has been emphasized that Cary's views on art and literature are closely related to his philosophical outlook of freedom for the individual. For Cary the interrelationship of man and freedom is quite unavoidable for the elementary reason that it is for him freedom that gives ultimate significance to everything. For Cary, freedom is not some kind of luxury that man may choose to take or leave; it is not something vague. Rather, freedom arises out of the very essence of human nature; man is by nature a lover of freedom. Ultimately, therefore, all really human problems become problems of freedom. For Cary, freedom explicates everything human; and humanity means morality.

But, why must men philosophize with regard to freedom? Simply because their minds are so made that the meaning of freedom is their nourishment. Philosophy means thinking things out: e.g. who am I? whence did I come? whither am I going? what freedom do I have? what is my relationship to God? Thus, to think connectedly about art, freedom, literature, man and God means to philosophize it means to establish first principles and to develop their interrelationships.

1 Chesterton, G.K., All I Survey, Dodd and Mead, New York, 1933, p. 91

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it has been shown that Cary regularly employed, wittingly or unwittingly, what may be called his three principles in his approaches to man, art and literature, that is, the universal need of the freedom of man, the quietus of the conservative man and the struggle of the liberal man. Because the continuity and the coherence of Cary's thought will be thus more strikingly revealed in the summary that follows, each of these three principles will be considered as the main units of his general philosophy.

With the French Revolutionary ideals of 1789 *Liberte*, *Egalite*, *Fraternite*, Cary would undoubtedly agree that the human soul is by its very nature and divine construction free. With Gibbon, Cary would agree that there is such a thing as Christian Philosophy. As contrasted to the philosophy of Christianity, many of the other religions and philosophies in many ways misunderstand human nature. Whether he realizes it or not, an artist receives complete theoretical support for his artistic activity from the central Christian tradition. Christianity is most beneficent to art in all artistic forms.

It is quite true that the artist, painter, writer or composer starts always with an experience that is a kind of discovery. He comes upon it with the sense of a discovery; in fact, it is truer to say that it comes upon him as a discovery. It surprises him. This is what is usually called an intuition or an inspiration. 2

2 Cary, Joyce, Art and Reality, Cambridge University Press, London, 1958, p.1

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In revealing to mankind the fact of Divine Creation, the Christian Philosophy sheds light on all human "creation." In telling mankind that God is truly personal because He is so infinitely intelligent, Christian philosophy suggests an ideal for all artists. In telling mankind that there is thus only one world, Christian philosophy suggests to the artist that he can be but a creator analogously, that he should allow his mind to feed on this one created universe, that strictly speaking an artist's best efforts, as contrasted to Divine Creativity, are merely a form of "combination." In telling mankind that the Maker created the universe out of nothing, and he is both immanent and transcendent to the created world, Christian philosophy suggests to the artist why he feels that he is touching transcendental truths and beauties. Because the universe is one and yet many, Christian philosophy suggests to the artist why analogy, allegory, and paradox are so bound up with the artistic vision and method.

But what does Christian philosophy tell the artist about human nature? It tells him that man is made in the image of his Maker, that his nature is divine-like. It tells him that rather than worship nature, he should imprint his image upon it: that things, when they pass through his nature, really go through a second creation. On the other hand, Christian philosophy reminds the artist that though man is so great, he is also (as Shakespeare was so well aware) so little and so petty. Christian philosophy reminds the artist that in all things human there is the possibility of a fall.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

But all great artists have a theme,
an idea of life profoundly felt
and founded in some personal and
compelling experience. 3

About the human faculties, Christian philosophy suggests to the artist that in free will lies the explanation for his activity. The artist is never more rational than when he is most conscious.

Because man is made in the image of His Maker, Cary told the artist that art is almost a definition of a man, that it is the signature of a man. In a sense man must create art. Again in a sense, the artificial is really older than the natural. Because the imagination and intellect are complementary, Cary told the artist that insofar as it is meaningful, the image is more perfect. Because man has emotions, Cary assured the artist that in stirring these emotions he reaches the "whole man." Because man is necessarily idealistic Cary informed the artist that Romanticism is realism.

As scientists tell you, even a
bad doctrine is better than none
at all. 4

Employing his own religious and philosophical theory Cary reflects on the traditional artistic problems of genius and imitation. Because man is divine-like in his nature, it appeared to Cary that all extrinsic theories to explain creation are philosophically fallacious. Because man is divine-like in his nature, artistic

3 Ibid., p. 105

4 Ibid., p. 42

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

creation should not be a mere mimicry slavishly executed of the Divine Creation. Rather the artist should imitate the act of creation. However, because man is not capable of ultimate creation, the artist is never more than an artist than when he is viewing life steadily and the whole in the framework of Christian thought: than when his work resembles life: than when his art is receptive to facts outside himself. In short, art is forced to look probable.

The meaning received is created by the imagination from the symbols, and the imagination must first be educated - as the artist himself was educated - in the use and meaning of a symbolic system. 5

In his approaches to the literary genres, Cary defends comedy and humour. Whether it be in tragic or comic drama, whether it be in melodrama or farce, whether it be in irony or satire, Cary justifies them and explains their peculiar characteristics on the basis of what they correspond to in the nature of things, and on the kinds of human responses they evoke. Yet all literature rests on morality.

Art has its immense power for good and evil because it deals always with fundamental passions and reactions common to all humanity. 6

5 Ibid., p. 120

6 Ibid., p.146

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With regard to poetry Cary feels that it is the vehicle for the essence of the artist. He stresses that poetry thrives on the strangeness of things, on their mystery. Because men live in a most mysterious universe, they create poetry. In a sense poetry is more rational than Rationalism. Nothing about poetry is artificial. Whether it be its imagery, or its rhyme, all appeal to something in human nature.

It is impossible for us even to
think ourselves out of the universe,
any more than a deep-sea fish can
think itself out of the sea. 7

This world, partakes of the paradox. Accordingly, the scientific method has most severe limitations when it is applied to art. In everything about art, whether it be in its historical origins, or in its human creation, or in its peculiar effects, there is an element of mystery. Historically, the roots of the arts are shrouded in mystery. In the actual creative process, there is encountered the mysterious life of the imagination, giving a greater reality to things than they have in the so-called real order. In its effect, man will know what art means when he knows what he means when he responds to it. Furthermore, every artist in his making feels that he has reached the pinnacles of truth and beauty. No wonder, then, that a thing of beauty is a joy forever, an inspiration forever. Beautiful images reflect and symbolize the beautiful one.

7 Ibid., p.14

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is the independent reason of man in which his individuality, his freedom, resides. The gap is as necessary to him as the division between his feet and the ground, which enables him, unlike a vegetable to move about the world by his own volition. 8

The best that men can do is to combine. Creation means rejection and selection. The artist as a craftsman must cut things down. Art is an attempt to symbolize a vision; conventions are not artificial. Form controls expression.

Language is essentially imperfect as a medium to capture reality. Plagiarism and imitation are not as detestable as the experimentalists would have us believe. Limitation is essential for success in any of the literary genres. The restrictions of poetic art serve to produce a thing of beauty.

And so the critics of any time, the good, the honest, the informed critics, will always hate and despise an original artist or writer. 9

As applied to art, this principle of perspective points out to the artist that art is born when the temporary touches the eternal.

8 Ibid., p.28

9 Ibid., p.69

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

But whether he comes back or not, the tragedy remains that artists, especially painters, are apt to live much longer than their style, than their symbols. A man of eighty has outlived probably three new schools of painting, two of architecture and poetry, a hundred in dress. 10

As applied to literature and poetry, the principle of perspective points out that great literature deals with the eternal youth of mankind. It tells the artist that all new ideas are in the old books in the right contexts. Historically it tells the artist how indebted English literature is to the Graeco-Roman and Christian traditions. It tells the artist that sympathy is needed to understand the Zeitgeist of another literary age. It also tells him that the Zeitgeist reflects the religious and philosophic outlook of the time. It assures the artist that literary revivals are necessary. On the other hand, it warns the artist that nothing is more narrowing than novelty, for novelty's sake. As to the poet, it tells him that his art is a descendant from ritual and mythology.

By perspective, the literary artist is told that great literature is centripetal: that it is both universal and unique; that it is both national and personal. It tells him that it is ideology that makes for universality; that it is style and imagery that make for uniqueness. It tells the critic of literature that his supreme function is to discover that part of an artist's work which is truly his. Why did a man like Dickens succeed?

10 Ibid., p. 83

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A writer like Dickens may indeed sell, but that was not because he attempted to give the public what he thought it would like but because what he himself liked to do was also liked by a great number of people. He had the good fortune to find himself doing a popular thing. But he is a rare case. And it is rarer still for an original writer to be a best-seller - at least till he is dead. 11

Yet Cary loved and appreciated humour as well as serious philosophy.

That was the kind of accident which moved his sense of humour, especially when it happened to himself. The best joke of his year had been a Tornado which blew off his roof in the middle of a dinner party, smashed most of his crockery and soaked guests to the skin in one minute. Dallas also belongs to that order of the comic, the disastrous, the squalid, the ruinous; together with Harry Tate's motor and Rosinante. 12

This short scene although not showing any suggestions of description does show an exaggeration of character which borders on caricature.

Once again in Dickens' Martin Chuzzlewit we find Mrs. Gamp described in great detail and with the usual touch of caricature. Mrs. Gamp's hair is too false; her insobriety is too obvious; her chatter is too loquacious. One does not feel put upon -- but in retrospection the hyperbole is obvious. In Cary's Mister Johnson the reader sees a similar exaggeration in the following scene.

11 Ibid., p.90

12 Cary, Joyce, An American Visitor, Michael Joseph, 1952, London, p.30

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

"No, no sit down." He pushes her into the chair. Bamu jumps out of it and gives a scream. In comes the family. There is another dispute. Johnson sheds tears and cries to Ajali, "What can you do with such savage people -- I too tired -- I die now." He lies down on his bed. Sozy comes and takes his shoes off. The family has every right to attend to her husband, and that it would indeed be indecent for her, as a married woman, to sit down to feed with her man." 13

Here one sees the comic aspect of Johnson and of Bamu's character along with the great comic effect of the situation described. The reader is easily transported mentally to enjoy the rollicking type of comedy here supplied.

Dickens never lost his sympathy for the poor and the mistreated. His best novels are of victims of the slums, the poor houses, the debtor's prisons, and of the seamy sides of London life. The novels of Dickens are filled with stark realism and with a kindly humour. He never became bitter or bitingly satirical, but even when dealing with the most miserable of social conditions, his tone is one of idealism and his situations are sketched with understanding and sympathetic feeling. He was a novelist of the people and his creations have had a continuous popularity with all classes to the present day. Cary stands a good chance of doing the same for the black-white relationship as Dickens did for the rich-poor problem.

13 Cary, Joyce, Mister Johnson, Michael Joseph, 1958, London, p.43

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Joyce Cary was one of the modern English novelists who wrote in the great English tradition of the novel set out by Defoe, Richardson, Dickens and Conrad.

Mr. Hall believes that his seven authors - Forster, Huxley, Waugh, Green, Joyce Cary, L.P. Hartley and Anthony Powell -- form the most significant tradition in modern British fiction. 14

Cary's novels were concerned with philosophy in general and with morals and morality in particular. The other question which concerns Cary is the deviation of personal and public morality away from the moral law as seen in Christian philosophy.

There's a lot of old stuff up there. Even my uniforms from the African campaign (World War 1). One or two unpublished novels which I shall burn. Like my others, they are philosophical novels, but they seem like ordinary novels because I take a lot of trouble to make them so. 15

Time and time again religion, philosophy and ethics form the conflict in the novels of Cary. We see through his eyes people who obey and who disobey the Two Commandments of the New Testament.

14 Greene, G., The Commonweal, The Comic Mode, October 25, 1963, p. 149

15 Life Magazine, A Valedictory of a Great Writer, May, 1947, p. 108

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I'm working on a novel about religious people who hate religion -- the whole complex conflict. As for myself, I believe in God. His existence is dear in love, affection and feelings for nonmaterial things. What God would have us do is do right by each other. Human values are his values. But I do not believe in asking God for anything. 16

In his own life, Cary adopted the Christian philosophy as his own. As a true Christian, he recognized and accepted calmly and with dignity the concept of his own imminent death.

Cary, who is now working, whenever he is able, on a new novel which has a religious background, is almost matter-of-fact about his own imminent death: 'I'm still alive and I can still work, and I might be dead, you know. I don't think I'm going to die tomorrow. But please just don't be sentimental about it'. 17

Joyce Cary was impregnated with the joy and delight that comes only to a Christian who works and is happy in the knowledge that he is doing his level best to 'come to the still point' and act, not for himself, but in accordance with the wishes of the Creator.

16 Ibid., p. 108

17 Ibid., p. 106

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

'Everything that lives is holy,' said Gulley Jimson in The Horse's Mouth, Joyce Cary's best selling novel of 1944, 'life delights in life.' Neither Jimson nor a dozen other ebullient Cary characters, whom critics have hailed for restocking English literature with a sense of human joy, loves life more than Cary himself. And never more so than to-day. In spite of a creeping paralysis which has left him almost totally immobile, Cary is determined to continue to the end (which could be a matter of months) the writing that has made him one of the half dozen finest living novelists. 18

Joyce Cary knew fear and what fear could do to one's judgment and to one's ethics. F.D. Roosevelt put it this way -- 'the only thing man need fear is fear itself.' Cary was not quixotic -- he did however master the art of understanding fear in ourselves and in others.

When a critic gets old, he's apt to say 'The novel is dead.' Every time a great novelist dies -- Dickens, James, Conrad -- they are described as 'the last of these giants.' It only means that the critic is dead, or has stopped reading new novels. But the hatred of academic critics for any original art is an old tale. The greater the art, the greater the hatred. It is based on fear -- that the old standards will be upset. And new art is meant to upset, to break the crust and get at the real feelings inside. But to have your crust cracked after a certain age is dangerous -- your essence may leak. You may be left empty of any opinions at all. 19

18 Ibid., p.100

19 Ibid., p.105

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Cary's characters were masterfully created. Since he looked at man as a creature made up of the physical, the mental and the moral, his creations have a depth and permanency difficult to emulate.

That Joyce Cary is one of the most vital and engaging writers in England today has been proved by nine of his novels published in rapid succession in this country. He has a way of creating characters with so much enthusiasm for life; whether they are young or old, arrant sinners or self-professed saints, that they cannot be polished off in a single book but reappear again and again with undiminished vigour. To his readers it is like meeting with delight or apprehension an old acquaintance who has been lost to sight or who was presumed dead. You say to yourself, 'Why, there's that awful (or wonderful) woman again; I wonder what she is up to now?' I ran into her in The Horse's Mouth and Herself Surprised.²⁰

The love-hate, go-stop, yes-no part of man, and of woman, was well understood and well described by Cary. Nina is one character who shows just how deep the moral penetration of Cary was.

Aside from its own merits, Mr. Cary's latest novel, Except the Lord, takes the reader back to last year's Prisoner of Grace, the story of what happened last century to a young girl of good family who was seduced by her cousin and childhood companion and then married a young man from a desperately poor family with a talent for preaching and making revolutionary speeches.

20 Lord Nimmo's First Struggles, Saturday Review of Literature, November 14, 1953, p.28

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Mrs. Chester Nimmo is one of the most delightful of Mr. Cary's extensive gallery of remarkable and illusive women. Her logical mind could see nothing wrong with presenting her possessive and uxorious husband with two illegitimate children; but on the other hand she despised and often hated him for his ruthless climb to political power by using the newly-born labour movement and every oratorical trick in the arsenal of an unscrupulous demagogue. Nimmo became a leader of the Liberal Party; and when it finally met with complete disaster he was made a peer of the realm. During her long life with him she saw clearly that her husband's slogans and noble battle cries bred nothing but new and more cunning, hypocritical despots, better organized murder, and a popular nationalism drunk with conceit. After closing the novel the reader can no longer believe that nineteenth century England was gentle and charming. Lord Nimmo remains in retrospect a dangerous, unscrupulous if fascinating scoundrel. 21

Cary shows the same skill creating Chester Nimmo, Nina's husband. Chester, like most of us, was not entirely good, nor entirely bad. Cary builds him up into a most interesting psychological study.

Joyce Cary is a kindly man who views the misdeeds of his characters with tolerant sympathy. Perhaps he felt that in Prisoner of Grace he has been too harsh with Chester Nimmo, for in Except the Lord

21 Ibid., p. 28

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

He tells the story of his early life in his own words, and in this manner presents an astonishingly different man. Before he married he was bankrupt of faith and hope; he had joined the Labour Movement and had tried to form a Farmer's Union in his own village which resulted in an attack on his life. Later he went to Longon and met the first of the rising Labour leaders, revolutionaries at heart perhaps, in every way unscrupulous men. They needed a young man whose desperately poor childhood had taught him to hate class privilege of any kind, and especially they needed his talents as rabble-rouser and his extraordinary confidence that the Lord was always with him. 22

James Stern pays tribute also to Cary's Dickensian gift for character creation when he writes:

For sheer characterization, energy of language and powers of invention, Cary to the last had few living equals. Yet some of the most distinguished critics have been left wondering what precisely it was that he wished his novels to express. The serenest and gentlest of men, who was perhaps at his best with the young and the innocent, he delighted in creating characters to whom guilt and guile were the breath of life, men and women who were continually tempting the gods and risking damnation every day. 23

Religion, morals, morality, ethics -- these words are tied to Cary at every turn. Few critics of Cary can

22 Ibid., p. 28

23 Stern, James, Two Rogues in Pursuit of Power, New York Times Book Review, January, 25, 1959, p. 45

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write for very long without coming back to these concepts in an attempt to explain Cary and his work.

Had he lived longer Cary would not only have completed this novel to his satisfaction; it seems possible that he would have turned the subject of the book into a trilogy. It would have been his third. The first, it will be remembered, culminating in The Horse's Mouth, the novel that brought him fame, was concerned with the artist's temperament; the second, portraying the life of Chester Nimmo with the politicians. In the Captive and The Free, Cary is preoccupied with religion. Basically however, Cary was interested in power. In his last novel it is the power of the word: the power of the preacher, the power of the press, each with the power to do good or evil. Of the free it could be said that they are inspired, those who have opinions of their own; of the captive that they are the insipid, those who are content or compelled to abide by the opinions of others. ²⁴

Cary took great pains with his novels; no novel was rushed off in the heat of the moment. Quite often Cary would write three or four novels at the same time. When he got a good idea for a certain novel, he would work on it; when the spirit left him he would stop.

That Irish farmer was clearly a man after Cary's own heart: a man of action, as are the 'heroes' of all his later novels, including this, his last. For Cary, surely one of the most beloved, most lamented of men, the writing of this book meant a race against death. 'It will break my heart if I don't finish this,' he told a friend Winnifred Davin when he knew that muscular atrophy would allow him no more than a

²⁴ Ibid., p.44

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year to live. Cary did finish the book but despite Mrs. Davin's careful post humorous editing, 'the ultimate impression' as Lord David Cecil says in his Introduction, 'is a little too much like that of a piece of music in which the theme has not been fully resolved.' This is not surprising, for in the writing of his novels, Cary took infinite pains; I believe it is true that for every hundred thousand words of his that appeared in print, twice that number had been written and cast out. 25

Cary was not a passive person. He lived, he wrote, he acted. He was in life a catalyst; where he was things happened. When he wrote a plot it moved.

When young Joanna Rideout, a passive, homely, heiress, says of Harry Hooper, her unscrupulous, go-getting journalist lover: 'Perhaps he's a gambler, but he does things!' I was reminded with a start of a remark Joyce Cary made, the first time I met him. Cary was talking of a highly successful farmer whose acquaintance he had made on a recent visit to his native Ulster. 'That man was ruthless, no doubt,' Cary said his eyes flashing with enthusiasm in the beautiful bird-like head. 'He drove his men, but they respected him.' Then, with an intensity quite unforgettable, he exclaimed: 'He did things, you see. He wasn't afraid to do things!' 26

James Stern has the following to say about Cary, his actions and the actions of his characters:

25 Ibid., p.44

26 Ibid., p.44

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To read Joyce Cary's later novels is like travelling by subway in the rush hour. His people are in perpetual motion, eternally arguing, pushing, shouting. They rarely sit down. Their thinking, their wangling, their work, is all done dashing from one place to another. How they live, what they do when at home, or what those homes look like, Cary seems to consider neither his nor his reader's business. Like many a traveller in the rush hour, his characters are usually seen behaving at their worst. The people in The Captive and the Free are no exceptions to this rule. 27

Meredith, Hardy, Conrad and Cary -- these names go together well. The psychological novel -- the meta-physical novel -- the novel of the psyche -- this was the novel which engrossed these men.

Meredith and Hardy represent two sides of the serious psychological novel which fitted well into the two attitudes prevalent in English society at the turn of the century -- on the one hand an optimism that problems of the past would find a facile solution in a new scientific age of enlightenment and a disillusioned sector of society who saw no hope for improvement. Meredith insists that, in spite of the sorry state of society, man can, by his natural ability, rise to individual happiness. Hardy followed a philosophy that shows man's nature twisted in the toils of the society which he has created, a set of realities from which he cannot escape or hope to change for betterment.

27 Ibid., p.44

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One test of a good fictional character is whether he leads a double life in (1) the writer's imagination, (2) the reader's memory. Joyce Cary, who has created some of the most memorable characters in 20th century fiction, has frequently passed this test with loveable scamps, e.g. Gulley Jimson (The Horse's Mouth), Sara Monday (Herself Surprised). Chester Nimmo, who made his debut in Cary's last novel, Prisoner of Grace, is no scamp but a fire-balling politico who married into money, gets elected to Parliament, enters the cabinet and finally becomes Lord Nimmo, without ever losing his missionary zeal or his sense of political destiny. Except the Lord, which takes Chester Nimmo back in point of time to his Mid-Victorian boyhood and young manhood, asks, retrospectively, one central question: What made Nimmo run?

The Nimmos are a farm family, bitterly poor and sternly religious. They are also a game clan. Knocked down in one round of human experience, they are eagerly up at the bell for another. Most of the time in Except the Lord, young Chester is busy picking himself up off the floor.

He is floored by the poverty that haunts his father with the workhouse which wrecks his mother's and sister's health and prematurely kills both, and sweeps the Nimmos into humiliating dependence on neighbours. He is floored by his preacher-father's Puritan code and his mathematical proofs of the imminent second coming of Christ. He is floored by his elder sister's erratic half-fond, half-bullying rule over him when their mother dies.

By the maxims of contemporary popular psychology, this kind of childhood should lay a maze of neuroses for little Chester, and keep him confused, embittered and

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forever shying at life's challenges. That it fills him instead with great expectations and the drive to make them come true is a sign of the soundness and not the weakness of author Cary's insight.

Chester catches sight of his destiny in adolescent flashes of intuition. Standing in a tent show before a penny-dreadful melodrama, he feels the actor's hypnotic hold on the crowd, senses that his words too may one day sway and spellbind.

Standing, on another day, atop a rain-drenched hill with his Adventist father and nine of the faithful awaiting the second coming of Christ, he feels his faith oozing away. He turns to the prophets of social revolution, soaks up the teachings of Proudhon, Marx and Bakunin, and becomes a Labour organizer. But a violent and bitter strike convinces him that his new gods are false. AT the novel's end, Chester Nimmo, over 21, is clean of illusions, and ready for whatever further adventures life and author Cary have in store for him. That there will be more seems likely, for Chester Nimmo has captured the next best thing to Joyce Cary's comic genius, his endless curiosity. 28

Cary was concerned with God and with the qualities which God possesses. From time to time, Cary probes the qualities of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

28 Cary, Joyce, Mister Johnson, Michael Joseph, London, 1958, p.42

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I will not quote further. The argument was essentially the same as Richard's nearly two years before. Either the omnipotent God was a tyrant and devil or there was no God at all -- omnipotence being assumed as an all-embracing power over time and space, to subvert nature itself, to intervene at any moment in human fate. 29

In this short quotation one is reminded of Hardy's fate and oppression.

Cary was well aware of the power, the permanency and the solidarity of a moral code taught to a child in its early years. Without such a code a human being is much like a ship at sea without a compass.

The faith that grows from childhood into the very texture of mind and soul can give it strength and unity which nothing earthly can destroy. It has stood the utmost cruelty that man can invent, it is like the elastic steel of those tall houses which in an earthquake sway each way but will not fall. 30

Cary brings the good-evil or schitzophrenial tendencies in all human beings together in the person of Sara Monday.

29 Cary, Joyce, Except the Lord, Michael Joseph, London, 1953, p. 128

30 Ibid., p. 150

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'Very well and that I was humble enough, and I remember the first time I saw myself in my true body. It was on my honeymoon, in Paris, in a grand shop, the grandest I had ever seen. I had big mirrors in the showroom, between the pillars, like glass doors, and I was walking to the stairs in my new hat as big as an Easter cake, and feeling the swish of my new silk petticoats and the squeeze of my new French stays. I seemed to be looking into the next saloon, and I thought: "Look at that fat, common trollop of a girl with a snub nose and the shiny cheeks, jumping out of her skin to be in a Paris hat. Wouldn't you bet she was out from Dartmouth Fair last week? You can almost smell the cider on her lips. What a shame to expose herself like that and her nation to these foreigners.'" 31

Dickens' Mrs. Gamp is, almost, the identical twin of Sara Monday as seen by her own eyes.

Cary praises the individuality of the person who accepts morality and who lives by reason and truth. He has no use for the lover of Judas. The fadist is one who does not think for himself, who has no personal code of ethics and who blows with each wind.

No, you would not have liked him. Neither did I. But perhaps we ought not to boast of that delicacy and refinement. Perhaps we don't like him because we are small people. Small people never like great people. Small people are people who follow the fashion and live like frogs in a ditch, croaking at each other. When a real man comes near,

31 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Michael Joseph, London, 1958, p.10

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they are all silent. If baggy trousers come in, all the small people will get into baggy trousers like that old fool Jaffrey, who looks like a dwarf with elephantiasis. And if painted faces and long bobs come in, then all the little girls paint their faces and wear long bobs even if it makes them look like clowns with hunchbacks. The people of character stick to the shape and colour given them by nature -- to reason, and truth. 32

The characterization of Cary always in subtle ways point back to the morals or ethics of the individual. All his actions and words are assessed in the light of Christian virtue.

And it is hard to say whether the tweed suit, the abrupt tone, and even the crudity of speech, new in the last year, are the arrogance of one who is really contemptuous of others, who is truly a vulgar soul, or an attitude meant to hide the profound boredom of an old man with everybody but one or two intimates, and everything but his private schemes and ambitions. 33

The portrait here is similar to Dickens' clever character Scrooge in A Christmas Carol.

32 Cary, Joyce, To be a Pilgrim, Penguin Books Limited, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1957, p.19

33 Cary, Joyce, A Fearful Joy, Penguin Books Limited, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1955, p.200

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Cary, the man and novelist, is much like one of his own dynamic characters in his novels.

At work in the Attic, at 63, Cary is a thin, lively, garrulous man with a richly seamed face, a sharp inquisitive nose and a thin cirrus of unruly grey hair. Since the death of his wife in 1949 he has been a lonely man who sometimes eats pork pie for breakfast, lunch and dinner in the kitchen of his Oxford house where (his sons off on their own) he now lives alone. With all his ailments, Cary is tough and wiry, and likes to take long walks every day. During a lengthy conversation he is as apt as not to chin himself on a door. As a talker, he is occasionally overwhelming. His mind is crowded with stored-up memories, like the attic of an old house; there is no telling what will turn up. Says Humorist A.P. Herbert: "He rather terrifies me. There is nothing he is not prepared to discuss. He even talks at breakfast." Almost any day he may be seen in the park opposite his house churning along at a rapid pace, his lips moving as he tries out a new bit of dialogue. But, England, and especially Oxford, is used to mad people.

Cary's house is packed with books, furniture, works of art, musical instruments -- the accumulated treasures of a full life. His tousled study on the top floor under the eaves is lined with bookcases and filing boxes. Clamp boards holding notes and exhortations to himself are braced against the wall, and specially built slots in his old-fashioned desk hold sections of whatever book he is working on, folders with scraps of dialogue and random ideas. He writes his books in bits and pieces, may drop one section to tackle another, and sometimes drops the whole thing to work on something else. It is a seemingly wasteful method (he always throws away thousands of words), but it is one that suits him. By the time he is ready to write, he has dossiers on each of his characters, the looks of the locale, studies of the historical background, even plans of houses. He has schemes for at least eight more novels.

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The best God can do. To hear him talk, each of those novels is an illustration of his cheerful philosophy a belief whose statement has faint overtones of Jimmy Durante, faint undertones of the incorrigible schoolboy. The world, he says, "May not look so good, but it is the best God can do at the time, with conditions as they exist." He also likens the world to an old sow, which would lie down lazily in the muck and never move, if it were not for the gadflies -- the rebels, artists and other eccentrics -- that buzz and bite in her somnolent ear.

He is the very antithesis of Graham Greene, the guilt-ridden Catholic who keeps pecking away at the problem of personal salvation. Prisoner of Grace though was written as an answer to Greene's End of the Affair. Personal salvation, Cary would say, is too selfish a business to bother about: his heroine is more concerned with her two dependent men than with her own rescue. Moral law? Justice? As far as human beings should concern themselves, "The world consists entirely of exceptions."

By all accounts, including his own, Cary was "extremely idle" at Oxford's Trinity College. He barely got his degree. While others studied, Cary talked, bought first editions and wondered if his income would stay steady. His college friend John Middleton Murry (later a literary critic and the husband of Katherine Mansfield) "never saw him do a spot of work." Cary's pals (most of whom did all right in later life) were a hard-drinking lot. Says Murry: "I mean you would see them sozzled three times a week. Joyce drank about like the rest of us. But he was the chap that would see you home." On one such late evening, just outside the college, Cary was sure he had suddenly gone lame. His friend; leaning out the window, roaring with laughter, shouted: "You've got one foot in the gutter, you fool!" 34

34 Time Magazine, Cheerful Protestant,
October 20, 1952, p.97

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As one reads the novels of Joyce Cary, again and again one is reminded of the literary style of Defoe, Richardson, Dickens, Thackeray and Conrad, plus an accent on morality.

I said that if he got a divorce I might think of him after all. For though I had not wanted to marry Jimson, yet so it was that I didn't want to go back to Brighton either, and that trolloping life. I felt let down as far as I have ever been. 35

Nobody has yet successfully defined a novel, much less a moral novel. The best anyone can do is point to a good one, and say:

"This is it." A good many people these days are thus remarking the novels of Joyce Cary. For his books are haunted houses, inhabited by very lively ghosts. To say that a novelist "creates" characters is a metaphorical way of saying that he contrives portraits of people that live, move and have their being convincingly, and stay alive in the memory after their book is shut. It is not an easy trick, especially when it has to be repeated. In general, modern novelists are notable for a feebleness, sinking sometimes almost to impotence, in this kind of creative invention. Even Hemingway has created only a type, the Hemingway hero (his women, also a type, hardly vary from pin-up girl to succuba). 36

Britain's best contemporary critic, V.S.Pritchett, who likes more delicately flavoured cups of tea than the ones Joyce Cary pours, nevertheless admits Cary's sturdy authenticity. Pritchett calls him "the chameleon among contemporary novelists."

35 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.95

36 Time Magazine, Cheerful Protestant, October, 20, 1952, p.94

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Put him down in any environment or any class, rich, middling or poor, English, Irish or foreign, and he changes colour and becomes whatever his subject is from an English cook to African delinquent, from a ten-year-old Irish hoyden to an English army wife or an evangelical lawyer. The assimilation is quick, delectable, sometimes profound. Many novelists have a wide range of characters but it is often merely a range of conscientious guesses: Mr. Cary goes further and becomes the person." 37

You will say that was just what a flighty girl would do, marrying for a whim. But I was not flighty then. I was a sober-sides. If I had been flighty, I would not have been so surprised at myself, as I was for many a day, until I had no time to think of anything. 38

Cary's characters are always surprised at their own immorality.

I was surprised bu pleased, too.
For it was as it should be. A honeymoon is one thing, and life is another. I was only surprised when I looked at it, because Jimson had turned so sensible and ordinary. 39

Joyce Cary whose trilogy (Herself Surprised, To be a Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth) came out in England between 1941-44 and proved a thumping literary success over here during the past few years, has been having himself a time on his first visit to the States.

37 Time Magazine, Romance, October 20, 1952, p.95

38 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.16

39 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.101

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He's been lecturing and visiting and plane-ing and training, and always on the go with no respite. He's been enjoying it. "I like it a lot," he says. "There's been a lot of good talk." When you say-thinking that Mr. Cary has passed his sixty-second birthday, - well, take it easy, anyway, he answers: "Yes, but I'm tough, y'know, pretty tough." 40

But I was dog-tired and said at last I did not care what happened. So we went up to bed as man and wife and Rozzie said only that I was a bigger fool than I weighed. 41

Preedy was not at all well known then, but he had been very successful at the Mission, and he had caused much trouble in the parish. 42

These last two quotations again show loose morals in different characters in unlike circumstances.

Cary was aware of the ancient and continual war which has always existed between the artist and the critic. In The Horse's Mouth Gulley Jimson represents the artist's side of the conflict.

The best kind of literary criticism is that designed to help us read the criticized work. Botanical criticism, relating the work to this or that tradition, and judicial criticism, developing laws of art while pretending merely to apply them, may make better reading and sometimes can even give the illusion of being literature themselves; (what Joyce Cary's Gulley Jimson feared) the critic's triumph over

40 Time Magazine, Cary, October 20, 1952, p.100

41 Cary, Joyce, Herself Surprised, Op.Cit., p.96

42 Cary, Joyce, The Captive and the Free, Op.Cit. p.14

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the artist -- the curator's possession of the painting, so to speak. And after all, they are not very useful. 43

Cary, in each of his novels, is never at any one point too far from the metaphysical penetrations of his characters and the motive of their actions.

Behind the disorderly richness of Cary's surface -- the tumbling stream of Gulley Jimson's consciousness tossing up bits of Blake and eternity, (The Horse's Mouth), the made soldierly buffing of Jim Latter's apocalypse (Not Honour More), the cunning crepuscular dither of Ella Vern (The Moonlight) -- is a metaphysical almost anxious, intellectual purpose. 44

Cary is not always clear; his meaning is not always obvious. This, of course, does not lessen his status as a novelist. There are always three reasons at least for obscurity -- the writer may be a poor writer the topic may be inexplicable, the reader may lack sufficient skill to understand the work. In the case of Cary it is usually the reader who is at fault when any serious difficulty arises.

Nevertheless, it begins with an implied apology for treating as a great writer one who made no startling innovations in technique: one who committed no outrages on our moral sensibility; one who, when he could not (or, out of his hatred for unfree art, would not) make his meaning obvious to us, would rather that we thought there was no hidden meaning than that we should feel puzzled and ashamed. 45

43 Barr, Donald, Right From The Horse's Mouth, New York Times Book Review, Jan. 25, 1959, p.4

44 Ibid.,

45 Ibid.

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That Cary wrote about common ordinary people was a fact -- however he did not write in an ordinary way. His interest in humanity was not ordinary: he was always concerned with the morals, the ethics and the psychology which formed the basis of their actions.

This still needs to be said, especially in America. Cary's reputation came late here, largely because book-reviewers carelessly assumed that any novelist who wrote with such Dickensian vim, who was so prodigal of characters, and who dealt with 'the important things' (the things that can happen in a 'village', he once remarked) even when writing about peers, emirs, artists and cooks, must be interested only in telling a good tale or at best in expressing some sturdy, old simplistic goodness. 46

In fact Cary had worked out and brooded over his philosophy with great intellectual travail. He had after being invalided out of the African political service, deliberately re-educated himself because he felt he did not know or understand enough to write what he desired to write. Each of his novels -- for all the bravura air -- was part of an intense effort to give form to wisdom. 47

Cary is ambiguous yet it is not due to lack of skill. Any ambiguity which arises is due to the difficulty of the topic or theme.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

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Yet there seems to be a central ambiguity about his work. Cary is peculiarly irreducible. Even in his essays we are sometimes afflicted with the sense that plain words colloquially arranged have somehow escaped to another level, or that we have missed an allusion. Despite the difference in style, we are sometimes reminded of Conrad. 48

All of the novels of Cary may be seen to work within a framework of ideas. For Cary this framework consists of imagination, order, ethics, psychology and Christianity.

This is because there is no manifesto at the heart of Cary's work, but a dialectic. It is a true dialectic, the clash and abiding principles. These principles are imagination and order; or we can call them intuition and form. Their war is eternal; they renew each other by trying to destroy each other. Gulley Jimson paints; not only is John Constable his enemy, the Academy is his enemy, the rich collector is his enemy, the critic his enemy; but his own finished work is his enemy. Even in a line that pleases him in a barely begun painting is the enemy of all his seething efforts to work further. 49

If one seeks for an authority or a manifesto in works of Joyce Cary it must be the Ten Commandments and the Two Commandments of the New Testament.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

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Religious experience turns into ritual and suppresses further religious experience. The spirit giveth life; it produces the letter which killeth. At the same time, the claims of order and accomplished form cannot be dismissed; the verities are not less true yesterday. So there is no 'subjective centre' in Cary's novels, no auctorial 'And this is what I believe' -- just as no verdict is rendered in Shakespeare's Henry IV between Falstaff's lawless vitality and Hotspur's rigid honour. 50

For Cary man is free. God has given to each man a free will. Each person may or may not act within the principles of Christian philosophy. The freedom of will is man's but the freedom to punish is God's.

Cary, though he is a metaphysical, is saved from allegory -- which he pretty much despised -- by his insistence on building his novels upon character rather than on a table of events. And this, of course, conforms with his doctrine, which is that men are free. There are three archetypal characters who recur in Cary's work: the anarchic Man of Imagination; the preserving Man of Order; and the woman whose deep biological guile acts as the imagination creating a new order. 51

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

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Cary, then, stands for law, order, Christian philosophy and metaphysics and allows his characters to move about freely and to act according to their own ethics and then to be judged according to the ethics of God.

Cary worked hard, revising endlessly, to conceal his metaphysics inside the proliferating life of his novels; no better service could be performed for him than this scholarly and sympathetic commentary. 52

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Since, for Cary, religion and philosophy give ultimate significance to everything in this world, he quite naturally viewed all human endeavour in terms of these fundamental considerations. It may be said that he employed, consciously or unconsciously a few guiding principles in his approaches to life and literature: the principle of analogy, of aspiration, of possibility, of perspective and of humour.

Cary insists that art is permanently linked to religion, morality and philosophy. Insofar as the artist shares the truths of the great Christian tradition, his creative vision is enhanced. Religion is closely related to such literary phenomena as romance and the novel. Viewed from the standpoint of creation, art presupposes certain moral qualities, such as humility and honesty, on the part of the artist. Insofar as an artist's philosophy is distorted, his work suffers. Cary suspects all theories of artistic inspiration that deny that the artist himself is the sufficient cause of his own inspiration. He also stresses that the artist should not slavishly copy the Divine creation. Rather, confirming that he is made to the image of his maker, the artist should imitate the act of Divine Creation. In this sense, the human artist really does create another cosmos. However, in the strict sense, the human artist, as contrasted to the Divine Artist, does not create: he only combines. This being so, the artist's vision and product can be shared by other beholders; in fact, can even sometimes be better understood by others. Furthermore, the artist then assures communication and communion with his public.

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He thus bridges the gap. Since art is one of the highest expressions of personality, it involves primarily the faculties of free will and intellect. Art is the product of consciousness, not of the sub-human. Moreover, all artistic and literary genres are justifiable on the basis of what they correspond to in human nature. The principle applies to all such literary categories as the drama, the novel and poetry. It also applies to such literary phenomena as tragedy and comedy, melodrama and farce, irony and satire.

Guided by the principle of aspiration, Cary detected a mysterious element in all things upon which his contemplation fell. God is a name of mystery. Divine creation baffles the human intellect. Furthermore, the universe is full of paradoxes, of riddles, and the supreme example of such paradox is man himself. Cary sees mystery in the operations of the artistic imagination. For him, the beauty that the literary artist makes means more than it says. Furthermore, the effects produced by a work of art are similarly mysterious. Cary describes the true artist as one who feels that he is touching heavenly, mysterious truths.

The principle of possibility is revealed in such literary considerations as the dramatic unities, the plot of a novel, the rhyme and meter of poetry. The true artistic critic is above all else aware of the severe limitations of language.

To understand English literary history, the various revolutions must be understood. In terms of a well thought-out philosophy Cary evaluates all literary periods. Because the contemporary period has ignored the value of tradition, because it has made experimentation

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an end in itself, because its art makes the beholder wonder at the artist rather than at the created universe, because its fiction is naturalistic, because its poetry thrives on the detached image, Cary is not sympathetic to 20th century literary art.

Guided by perspective, Cary stresses that art and literature are of subordinate significance to life. He states that truly great art is more than merely technical accomplished art -- more than merely successful arrangement. Truly great art promises something of the destiny of the human spirit; it reminds man of the wonder of existence; it translates the indescribable so that it becomes more meaningful. In short, it communicates. Also truly great art is central. Paradoxically, great art is both universal and unique.

Finally guided by the principle of humour Cary writes and lives not expecting perfection in man and things. Man is mortal - prone to fail. kindly humour is needed in life and art to add oil to the squeaky workings which otherwise would detract too much from the real value of man, art, life and God.

As one saw in the introduction to this thesis, Cary is concerned with the good and the bad of his characters. Cary sets his hero, heroine and villain into a particular circumstance in life and then watches the manner in which they react to a given situation. For Cary the interesting thing is the amplitude of reaction within the Christian moral code. In many cases, of course, the character steps beyond the moral law but in each case retribution is speedy, just and final.

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Cary is concerned with the moral values of the individual. Gulley Jimson, for example, fights against the system and in so doing does wrong. He is punished and he expects to be punished.

In the field of public morality -- Cary views Chester Nimmo and his group of hypocritical political friends. This group also sins against themselves, their party and the public in general. They are all punished and the punishment of Nimmo is a symbol of the punishment which will fall upon the party and upon each member of the party.

Sara, another outstanding character, commits a great variety of sins -- infidelity, gossiping, lying, cheating and stealing -- to mention only a few. The peculiar point about Sara is that she is always 'surprised' at her own acts of immorality and 'surprised' that she must pay for her wrongs. She is an unconscious sinner.

That Joyce Cary was a great novelist is a certainty. It is the hope of the writer that this thesis will at least provide some material for discussions which may lead other students to a further study of the work of this great humanist.

W. E. Lindsay.

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