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JOYCE CARY'S INTERPRETATION OF AFRICAN REALITY: A STUDY OF THE AFRICAN NOVELS.

by

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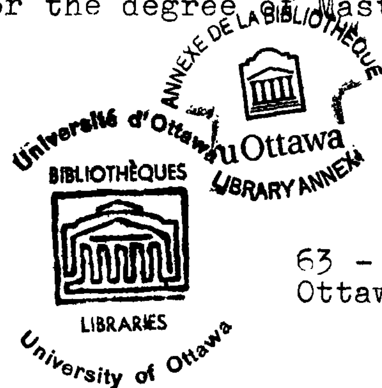

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INTRODUCTION

In 1913 Joyce Cary entered the Nigerian Political Service as a British Colonial Administrator. His first contact with upheavals in Africa was during the First World War, when he fought in the Nigerian Regiment. He was subsequently wounded on Mount Mora, a German fortification in the Cameroon. Although the excitement caused by the Balkan War (1912-13) had been enticing to him, the African experience left a much more lasting impression on his thoughts. He was thus opportuned, unlike most of his contemporaries, not only to be the sole ruler and judge of Borgu, his administrative region, but also to gain what Evan Owen has rightly termed "an intimate knowledge of native village communities."

The problem of cultural contact and change constitutes a central theme of the African novels. The four novels on Africa (Aissa Saved, An American Visitor, The African Witch and Mister Johnson are a proof of Cary's intimate contact with African life. His primary objective in delineating the historical reality of his 'own' Africa is to show the nature of cultural contact, and of the

resulting conflict in social transformation.

I have chosen these novels in order to show how he saw and interpreted the reality of the impact of European institutions on the African.

Joyce Cary's four novels on Africa remain an enigma to readers in Africa and elsewhere: critics are shocked or repulsed by the brutality, savagery and unruly nature of the mob in Cary's novels. M. M. Mahood was responding to this mood when she suggested rather inaccurately that Cary "did not at any time write a novel 'about' Nigeria" instead that he was using Africa merely as a "satisfyingly distanced setting" for novels about the fundamental injustice of the world, from which Nigerians are excluded. In my study I have stressed the fact that although both the Nigerians and Europeans have been assigned separate roles, they form an integral part of the same world.

Joyce Cary insists that the novelist starts always with an intuition. He further maintains that intuition is a means of revealing and discovering some form of truth about reality. Part of the role of the novelist is to

express and reveal a truth about life; hence art instead of copying life expresses it, by compelling the world to contemplate and understand itself. Therefore, in my study, I have used the word "interpretation," to mean not the historian's manner of interpreting history but an intimate understanding of facts and the subsequent translation of these materials into an experience. Similarly words such as "imperialist" and "colonialists" are used in this study to signify attitudes and methods of characterization and character portraiture only. Cary is primarily concerned with examining certain patterns of human behaviour and this is apparent in his insistence in saying that like Blake who created a personal mythology, he wrote about one world, or what he called his own symbolic system.

G. L. Larsen has pointed out that Cary's "interest in Africa and primitive forms of life" is close to that of modern anthropology. It is essential to note that the historical and anthropological material which Cary shows in the novels constitutes only a back-cloth for the drama of cultural conflict and change.

The present study is divided into four sections, each novel being assigned a separate chapter. The novels are introduced in the order in which they were published. The chronological method has the advantage of showing how Cary develops his style and his control of subject-matter from the publication of Aissa Saved (1932) through Mister Johnson (1939). It also enables one to see how Cary persistently clung to certain ideas while modifying and consolidating new ones.

Chapter one examines the separate clusters of Christian and pagan symbols and imagery with the aim of showing how Cary employs them to dramatize the theme of change. The second chapter explores the process through which British administrators, commercial land prospectors and missionaries, acting as principal agents of cultural transformation, effect change. In this chapter the conflict is heightened by the introduction of the instinctive primitivist American anthropologist, Marie Hasluck, whose theories about the reconstruction of the African past are in conflict with the desires of the tainted Africans themselves to embrace European values. Chapter three

discusses the efforts of an African prince in displacing the obsolete institutions of ju-ju and introducing European education in their place. Essentially the world of the prince is a new one in which disintegration and growth coexist. Mister Johnson, chapter four, represents Cary's most significant approach to interpreting Africa. Here, the past is abandoned and Johnson, the hero is compelled by his efforts to introduce a richer and better endowed form of life by living exuberantly only in the present in anticipation of the future. Mister Johnson, remains, in the words of Evan Owen, the "best of Cary novels to precede The Horse's Mouth," and shows a "more satisfactory integration of form and content."

The nature of my study suggests that Cary's themes are basically the conventional issues concerning cultural conflict. His approach to these questions is to portray a younger generation which in rejecting their own past embraces a new culture. In this way the plots of the novels are constructed on a system of polarity.
Jack Wolkenfeld has observed very accurately that the plots are "essentially designed to promote conflict." However,

Cary's originality derives from the treatment of African characters. The romantic conception of Africa and the accompanying false exotic attitude toward the African scene are shown as misleading and inaccurate. In these novels, African myths and institutions are given greater relevance in the lives of the Africans, that is, they belong to African tradition. I have been tempted therefore to stress the point that in the use of African tradition Cary shows the African in his 'created world' with its own limitations. Cary's characteristic technique, therefore, is to juxtapose elements of African tradition with those of European culture. He then considers the source of conflict and shows that it arises from the impingement of European ideas on the African mind.

I have deliberately used words such as 'conservative,' 'traditional' on the one hand to stand for the past and the expression 'the dynamic new' to represent the present. This choice of terms is meant to facilitate analysis. Here, change is represented as process and not as an automatic phenomenon. Consequently Cary's conservative characters may be timid, cautious and nostalgic but

it is wrong to think of them as being unimaginative. Their conservatism is not due to a lack of imagination but springs from their ability to fight against all forms of change that might alter what they are intensely attached to, that is the way of life which they had created for themselves. Thus, it is by the force of imagination that the old are made to be attached to their old ways. Since the very feeling of conservatism is imaginative 'the old guys,' the men of tradition are fighting to preserve a world that they had created in depth (to use Cary's expression). Therefore what life means to the conservative sector of society, is the preservation of their own way of life. This creates a situation that makes conflict inevitable; that is the unwillingness of the conservative characters to discard with their own moral sense of values.

In this study, therefore, I have used the word tradition to stand for what Cary intended it to mean: creation including what has been done, achieved, under-stood and grasped by one generation, culture, or race. Consequently the dynamic new stands for what Cary calls the creative forces in process. This is another situation

that makes for conflict.

A third factor in understanding any process of cultural contact and change and the resulting conflict arising from the situation, whether between generations and races, is the standard by which the relative merit of values - cultural and social - are judged by both the conservative characters and the younger generation.

My method of study is based on a close examination of stylistic devices, imagery and symbols, and relating them to theme of change. Since the novels constitute the primary ground of my study, I have introduced extraneous material into it, only when such documentation provides some verifiable and relevant help to the understanding of the inner significance of the novels. Throughout the study I have stressed the point that Cary's vision of Africa is 'imperialistic' and that his main concern is with the individual as a vital factor of organized society.

Finally it should be noticed that Cary is not presenting social and anthropological facts in the manner of a historian or social scientist as Golden L. Larsen has suggested, but he has successfully transmutted them

into literary works of imagination. Cary's vision of man and society, represents, in Evan Owen's words, the "advancement of the understanding of human personality in relation to society." The forms in which these conditions apply to society are through a system of ceaseless adjustments and replacement of 'obsolete' institutions.

CHAPTER I

AISSA SAVED

Joyce Cary's first novel, Aissa Saved, was published in 1932. In a prefatory essay to the Carfax Edition Cary explains that the novel had developed from his philosophical conclusions. Cary further tells us that it had taken him three years to finish the novel because "at the beginning the ideas that went into it were not clearly enough formulated"[1] in his mind.

Despite the fact that the novel took three years to complete Malcolm Foster has been able to observe accurately that Aissa Saved, even in its final state,

> . . . remains a clumsy book that tries to do so much that little is done successfully. Too many themes are introduced in too small a space, consequently they cannot be carried through to a successful conclusion.[2]

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[1]Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 314.

[2]Ibid.

Since Joyce Cary had the characteristic style of continually inventing new characters for every new situation, Foster's criticism of the complex structure of Aissa Saved, is true to an extent. But, on the other hand, it is false to argue that therefore the novel fails merely because of the complexity of plot and multiplicity of themes, to carry its message through to a successful conclusion.

It is also to be noticed that Mahood in her excellent study of Joyce Cary also detects and points out that the novel is over-populated with characters.

> Cary employs, in barely two hundred pages upwards of seventy named characters. As all but four of them are African, it is not surprising that he ran out of names in writing the book. When he exhausted his recollections of court cases and tax assessments in Borgu - the setting of the novel according to one manuscript version, which locates Shibi north of the Bussa rapids - he had to supplement his memory by recourse to anthropological works on southern Nigeria.[1]

The above citation points out a significant fact about Cary's sources and influences but it fails to state why Cary had to resort to the use of this method. The answer is to be found in the conclusions which Cary had

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[1] M. M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 105.

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arrived at concerning his own metaphysics. I wish to state that Cary's philosophical conclusions about the world did have a great influence on his style. In Aissa Saved and the other novels, when Cary seeks an effect, his style varies from parody to exaggeration.

Examples of aspects of Cary's style are numerous: the mob is a parody of the democratic society in which individualism thrives. The description of Johnson's Fada as the "scab of a wound" is an example of an instance during which the author exaggerates for an effect. The senile Emir in The African Witch is reduced to the size of a beetle as an example of the ineffectiveness of his tradition.

Since Cary's main concern in this novel involves the problems of social and historical transformation, I shall show how Cary uses his style to reveal consistent patterns of change in Aissa Saved.

In spite of the problems arising from the complexity of structure and abundance of themes, his characters derive their strength from his vision of life as tragic. It is essential to bear in mind that my attempt to define Cary's conception of life as tragedy is based on the need to know how the African experience contributed to the formulation of a metaphysics by Cary.

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The study of Aissa Saved is aimed at showing how Cary's African experience becomes part of his mythology.

Cary believed that freedom was the basis of man's tragic dilemma. To be free man has to be "separated by the very nature of his individuality from the real of which he is nevertheless a part."[1] There exists a polarity in man of two disparate but complementary entities, for instance, intuition and reason. The point of man's tragic dilemma resides in the recognition of the original severance between self and essence. Man's initial struggle is to recapture wholeness, in other words to bridge the gap between the two. One way of attaining this goal is through the creative act. Freedom and isolation are conditions in which man lives eternally remote from total meaning. Individuation, therefore, contributes enormously to man's tragic dilemma.

What is real about this world in relation to human destiny is that there is just no 'exit' to another realm - this then is the point of the tragic dilemma that can never be solved. Another important aspect of his metaphysics which concerns the novels is that he did not

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[1] Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, Ways of the Creative process (Garden City: New York, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 43.

believe in miracles or in any event that could alter the character of the world. For instance, according to Cary God cannot do evil, for if he did there would be a breach in the nature of things. God is therefore present in the world only as the human spirit of goodness and love.

Joyce Cary is principally a theist. He detaches man, who is part of creation, from the machinery of the world, from general nature, and makes him a conscious, free, independent and creative individual. By freeing man from the working of any providential power in the world, he avoids a deterministic conception of man.

> If he [man] has a sense of any goodness in the world, even the smallest act, unselfish act, that's ever done, he has to be a theist. Because the world has stopped being a machine. I mean the world can't be a cash register if it feels goodness and feels love.[1]

From the citation above we notice that when Cary talks of character he means the "independent reason of man (and God?) in which his individuality, his freedom resides."[2] It is thus understandable why Cary objects to the conception of the world as a machine: it deprives man

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[1]Nathan Cohen, "A Conversation with Joyce Cary," Tamarack Review, (Spring, 1957), p. 5.

[2]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 43.

of his character as creative agent and makes God, a God of necessity, who brings rains and punishes the sinners. In Cary's vision man can "move about the world by his own volition" only when he has been detached by his consciousness (individuation) from the machinery of nature.

The point to bear in mind is that Cary's understanding of man gives him the confidence to handle the various attitudes and responses to reality in Aissa Saved. It is also a matter of importance to note that the pagan conception of God as anthropomophic and the Christian regard of Him as spirit contribute a great deal to the understanding of the themes of the novel.

In Aissa Saved, Nature assumes several forms: the crowd, chthonic forces and tribal law and taboo. An examination of the principal imagery and symbols will show how Cary used the conflict and polarity between man and nature on the one hand and between the individual and society on the other hand to dramatise the theme of transition from the traditional African society to the Europeanized form of society.[1] It will be seen therefore that in Aissa Saved, Cary is less concerned with the story

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[1]Change here stands for the results of the impingements of cultural elements of European tradition on traditional African institutions.

than with the attempt to delineate the patterns that recur in man's history. The unity of structure is not expressed in the conventional manner of telling a good story; since the author takes time to explore the inner psychic problems of his characters at the same time that he describes the surface reality. This is not altogether a weakness; for an examination of the separate major imagery and symbols shows, however, that there is a definite point of view that projects a sense of direction.

It is also of importance to note that beneath Cary's conception of man is the strong believe in individuality. To Cary only individuals can think, and this belief is so persistently maintained in his political writing that one would expect his fictional world to be less cramped up with characters. On the contrary, the action of the novels is dominated by unruly crowds. Cary's use of the crowds is meant to act as a parody of the democratic condition, and here we notice how the unthinking mob, in its confusion and anxiety usurp the role of the man of the imagination. The mob and the rioting crowd in Joyce Cary's world are identified with the social tyrannies of tribal law and order. In Aissa Saved, the social relation is undemocratic, that is as Cary understood Democracy to mean a form of government in which

individuality flourished without being suppressed by taboo.

To this idea must be added the fact which Larsen has stated accurately that

> Civilization is the product of the creative powers of man . . . that social and moral values of the highest sort exist only in a society with a sense of pastness and antiquity. To have a civilization is to grasp an essential dimension of reality - the dimension of time.[1]

This is true only when we realize that only individuals can create but crowds cannot.

Another aspect of Cary's vision of reality that concerns us in the study of Aissa Saved and which complements our understanding of the above citation, is its duality. We can best understand Cary's dualistic vision of reality by making reference to Northrop Frye's discussion of archetypal symbols. Here, we are only concerned with two types of Frye's categories of archetypal symbols - the apocalyptic and the demonic.

Frye shows that the world ordered from the point of view of the apocalyptic vision presents the "categories of reality in the forms of human desire as indicated by the forms they assume under the work of human civilization."

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, Social Change and Moral Responsibility in the Novels of Joyce Cary (London: Michael Joseph, 1965), p. 16.

He also points out that opposed to the world of apocalyptic symbolism is the demonic. The latter vision presents to us a world that desire totally rejects. It is the world of nightmare, fear and anxiety, and of the scape-goat. The demonic world remains in all its aspects, a world of bondage, pain and confusion, it is the world as it is before any image of human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established. Frye's conclusions about the world of demonic imagery is even more illuminating in that here, "the social relation is that of the mob which is essentially human society looking for a pharmokos."[1] From Frye's definition we notice at once the dual approach at presenting the world of Aissa Saved to us.

This explanation is made clearer when it is understood that Cary conceives of two forms of reality: the objective reality and the inner reality. Objective reality represents an outside reality that is the actual world as we know it.[2] On the other hand the inner reality is ahistorical although it is revealed in recognizable forms and a

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[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays (Princeton: New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 141-149.

[2]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 76.

cyclical rhythms that can be felt. Richard Priebe has shown very accurately, though it another context but the facts are also applicable to Cary, that

> Myth represents an ahistorical inner reality though that reality is necessarily revealed in objective correlatives that we can recognize and a cyclical rhythm that we can feel. On the other hand realism shows us an outer reality that is like the historical one we daily experience and is thus controlled by a corresponding continuity . . . We might say that the writer whose imagination is governed by an ethical consciousness feels the rhythm of continuity, while the writer whose imagination is governed by a mythic consciousness feels the rhythm of recurrence.[1]

The significant point from the above passage that concerns Cary is that both the ethical and mythic consciousness operate concurrently in Aissa Saved. The point to bear in mind in this study is the extent to which Cary's experience contributed to the formation of his metaphysics. In this study it will be shown that Cary does not only incorporate the dual visions of the apocalyptic and demonic imagery but also compels us to feel the rhythms of historical change. In Cary's world, the single factor that unites these disparate

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[1]Richard Priebe, "Escaping the Nightmare of History: The Development of Mythic Consciousness in West African Literature" ARIEL, Vol. IV, No. 2 (April, 1973), p. 58.

aspects of reality is culture contact and conflict. Cary envisages an everlasting struggle between intuition or inner reality and external reality. In individual personality this struggle takes the form of conflict between emotion and reason. In society it assumes the form of a struggle between convention and creatibe genius, the sterile old and the dynamic new. In religion it is noticeable in separate visions - apocalyptic and demonic. The reason why there is an "everlasting battle, an everlasting creation which produces the endless revolution of politics and ideas,"[1] is that man's inner life, his emotions, despite his progress in time and education, are "still primitive in essence."[2] We notice then that mythical consciousness reminds man of his primitive nature while ethical consciousness reminds him of the necessity for adjustments. In conclusion it will be seen that the dual vision and the two forms of realities are realized and united in the creative act. In Aissa Saved the visions, the rhythms of change and continuity and recurrence operate at the same time. My analysis of the novel will

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 43.

attempt to show how Cary uses imagery, symbol, incident and character to project the feeling of social change.

In the story of Aissa Saved, a Missionary[1] and his wife have gathered around them the lowest class of Africans: misfits, blackguards and the lowest scum. Joyce Cary's list of the converts is remarkable for its mixture of types. For example, Ojo, the young convert of Mr. Carr, had lived a life full of contradictions and events: he had been beaten in the village and saved only by a policeman from Berua. Originally a Yoruba boy from Southern Nigeria, and once a trader's servant, he had spent most of his life in prison and hospitals. Before Mr. Carr had finally rescued him from the local prison, Ojo was suffering from syphilis. Ojo we are told was the type

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[1]Although the Europeans: Missionaries, Colonial administrators, white commercial men live in the same integrated society with Africans in these novels, I have treated the Europeans as Cary intended them to be: as the dynamic agents of institutional displacement and culture change in Africa. I have also assumed that no section of Cary's Africa is truly speaking "traditional," consequently the idea of culture contact and change is more of a process than an immediate act. Consequently, the Europeanized African, such as Aissa, Aladai and Johnson, constitutes only an advanced stage in the process of cultural change.

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turned out by the new civilization of coastal Nigeria.[1]

Although Aissa the heroine of the story has become the "star of the confirmation class," and the favourite of Mrs. Hilda Carr, she had earlier been rescued from hunger and starvation.

> It was from children that Ojo and Makoto had rescued her when they found her, too weak from fever and starvation to defend herself, being pelted in Shibi village. Ojo, always ambitious and eager in service, had recognized his opportunity, driven away the mob inspite of the abuse and threats of affectionate parents, and brought Aissa to the Mission [station] where from the first she had proved a quick and hardworking pupil. Three months of good food and success had given her back all her former looks and more than her former self-reliance.[2]

The passage shows without any doubt that the Aissa whom we meet in the novel had already been saved from the social tyrannies of Kolu. I wish to point out then that the action of the story is not concerned with the salvation of Aissa as has been argued by some critics; instead the story is based on her attempts to bring the symbolic rain to Kolu. There are two ways through which she does this: by asserting her leadership, and by destroying Owule, the

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved (London: Michael Joseph, 1951), p. 16.

[2]Ibid., p. 47.

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idol and symbol of sterility. From the start, we notice then that it is Aissa's freedom from the tyranny of the tribe that gives her the power to fight Owule and to destroy him. The following description shows us Aissa, as she struggles in the maul of conventional morality to free herself.

> She was the sort of girl who could not take advice and could not control herself like a sensible creature. She could not understand that her days were over. Like a spoilt beauty she thought that the world must be turned upside down to give her sunshine at night. She demanded that Gajere should be ransomed from prison and that the evil spirit which had taken possession of the baby should be driven out of it.
>
> She went to all the priests and Mallams and juju men for a hundred miles round and commanded them to give the baby medicine. She could not pay them but still she commanded and when they refused she insulted them. Then their servants beat her and once more she spent a morning in the stocks.[1]

The above citation shows that the physical stocks which the Kolua put on Aissa's leg do reflect the moral attitude of the Kolua towards new ideas. Aissa's freedom from the Kolua is a simultaneous act of freedom from the stocks and the mind. It is right to argue that from evidence of her revolutionary nature she belongs to that

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[1] Ibid., pp. 46-47.

group of receptive minds which Cary calls the scientific.

> This then is the final distinction between minds that some are open to new truth and welcome it; but some are closed to new truth and crush it if they can. The first is scientific; the other dogmatic.[1]

The significance of the above passage is that it enables us to come to the conclusion that any form of change and social transformation comes through the activities of those who possess the scientific minds. It is they who perceive deeper into their present social reality, see what is wrong with it and then try to do something about it.

This above point can be clearly understood if we compare the character of Aissa with that of Tanawe. The character and function of the little girl, Tanawe contrasts strikingly with the instinctive and rebellious nature of Aissa. Dancing together with the other female devotees of the fertility god, Oke, Tanawe is described as having performed "the Oke dance with care and carried himself with dignity." Besides, we are also informed that she possesses a very strong sense of morality and group responsibility. She is further described as having "pleased the bystanders

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men with an introduction by Hazard Adams (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p. 14.

by her shyness."

> Shyness in children is an admired quality in Kolu because it speaks of innocence and of gentleness which excite affection and the protective instinct in everybody of the same kind, that is, man for man, or dog for dog. . . . Kolu children of old fashioned families like Makunde's were remarkable for their gravity and decorum; because though they were much loved, they were strictly brought up and made to behave themselves as far as possible like grown-ups.[1]

Thus, it becomes evident that as a child, Tanawe is a contradiction to Cary's conception of the creativity of children. We need only turn to Aissa's response to the traditional values of society (p. 14) to know that Tanawe owns the kind of unimaginative mind which is dogmatic and therefore uncreative.

It is a matter of fact that in Cary's fictional world, he presents children full of imagination and vitality. He hardly expressed his sympathies with those children and adults who were made by the group to "behave themselves as far as possible."

We must keep in mind that in every one of Cary's novels there is always the inter-relationship of tutor and tyro. The tutor is as imaginative and energetic as the

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 33.

tyro: Mr. Bewsher and Obai, in An American Visitor, Aladai and Judy Coote in The African Witch, Mr. Rudbeck and Johnson in Mister Johnson, and Gulley Jimson and Nosy in The Horse's Mouth. The examples of such pairs of dynamic, independent and imaginative characters can be made up quite easily in Cary's novels.

M. M. Mahood contends that Cary favours Tanawe's form of moral responsibility. She then argues that the Christians, by looking for a scape-goat in the name of Jesus, abdicate responsibility. The "sense of responsibility, of being entrusted with a job to do, is particularly strong among pagan children." This is really essential to understand because Mahood maintains, it is the good fortune of the pagans that they always seek "to fit themselves into the scheme of things."[1] How very unlike Cary, this conception of man by Mahood is, will be seen in the following discussion. In the first place, it is a false assumption to maintain that Cary meant the Kolua to stand for a positive force. Mahood, initially fails to realize that "responsibility" to Cary did not mean compromise of one's individuality, but a defense of the latter. It is

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[1]M. M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa, pp. 109-111.

this kind of misunderstanding that led Mahood to see in the lives and actions of the Christians only a "sequence of self-abandonment, possession by evil spirits, exorcism of the evil spirits and possession by a good spirit." She then concludes that the actions of the Christians in _Aissa Saved_ have "perverted Christianity" and turned it into a

> . . . religion of blood sacrifice, whose adherents, attributing the injustice of the world to their own sins, seek a scape-goat whose sufferings will free them from responsibility.[1]

The question is how else does a Christian faced with disaster seek salvation?

On the whole the questions which Mahood's criticism attempts to answer concern the individual's relation to society and its values. It must be pointed out that Mahood's answers to the problems arising from _Aissa Saved_ are inadequate. First, the question of responsibility which Mahood conceives of as the sense of an obligation that is socially pre-determined, is wrong.

> . . . It is this sense which carried the small girl, Tanawe, who is sent to Bradgate with the news of the Kolu riot, through wild crowds, and along a ghost-ridden bush track. . . . Exactly

[1] _Ibid_.

> the same eagerness of children and adolescents to know what they ought to do and fit themselves into the schemes of things is shown by the small boy who runs for a pestle when the witch's limbs are to be broken, the youth who helps kidnap the pagan mother, Ishe, and the young boy who gives Ali to the mob of demented Christians.[1]

From the above citation we notice that Mahood's understanding of responsibility as a fall back into the group is based on the false assumption that Aissa is not saved.

It is true that the pagans, in their own way argue that "the whiteman does not know anything about our country . . . we shall not be sent to sleep."[2] They, accordingly decide to look for the person who has cursed their crops, and also stopped the rain. In fact, in their search for a scape-goat (Mahood does not notice this point) they boast that "We [the pagans] are not Christians to be whipped."[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 111-112.

[2] We are dealing with two institutional approaches and the culture derives its strength from the strongly entrenched traditions, each impinging on the other. In this way the author makes it possible that change occurs in the process of the creative agents displacing obsolete institutions and replacing with richer and better endowed ones.

[3] Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 30.

We notice at once that because the pagan is a man of action, it is he who is in search of a scape-goat, not the Christian. But this belief in power, in knowing what to do and doing it should not hoodwink us to believe that it represents Cary's true point of view. The fact merely makes the Kolu society human, and that fact alone does not make the form of their values and the nature of their vision acceptable. A few examples from some scenes concerning the ritual dance to Oke will illustrate the point and nature of Kolua sense of responsibility.

From the start, the narrator warns us that,

> . . . the Kolua are an intelligent people, brave people [who] know that every effect has a cause, and they are not prepared to call any cause hopeless of improvement.[1]

But the question here is, how well do they go about looking for solutions?

The pagans organize a ritual dance during which a virgin will be sacrificed to put off the anger of their god, Oke. During the dance, Makunde is caught and beaten down by a group of young pagans, their reason being that "his sons . . . had become Christians." This same group

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

threaten that they will burn down the old man's home, upon which threat, Marimi noted for always hiding her feelings runs out into the street, joins in the procession and begins to "dance in the road and to sing the ritual song in its most elaborate form." Marimi,

> . . . like other worthy residents, quiet people had performed her religious duties early in the day, and did not care to repeat them as a spectacle for the crowd. But she had saved her house and husband by her wild howls and vigorous gestures.[1]

We notice from these quotations that Marimi's sense of responsibility, like Tanawe's, as immersion into group feeling is opposed to the Christians' sense of morality. Right from Mr. Carr's decision to ignore government regulations and join the expeditions, to Aissa's rebellious actions, we notice that Christian responsibility is personal and creative but not collective and tending towards resolution of conflict as in the case of Marimi.

It follows from this example, that a common factor of pagan worship is conformity; since the expression of one's feelings remains a group responsibility. With people like Marimi, individual freedom, and hence creative power,

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

cannot operate. By falling back into the group Marimi and Tanawe re-enact the pattern of stagnation. Among the Kolua, we are able to feel the rhythm of recurrence, the feeling of the life impulse but this is stifled by superstition and moral conformity.

For instance, Ishe's son, Numi has been detained by Owule and Moshalo for sacrifice to Oke. Ishe rushes towards the D.O., Mr. Bradgate to make a case against the devotees of Oke. As she pushes herself through the crowds and shouts out that Moshalo has stolen her child, she is seized, before she has time to come up to Bradgate, by a boy called Ije. Ije immediately calls upon two other men from among the crowd, they gag the woman with a piece of cloth, tie her up, and drag her into the bush. Cary does not, in fact, appear to be enthusiastic about Ije's sense of responsibility as Mahood maintains. Here, Cary is presenting a society full of talent but whose concepts of duty destroy the genius.

> This was done in the sight of three or four hundred persons, including constables, mallam-secretaries, rich merchants, Christians and Christian sympathisers, garrison police, and Bradgate's servants, of whom Jamesu was chatting with Jacob within a few yards. If Bradgate had turned his head he would have seen the three struggling with Ishe, but he had no reason for looking round just then and none of the spectators' uttered the faintest cry of protest or

> warning. When Ije, glaring fiercely round him in his fear of some traitor, passed his eyes over them, the men turned away their heads, or looked downwards and licked their lips afraid lest some fault be found with them even for watching the crime.[1]

Since individuality is an important factor in Cary's creative world, the above citation finalizes the argument that it is absent in the conception of responsibility by the Kolua. It is my contention that Cary's point of view stresses the fact that a socially predetermined sense of moral responsibility does not allow scope for creativity and freedom. It will be realized that Aissa, the reckless, irrational woman asserts her freedom against the society that has already allowed its moral dogma to invade the minds of persons like Marimi and Tanawe. We are told that in Kolu,

> . . . to become known, talked about, for whatever cause is dangerous. It attracts attention . . . it makes [one] conspicuous and open to attack from all sides.[2]

The closest counterpart to the Kolu society, is the so-called Apollonian tradition, in which everything moves

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[1]*Ibid*., p. 121.

[2]*Ibid*., p. 33.

towards resolution.

We notice then that when, later on in the novel, Obasa breaks Aissa's ankle with a pestle, his action deprives him of his own individuality, seeing that he is acting for a common purpose. The action is based on the custom that all witches must die in the manner of Salente, that is, by leaving them to die on an ant-hill. A good contrast can be made between Obasa's action in punishing Aissa according to tradition with Rudbeck's refusal to hang Johnson according to custom but instead shoots him.

Joyce Cary's classic example in history of an instance when traditional morality and law inhibited freedom of the mind is the trial of Galileo. According to Cary both Galileo and his judges all had moral freedom. They had their sense of duty and acted upon it and "it was useless for Galileo to argue with his judges that the earth moved." What deterred the judges from perceiving reality with Galileo was their faith, that is to say, "their minds were not free."[1] Here, then is the crux of Mahood's misunderstanding of Cary's point of view: that he gave to the Kolua their faith and their own sense of value in what

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 14.

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they believed in.

It follows that one way of looking at the culture is to turn to the people's faith, that is to say, the freedom of the mind. At this point Cary's political ideas regarding education and freedom of the mind are an invaluable source of reference. Cary writes:

> The savage has moral freedom and natural liberty but he is blocked in every path by superstition or false belief. . . . Primitive races do not lack intelligence but freedom. They are crushed by false ideas derived from past authority and are stultified by the traditional creed that such ideas are superior to truth.[1]

In this passage Cary is suggesting that since truth is different from traditional creeds and ideas derived from past authorities, morality may not be far from being personal. In him, perception and individual intuitions have replaced doctrines as the sources of truth.

We notice then that a persistent theme in these novels is the conflict between individuals and all forms of prescriptive morality. The essential thing in Cary's Africa is that the strong influence which the mythic past has over the minds of Cary's pagans makes the process of change almost an impossible goal. It follows that a necessary

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[1] Ibid., p. 15.

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first step to change is the destruction of the mythic tradition and all the resuscitated aspects of the mythical past. The second step is to encourage the growth of the emerging individuality. Cary has this to say of the society built on conformity:

> So that the education that aims at uniformity and pattern ruins, and it did almost ruin a great civilization like that of the Chinese because when the system breaks down it leaves the people helpless to judge for themselves and form their own opinions. They are then ready to believe anything, to follow any-spell-binder. . . . the same confusion of mind and moral inability can be seen in any country among numbers of sects or parties whose creeds have exploded. . . . Mass education fails in countries when there is any critical tradition, any freedom. It is surprising how little freedom, how small an amount of independent thought, in comparatively few minds, can bring it to ruin.[1]

Systems that do not allow for adjustment may, when invaded by new and more powerful cultural values break down completely. Thus, according to Cary, the only possibility for an enriched culture to continue is to allow for regular adjustments. Changes in the building of society, like those in art are the result of the discoveries of new intuitions. The function of the revolutionary artist and creator is to enrich and bring new life to society rather than merely

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

cause its break down. Similarly the artist, is the man of culture, the man who loves order and beauty; hence he like Aissa and Johnson cannot bear very much disorder.

"Man," Cary says, "is a living soul and a machine is dead."[1] As a living soul man has an interest in continuity and growth. Therefore any society that does not create room for this basic understanding of man can either suffer from some form of stultification of the minds of its citizens or expect some form of revolution. To borrow Jane Ellen Harrison's passage, which appears in another context but which explains this point without any falsification, Harrison like Cary sees a tendency in society in which the individual grows out of the collective into the personal. Harrison says:

> The whole history of epistemology is the history of the evolution of the clear individual, rational thought out of the haze of collective and sometimes contradictory representations.[2]

The other point which remains unexplained is the search for a scape-goat and the subsequent sacrifice of

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

[2]Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis*, A Study in the Social Origins of Greek Religion (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962), p. xii.

human beings. In order to relate the question of blood sacrifice to that of responsibility and social change it is necessary to locate the exact disasters that warrant the reversion by both pagans and Christians to blood sacrifice. The disaster is a drought, and Cary portrays the following scene.

> Kolu was crowded for the feast on account of a religious revival. The drought and bad prices of 1921 which followed the boom years of the war hurt the pagans, who were farmers, much more than the Mohamedan tradesmen; the villages were full of half-starved people whose stores were nearly finished, whose children were hungry and who expected to die in the most miserable fashion if the rains did not fall and the crops did not grow. They were frightened, and they were determined to find out why so many troubles, bad crops, bad prices, late rains, one after another, had fallen upon them.[1]

The passage shows quite a different picture of the reality and we notice at once that the action of the novel is not dramatising the conflict between Christianity and paganism but that the action reveals the condition of Kolu: the starvation, expectation of death and the general plight of the Kolu. In order to appreciate the significance of this reality, the reader is compelled to turn to the introductory chapters of the novel to recreate the background from which Aissa and Ojo had come (pp. 12-13).

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 30.

The above quotation presents us with the final reality. The questions raised by the novel are: will the Kolua solve the problem through the revival of the spring dance? Will they agree to change their faith, their minds, modify their institutions and embrace new effective ideas that will enable them to tackle the problem?

Rain-making feasts are not an end in themselves: they are the rites of transition. The basis of these rites is that what was there in the form of life is dead; hence a new form of life, richer in content was being awaited. It is to be noted then that rites symbolize two things: they reveal the recurrent rhythms of life in man, through music and dance, and they are also symbolic of the ushering in of the new life.

On the other hand it is false to assume that Africans expect miracles to occur because they have sacrificed to a fertility god. Most of these feasts occur at specific times of the year when the devotees to a god know that the seasons are about to change. Therefore, a spring dance remains in all its aspects, a celebration and not an invocation of life.

A glance at the original nature and function of African traditional rites will indicate how Cary intended the celebrations in Aissa Saved to be understood. An

essential aspect of traditional African religious rites is the strong belief that fertility in all its forms is the only way to guarantee the prosperity of the community.

Amaury Talbot's insights into this desire for fertility are accurate:

> How deeply the longing for offspring is ingrained in the hearts of these people [of Nigeria] may be gauged to a certain extent by the horror of the means to which they will sometimes resort in order to overcome sterility or increase fruitfulness. For such an end no crime is too cruel; no magic rite is too dark or revolting.[1]

Female sterility was and is still considered, in most African societies, a misfortune by the individual women affected. Thus, it is understandable that the women who dance in the Oke dance should openly express their desire to have intercourse with men. It must be added that whereas Cary's female devotees are able to emerge out of the ritual throng to enact their fear of death and sterility through sexual imagery, the men do not respond to the female advances, instead they become too timid to assert their individuality. Consequently, they are lost in the crowd. A good contrast can be made between the women's songs in Aissa Saved and those sung after Johnson's wedding. We

[1] P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults (London: Frank Cass, 1967), p. 133.

realize immediately that, because of his dynamic nature, Johnson is represented by the women as the brutal serpent. It is through Johnson's assertion of his virility that his wife becomes pregnant (p.213). In Aissa Saved, the ritual dance does not result in any form of fruitfullness.

During the dance itself traditional African rites were generally supposed to be full of mysterious potency. African traditional art and ritual is mostly songs, sometimes sung but often played in the language of drums. As is the case in this novel, the songs are played at a time when the life of the society was unified for a common purpose.

K. E. Senanu states accurately that during ritual dances, the drums act as the "integrating symbol of the community" because the text of the music is often a "restatement of the community's awareness of a common life shared by both its deceased and the living members." Senanu attempts therefore to stress the group-centred attitude of African ritual, and to him the world of the African and his art and ritual represents a universe of an,

> . . . undifferentiated flux in which the natural and the supernatural, the animate and the inanimate possess a spiritual essence binding all

together and lending them a mysterious potency.[1] Thus to Senanu, beast, man, God and the dead share the same universe. In such a world, the music of the people, the laughter, the songs, the drums, the howling instead of creating chaos seem not only to awaken the universe, but also to "recreate it, or rehearse its coming into being."[2]

While we agree with Senanu that the basic impulse underlying all forms of rites is to "rehearse" the coming into being of a new form of life, we must question the false assertion that the individual who lives in such a world is no longer faced with polarity, that is to say, the gods and eternal truth are no longer remote from his imagination. Such an interpretation of African ritual is false because it assumes that the African devotee attains wholeness through ritual, lives in the world of pure knowledge and therefore feels no sense of tragedy - tragedy as originating from man's consciousness of incompleteness and remoteness from final truth. It will be seen that a

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[1]K. E. Senanu, "The Literature of West Africa," The Commonwealth Pen, An introduction to the Literature of the British Commonwealth edited by A. L. McLeod (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 169.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 171.

closer look at African ritual and art, shows that a majority of African myths and fables are concerned primarily with the problems of polarity and the original severance of man from eternal truth. I agree with Wole Soyinka that it is a misrepresentation and pretentious to maintain that the African is pure intuition.[1] In fact, in all religious ceremonies the primary desire that wracks the psyche of the African devotee to a god, is the sense and feeling of the primal loss of wholeness, which we notice in Cary's women expressed in sexual imagery. Fertility, to the African is and remains, a major way of sustaining continuity in the life of the individual and that of the society. It is therefore, an overstatement to envisage, without qualification, the spiritual and physical unity of the African world through the agency of ritual.

It is my argument that in Aissa Saved Cary does not portray the "mysterious potency" of the rites. Instead, the rites assume the function of ineffectual gestures - as in the example of Marimi - and Cary finds a reason for the impotency of the rites in the efforts of the

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[1]Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," Morality of Art, ed., D. W. Jefferson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 126.

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community to impose a pattern of conformity on individual lives. The lack of individuality characterizes the performances of the devotees of Oke. Through the practice of enforcing uniformity, the rites inhibit growth, both of mind and society, thereby putting everybody at the same level.

At this point it is necessary to point out Cary's unambiguous position on Christianity. The Christian God is not an anthropomophic one; hence Christian worship is concerned with an inner spiritual struggle, exemplified by the character of Mr. Carr, not with a business transaction, such as is the case with the Kolua. As to the nature of Christian ritual, Cary sees the main problem that faces the church - the kind of situation that faces all ancient institutions.

The Church Cary maintains has

> . . . inherited, like parliament, articles of faith which were once taken in a literal sense but are now, by old believers, accepted as metaphors or symbols.[1]

We notice then that at a certain level both the pagan and

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 9.

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Christian worshippers are faced with the same problems of translating metaphors into actual fact. Thus, when Aissa says,

> 'All de tings I lak de mos
> I sacrifice dem to his blood,'

she believes that she is supposed to enact the feeling of sacrifice itself. Even though Aissa finally sacrifices her son in order to prove the superiority of her religion over the pagan worship and also to symbolize her surmounting of all tribal obstacles, there is no reason to believe that Cary therefore did not recognize the superiority of Christianity over pagan worship. I agree with Larsen's view that in this novel Cary "recognized very clearly the superiority of Christianity over paganism." In relation to the theme of change, Christianity is "essentially historical while paganism is essentially non-historical."[1]

Therefore, in Aissa Saved, Christianity and paganism represent two distinct approaches to change and social transformation. It has been shown, as Larsen also accurately states how,

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, pp. 13-20.

> . . . the collapse of personality back into the anonymity of the tribe is at once a threat to individuality and from the point of view of the natives a protection against the inexplicable forces of nature.[1]

An examination of the moral implications of the two blood sacrifices that occur in the novel may show exactly the attitudes of the two groups towards change, on the understanding that the assertion of individuality complements the power of the creative forces to enact change. For instance, the three women who sacrifice their babies are Ishe, Aissa and Mrs. Hilda Carr. Each of the sacrifices has its own moral meaning. Ishe sacrifices her son to the god, Oke in order to appease the god's anger.

Geoffrey Parrinder's studies on West African religions leads us deeper into the mysteries of pagan worship and blood sacrifice. According to Parrinder, most pagan gods have kinds of sacrifices and food that they like. Therefore "to offer a sacrifice that is disliked would be a grave offence and bring certain troubles, so the priest is consulted as to the appropriate offering." Some gods demand human victims and the purpose for choosing a human victim was to remove some great evil from the people.

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[1] _Ibid_., p. 11.

The threat of death, drought, a plague of locusts, all these were of the very serious categories of evils and the gods often demanded human sacrifices.[1]

From Parrinder's account we notice that Cary recaptures accurately this pragmatic pagan attitude towards the gods and the many forms of disasters characteristic of their society. The significant fact about pagan sacrifice which Parrinder points out accurately is that it is done to "remove some great evil from the people," that is to say, it is not an individual sacrifice. We are made to infer then that the difference between Ishe's sacrifice of her child on the one hand and Aissa and Mrs. Hilda Carr on the other hand, is that in the case of the latter two women the sacrifices are personal. In fact in Aissa, the sacrifice is symbolic of the act of surmounting all the obstacles that might hinder her progress into the future.

On the other hand whereas the pagans see god as one of themselves, the Christians think of their God as very remote from them. There exists an underlying belief in the Christians that human understanding is fundamentally

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[1]Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion (London: Epworth Press, 1969), p. 71.

inadequate, but the pagans seem to believe that they understand every cause and therefore can solve their problems. By juxtaposing the Native's reaction to reality with that of the European characters Cary compels us to interpret Kolu reality from the position of the separate factions as they re-enact their established prejudices. Each faction's selective consciousness reveals to us the nature of Kolu reality.

In terms of what the author shows in the novel, the sacrifice of Ishe's son is meaningless because it is meant to be used for a useless and stupid ritual. We are made to know that given the physical facts of the Kolua situation the sacrifice of the boy cannot bring rain, and it never did bring rain in this novel. When Ishe dies everything seems to have been resolved, but both the deaths of Aissa and that of Mrs. Carr do not resolve anything. Mrs. Carr dies as an evangelical missionary, and her visions are obviously higher than those of Ishe. In this novel, as is the case with the other novels, freedom is engagement rather than withdrawal. Such an understanding of freedom shows how Cary develops the characters of the Christian missionaries and those of their converts to represent dynamic and positive forces.

With the Christians, transformation is a reality; it is dramatized at the level of each individual

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Christian's feelings, then, it is also represented by Aissa's spiritual struggle to come to terms with the transformation of herself from a leading convert to a full communicant. The separate traditional Christian images which Cary employs to illustrate this aspect of theme are to be understood in the traditional Christian way.

Studies of Aissa Saved have been primarily preoccupied with the problem of the author's objective description of savage rites and the theme of injustice in human life.[1] This approach has tended to turn the critics away from the wealth of imagery and the depth and multiplicity of character and action; and compelled them to analyze the actions of Aissa, in the conventional pattern of a novel based principally on story. The result of this conventional approach has been to ignore completely, characters such as Mr. Carr, or to talk about them only casually.

Of Cary's African novels, Andrew Wright writes:

> . . . they all provide a setting in which Cary can depict in clear and simple contrasts his theme of man's freedom and the world he creates in order to give it scope. None of these novels is colonial, even in the sense that A Passage to India is colonial. Their interest is not in explaining

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[1]M. M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 105.

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> Africa to England, not in making a plea for this or that course of action vis-a-vis Nigeria; the interest is in the drama played against a backdrop which by its very brilliance lays bare human motivation. . . . there is in Africa 'confusion, conflict, the destruction of old values before the new are established. But this is the perpetual situation of the whole world - it always has been.'[1]

This argument is appropriate in-so-far as it attempts to see both the European and African characters, as men and women faced with the same situation, who attempt to find solutions to the problems of transformation.

In Aissa Saved the role of Mr. Carr is invaluable to the theme of transformation. Mr. Carr is the leader of the Christian converts and all of them belong to the same Christian tradition. As converts in the traditional sense of the word, their battle is to be fought within the tradition of the original evangelical Christian teaching and wisdom. Religion to Joyce Cary like the word artist has many meanings but its prime "requisite is not a prescribed dogma," but rather a faith. Mrs. Carr and her husband are religious people because they have a larger "imagination and a stronger faith."[2] Hazard Adams has

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[1]Andrew Wright, Joyce Cary: A Preface to his novels (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), pp. 57-58.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

shown rightly that in Cary's work "one senses a desperate need to discover new meanings for old words."[1]

"There is detectable," in Joyce Cary's work,

> . . . a disillusionment with out-worn slogans, an effort to escape from their abstract emptiness to an intimate concern with human beings as individuals.[2]

Cary's efforts to redefine liberty as the power to act and religion as personal faith were all aimed at a more realistic attitude to the life, work and leisure of the contemporary citizen.

In the first few passages in Aissa Saved Cary dramatises in Mr. and Mrs. Carr a reaction to the facts of nature similar to the physical ritual acting of the pagans during the Oke festival. In the case of the missionaries, their response is tuned to the nature of their profession as missionaries. The reaction is made less physically visible but rendered more emotionally potent. They are, in fact, caught up in a confused state and the degree of emotional confusion is shown in the image of the Biblical maniac of Gadarene.[3]

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[1] Hazard Adams, "Introduction," Power in Men, p. x.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 19.

According to the Interpreter's Bible:

> The ancient term [demons] corresponds more closely with felt realities. The deeply disturbed or divided person is likely to feel himself possessed by powers more than human who have somehow got into him and gained control over him: the true self is helpless to assert itself. The first step towards wholeness and inner security is to face the facts, and the facts are disagreeable.[1]

The above citation shows that seen from the Christian point of view the beginning of Aissa Saved and its ending contribute very significantly to the theme of transformation. At the end of the novel, after the sacrifice of Aissa's son, the Christian converts, led by Makoto, make the symbolic rush into the river, to re-enact the action of the Gadarene swine which they had discussed in the Bible class at the beginning of the story.

The image of the swine, like that of the symbolic drought is central to the theme of change. It is characteristic of Cary's style that he employs one image or single symbol that will capture for the reader the whole meaning of the novel in point.

In Art and Reality, in a chapter entitled "The Total Symbol," Cary shows how a writer can record the whole

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[1] The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. viii (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 156.

meaning of his intuition in one scene, a piece of dialogue, in such a way that he conveys to the reader the full impact of the original intuition. Such scenes, Cary says, often record for the author an experience fundamental to the meanings of his books.[1]

The same is true of An American Visitor, The African Witch, and especially Mister Johnson, where Johnson's clothing and patent leather shoes constantly remind the reader of his understanding of European civilization.

Therefore, from the point of view of the Carrs and the converts, it follows that Joyce Cary was aware of the fact that the image of the demoniac of Gadarene embodied the whole theme of instability and change which is treated in the novel. Cary's belief that a single scene, an image, an idea or a word could reveal the theme of a novel is expressed in his judgements of Charles Dickens' Bleak House. He writes:

> Dickens, at the beginning of Bleak House, gives us only London fog. But that fog is the keynote of the whole. It gave Dickens back all the time, whenever he needed it, the sense of a dark, dirty

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 116.

> and muddled world, of the confusion and despair of lost souls.[1]

Another striking feature of Aissa Saved is the way in which Cary introduces and develops the theme of Christian suffering through the actions of the missionaries and their converts. Consequently the Christ about whom Cary writes and for whom Mr. Carr works is the suffering and enduring Christ. We have to bear in mind that Mrs. Carr at one point in the novel convinces Aissa to recognize the necessity of suffering. Hilda Carr convinces Aissa to see with her that,

> . . . if there were no suffering in the world, no pain, no loss, no sin, and anger, then we [Christians] should not need love of Jesus, we should not turn to him and trust him.[2]

Cary is not alone in believing that suffering is a necessary condition of conscious life and freedom. Nietzsche has also shown that suffering is caused by individuation and he further explains that since whatever exists is of a piece, individuation is a necessary contradiction to the spirit of oneness and therefore at the root of all evil. At this point Nietzsche's vision is very

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[1] Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 116.

[2] Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 148.

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close to Cary's; for according to Nietzsche art acts as the hope that the spell of individuation may yet be broken as an augury of eventual integration.[1]

The point to bear in mind is that the real tragic meaning of Aissa Saved exists in the image of the demoniac at the beginning of the story - man's awareness of the sense of loss creates a feeling of instability, and then follows his efforts through individual action to make symbolic endorsements in order to arrive at an eventual integration. We notice that the exotic and the irrational in Aissa Saved represent the new dynamic and positive forces in a changing society.

M. M. Mahood views Mr. Carr's change of mind to follow the converts in order to strike a blow at the Kolua pagans as "a disastrous surrender" and a "tragic abrogation of responsibility." Her conclusions are based on the argument that the Christian missionaries and their converts embrace "self-abandonment" as a solution to their problems while the pagans believe in "self-reliance."[2] Mahood's

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[1]Frederich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (New York: Double Day, 1956), p. 67. tr. Francis Golffins.

[2]M. M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa (London: Methuen 1964), pp. 110-118.

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conclusions are based on the false assumption that the pagans were a more positive force and therefore Cary intended to criticise the Christians and their attitude toward the issue of the drought. It has been shown (p. 19) that Mahood's understanding of the novel in this way is based on her misinterpretation of the meaning (from the actions of the Christians) of responsibility to mean some socially predetermined values.

The question which Mahood fails to ask is, how does the individual come to terms with a reality such as that of Kolu? Joyce Cary in Art and Reality says that,

> Every one, not only the writer, is presented with the same chaos, and is obliged to form his own idea of the world, of what matters and what does not matter.[1]

We are thus made to realize that in Cary's world the individual is at the centre of the creative process and only those who have new creative intuitions can initiate the process of change.

In the example of Mr. Carr and his converts the latter word was intended to be understood in the traditional meaning of changing over to embrace some new form

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 18.

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of life, more positive and enriching to one's life. Thus, one was converted when one realized that the conditions in which one had been were no longer able to provide a meaningful life. Similarly, the difference between Mr. Carr's affirmation and the pagans' self-reliance in their ritual dance is to be found in the spirit behind the meanings attached to the words: pagan and Christian. These words when understood only as ideas are meaningless for they are "real only in the acts of individual men."[1] It has been shown in my analysis that the actions of the individual pagan are characterized by superstition, conservatism and dogmatism and that Cary meant the actions of the Christian to stand for something significant and worth dying for. Cary, talking of the spirit of Christ states:

> When we say the spirit of Christ, we mean not only the character of Christ, but something that remains in the world . . . to act in Christ's spirit is to act in a manner characteristic of Christ. . . . the conception of something characteristic.[2]

Mr. Carr's change of mind to embrace the cross of Christ as the only source of certainty is consistent with

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 52.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

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his character as an evangelical Minister of Jesus.

Only in this context can the conversion of Ojo be meaningful. At the end of the novel when the converts are ready to sacrifice Aissa's son so that Christ might bring rain, their leader, Ojo, suddenly begins to shout out 'murder' against his fellow converts, arguing that the sacrifice of Abba constitutes a pagan rite. The resultant conflict in Ojo is similar to that which takes place in Mr. Carr, although he too is eventually converted by the songs sung by the other converts.

> [Aissa's] joyful voice, her look of exultation, the disfigurement of her face pierced Ojo's soul. In that moment he perceived that she and Makoto were right and he was wrong. He had called them pagans because of their pagan rites - but their hearts were more Christian than his. He was fighting against the very spirit of love and sacrifice, against the wisdom of Jesus and the power of the Holy Ghost.[1]

Furthermore, the conversions between Aissa and Mrs. Hilda Carr are even more significant. After Aissa's escape from the Yanrin prison to the mission station at Shibi, she is deserted in a hut to die. The girl gives up all hopes of life and is prepared for death. But Mrs. Carr, discovers her and preaches a sermon to her on the nature

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 208.

of suffering, which revives her.

> You don't want to be cured of your anger. You don't want that bad sorrow to be taken from you. You think that no one in the world has ever had such a big sorrow to bear. But you know who had such a bigger sorrow, much worse pain.[1]

The effects of the scene are dramatic. Aissa falls asleep after Mrs. Carr has convinced her that Jesus will give her happiness and like Mrs. Carr herself

> Aissa knew that Hilda was speaking what she knew to be true; her voice, her confident smile convinced her that great happiness was indeed within her reach.[2]

The first step towards Aissa's expanding and widening vision, according to Mrs. Carr, entails the recognition of the permanent existence of evil and suffering, because such knowledge proves that there is something like love and goodness. The spiritual changes that take place in the person of Aissa during the communion scene are dramatic, and she seems momentarily to have resolved her conflict. Jane Ellen Harrison also refers to this point and further says that in the Christian tradition the "holy communion is the end of the Christian cycle, and the thing

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 147.

[2] _Ibid._, p. 153.

begins again."[1]

It is in this sense that Aissa's confirmation and her first communion, instead of being final stages in her life, are really rites of transition that initiate not only an outward change in her life, but a spiritual one as well. It is in her new self that she leads the converts into Kolu to destroy Owule the pagan priest. It will be seen then that Aissa's entry into the full adult Christian life, her determination to do it, contrasts remarkably with parallel changes that will eventually take place in her society.

Thus, by dramatizing the tensions and the nervous nature of the African reality in the person of Aissa, Cary achieves his aim of making the novel a "story about people, not propanda, not a bore." His technique is to avoid ideas as much as possible and to dramatize the conflict of cultures as a personal battle to be fought by Aissa in her bit to retain her own private sense of morality.

According to Joyce Cary, and this concerns my interpretation of Aissa Saved, an author's point of view

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[1]Jane Ellen Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 89.

cannot be separated from his style. It is the author's craft that reveals something to the reader, not necessarily a particular voice. The author acts as a divine force that inspires the characters, so that we cannot separate what all the characters and situations express from the author's point of view. As he himself puts it, "We see the author in his characters, and this character is his meaning; the character can be true or false depending on his conduct."[1]

An interviewer once questioned Cary on the relation between form and content in his novels; that is that the form showed too clearly. In reply he said:

> Your form is your meaning, and your meaning dictates the form. But what you try to convey is reality - the fact plus the feeling, a total complex experience of a real world. If you make your scheme too explicit, the framework shows and the book dies. If you hide it too thoroughly, the book has no meaning and therefore no form.[2]

From the above citations we notice that Cary is insisting on the fact that the "principal fact of life is

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[1]Joyce Cary, "A Novelist and His Public" <u>Saturday Review</u>,Nov. 27, 1954, p. 31.

[2]Joyce Cary, "Interview with John Burrows and Alex Hamilton," <u>The Paris Review</u>, <u>Writers at Work</u>, The Paris Review interviews ed., by Malcolm Cowley (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), p. 55.

the free mind,"[1] the individual. He further maintains that,

> Tradition, patriotism, the ideas of national honour have immense power; so also do ideas common to humanity - brotherhood, equality; but they are REAL only in the acts of individual men.[2]

It is evident therefore that Cary did not believe in the romance tradition of presenting Africa as an idea. He saw and represented it as persons who are happy, stupid, fighting, suffering from various diseases, and in this way he could communicate the meaning of his own conception and understanding of Africa.

Cary was so convinced about his understanding of the role of individuality that he accused the Hegelian state conception of egocentricity.

> The flaw in Hegelian state theory is not in its emphasis on national spirit but in making this spirit independent of living minds and their critical reason.[3]

As District Officer in Borgu in 1919 Cary's pre-occupation with bridge-building was that the bridges saved

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 53.

lives. Traders "deviated fifty miles from their ordinary route in order to make sure of a dry crossing."[1] Bridge-building was to become an important aspect of his African novels.

In The Case for African Freedom, Cary's African man of the imagination is described as "small, ragged and dirty, full of disease and covered with bruises," and,

> Yet he had more brains, guts, and power of leadership than many of those Emirate Officials who had taken their pay for fifteen years to neglect the Borgu roads and leave the streams unbridged.[2]

Cary would not have contributed to any theory of African freedom that did not take account of the individual. Hence political independence was, according to Cary, not the thing to consider first, but rather education, because the latter released the power of democracy and liberty in the people.

Golden L. Larsen, in comparing Joseph Conrad's conception of the human dilemma with Joyce Cary's understanding of man's struggle in the presence of the facts of nature, has said that Conrad:

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[1]M. M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 53.

[2]Ibid., p. 54.

> . . . attempted to lift man out of the 'tragic circle' not through escape into the transcendental 'One' but through his dreams - his social ideals . . . the problem was not solved for him by his simple method . . . for Conrad's attitude towards civilization itself was clearly ambivalent . . . like his characters Conrad appears to be trapped in a circular pattern of finding, ironically enough, in his own personality, an affirmation of his ever-present animal nature. . . . Conrad's attempt to solve the problem posed by naturalism resulted in a retreat rather than a resolution - a retreat into the self, an annihilation of the conscious and social part of man in order to partake of the unconscious, and an obliteration of time in order to partake of the external.
>
> The distinctive fact about Joyce Cary is that he resolved the dilemma that confused his master, as he referred to Conrad, by turning away from an obsessive concern with the 'threat' of nature and the unconscious and towards a recognition of man as creator and doer.'[1]

To Mr. Carr and the Christians there is only,

> . . . the struggle - the necessary struggle - that goes on. . . . It is always with us, this struggle. It is the essential fact of human activity and of the novels as well.[2]

Aissa's different sense of value finds itself directly opposed to the nature of the social reality. Social organization, whether pagan or Christian tends to inhibit rather than encourage her freedom. The positive

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent (London: Michael Joseph, 1957), p. 4.

[2]Ibid., p. ix.

power in Aissa can be seen in the way she strikes down Owule, the priest of Oke. With only one leg, Aissa strikes the mask of Oke and instead of the god falling, Owule fell down and died.

Among the Ibos of Eastern Nigeria Talbot has this to say of their priesthood and succession. In the compound where the juju is kept,

> . . . the priest dwells, carefully guarded by all his people and never crossing the threshold unless called forth by some grave emergency. The reason for this restriction is that up to a few years ago any man who succeeded in killing the holder of this office would reign in his stead.
>
> The whole prosperity of the town, especially the fruitfulness of farm, byre and marriage-bed, was linked with his life. Should he fall sick, it entailed famine and grave disaster upon the inhabitants. . . . Under no circumstances did the term of office last for more than seven full years. This prohibition still holds; but since the coming of [Imperial] Government it is said that another of the same family, who must always be a strong man, may be chosen to take up the position in his stead. No sooner is a successor appointed, however, than the former priest is reported to 'die for himself' (sudden death not attributed to anybody). It was frankly owned that, before (Colonial) Government came - i.e. some dozen years (before 1914) ago - things were arranged differently in that, at any time during his seven years' term, the priest might be put to death by one strong and resourceful enough to overcome him.[1]

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[1]P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults, pp. 103-104.

The struggle by Aissa and the converts to destroy Owule, the priest of Oke, is based on a similar pattern of understanding the succession of priesthood. It is not essentially different from the struggle between Elijah and the priests of Baal. Thus, Owule, the man who has been perpetuating the falsehood dies to make way for Aissa's new values. Seen in relation to Owule, Aissa represents the new spirit that is struggling to take form but does not yet know which form to take.

At the end of the novel, Owule, the priest of Oke, is represented as being synonymous with the drought and all the forces of sterility and death.

Sara, the elderly Christian woman says to Ali, the educated clerk of Mr. Bradgate:

> Zaki, [master] you do not understand Owule is a devil. He worships a false god, and because of that the true god gives no rain. The people are dying because of Owule.[1]

Owule and his religion are the symbols of orthodoxy and all that does not accept change. But Owule's power to fight Aissa is not there, he is presented as an old man. The Christians are young and more dynamic. Mr. Bradgate's

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[1] *Ibid*.

statement that "they really are good, these people; there is a lot in Christianity, whatever you say,"[1] is probably true and fits in with the pattern of movement in the novel - movement to the acceptance of a wider horizon and a deeper vision of things.

One way, therefore of attaining freedom is to remove those forces of superstition that blurr the minds of the Kolua - and Owule, representing their religion, and therefore the most potent conservative element had to be removed first.

> 'Owule fell and the rain fell,
> The blood ran out of Owule
> and the rain out of the sky.'[2]

The repudiation of the past is re-enacted in Aissa's own person, not only in the communion room, but physically when she was in prison. Earlier in the novel, when Aissa had been caught by the pagans and her ankle broken by the pagan judge, Obasa, she had been sent to prison and handed over to an old veteran called Zeggi. Zeggi is all that stands for tradition, self-knowledge, discipline, wisdom and magic.[3]

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 125. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 139.

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

The illusion on which orthodoxy operates is exemplified in the character of Zeggi. He is frightened by Aissa's hysterical nature but he hides his feelings and in order to overcome his fear he puts on charms, drinks gin, and as he swaggers about he does all these things because he considers it "unbefitting to him as a man of authority," to show any sign that will contradict his having been well trained in "self-respect." Here, whatever sympathies Cary must have wished us to express towards Zeggi and his dual inheritance have been transposed and the character of the man is reduced to nothing. Cary undercuts Zeggi, a man who treats a fever by pouring water on the patient suffers from the lowest form of ignorance. He is here dramatizing the inefficiency of traditional authority, with its half-baked European ideas, in the person of Zeggi. In this particular instance of Aissa's illness, Zeggi next consults a Mallam, (a Moslem clerk, in the medieval sense of the word) who informs him that "Disease is a demon and demons only understand their own language."[1] Knowing that Aissa is a Christian, Zeggi turns, finally to a Christian trader, a Yoruba Kola nut

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[1] Ibid., p. 104.

dealer. The Christian opens his Bible and reads: "If your leg troubles you, cut it, if your eye take it out."[1] The scene in which Zeggi cuts Aissa's leg is described with merciless objectivity:

> He wrote these words /̲if your leg troubles you, cut off; if your eye, take it out /̲ on a board and also on a piece of King's paper - that is to say, a piece of paper from Bradgate's office stamped with the Royal arms. Such paper, which could be found in the waste paper basket, had a good sale in the market because of its power as medicine. Zeggi and he then cut off Aissa's leg at the ankle and cauterized the stump with a hot knife. They bound the paper to the wound in a plaster of chewed tobacco leaves. Then having washed the ink of the magic words from the board into the calabash of water they poured the mixture down the patient's throat. She mended at once. The swelling of the leg decreased, the fever left her.[2]

The symbolic cutting of Aissa's leg parallels the symbolic act of sacrifice of her son and both events relate strikingly to the theme of transition, transformation and change. The traditional story occurs in Mark's gospel and it was based on the fact that since life was a journey during which the Christian passed from the earthly stage to the heavenly, he had to remove anything on his way that could act as a stumbling block. The cutting of the part of

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[1]*Ibid*. [2]*Ibid*.

the body was a symbolic expression of what would otherwise have been a rite.

It was seen that the rain-making feast stood for the symbol of transitional rites of fertility and the cutting of Aissa's leg in terms of the Kolua was an acting out of the desire to leave out all the dredge and take the good points that will guarantee life and freedom.

Similarly, in James Ngugi's The River Between, the girl Muthoni runs away from her Christian father and goes to an aunt in order to be circumcised. Muthoni's argument is that as a Christian woman without the rite of circumcision performed on her, she is incomplete. Although the conflict in Ngugi's book is between the institutional Christianity of Muthoni's father and the paganism of circumcision represented by her aunt, Muthoni gains maturity, womanhood and wholeness by a return to the tribe, while Joyce Cary's Aissa gains wholeness by throwing away all that is bad of the tribe in order to partake of the glory of her vision which she anticipates Christianity will bring. Muthoni is different from Aissa in that she dies fighting a nationalist war of reconstruction, while Aissa dies fighting the colonialists' battles of cultural displacement and progress. She is thus rightly speaking an agent of change.

To an African reader Joyce Cary's vision of Africa is essentially colonial and imperial. Because Aissa is fighting a battle of the future, she has necessarily to reject the past, and being the symbolic mother figure she will even sacrifice her own children and herself before she can gain genuine freedom from the past. The difference between Ngugi's Muthoni and Cary's Aissa is that the former suffers from a sense of nostalgia; she longs to reconstruct the past, but Cary's Aissa on the other hand, like Mister Johnson does not have any feeling for the past except one of disgust.

The pattern of showing characters as men who are obsessed with the future corresponds to Cary's thoughts about freedom:

> This is the quality of freedom, that all its good comes in time to good use and all its bad is dredged away. But freedom and liberty by themselves are not values.[1]

Not only empty freedom is required as Ali the educated clerk, believes, but the removal of those forces and institutions that hinder the growth of liberty. In the person of Zeggi we notice how Cary shows the emptiness

[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 15.

of tradition in its administration of justice. This manner of undercutting whatever had earlier been shown as having significant value with the natives is made even more pronounced in Mr. Bradgate's relation with the native administration. Here, Cary introduces his theme of bridge-building. He uses it to show the ineffectiveness of the traditional authorities in formulating good economic and social policy.

During the time of the Kolu riots the District Officer at Yanrin, Mr. Bradgate is on a bridge-building tour of Shibi and Kolu and on this particular occasion he is struggling to bridge the Akoko river. He encounters indifference from the natives, "resigned melancholy" from the Emir and a general lack of imagination from the whole native population who do not comprehend the size of the project in hand. Bradgate loses his temper and rebukes the Emir and the native administration.

> 'What's the good of you'? he shouted at them. 'What are you for? How can anything be done for you if you won't do a damn thing yourselves. What's the good of being sorry now. It will take weeks to get hard wood in thirty-foot sticks and the rains may break tomorrow. What on earth do you pay Sarkin Tafirki for if he can't take the trouble to do the job that any small boy could do? . . .
>
> 'You know this is a big thing,' Bradgate exclaimed, growing more and more indignant and plaintive; 'You know that Yanrin is poor though

> the woods are full of shea nuts that anybody can pick up, you know that in every bad year people are short of food, you know that the only way that keeps out the trader is the want of a safe road with bridges, and now when there is a good chance of one you throw it away . . .
> Bradgate drew breath, controlled his temper, telling himself that the people were unfamiliar with threstle bridges and unusued to picture any kind of construction in their minds since they never saw pictures of anything.[1]

Bradgate's speech, summarizes in practical terms, what Cary understands by the reality of the Kolu pagans. They have the "shea nuts" but they cannot organize the picking and marketing of them. Thus, from the examination of the Kolu question from all angles, my conclusion is that the Kolu have the potential resources in power in men (exemplified by the ritual dances), the men and women of imagination (seen in the willingness of Aissa and Ojo to embrace new ideas), and the natural resources (represented by shea nuts) but they lack the ability to organize.

Because the native administration regards all forms of economic programs for development with "disgust and boredom" it is only among the Christians, led by Aissa and Ojo, that we see a real concern for change, a willingness to discard with obsolete institutions. The Christians are

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, pp. 74-75.

always looking for a sign, not for a scape-goat as has been suggested by Mahood. This introduces an important theme in the novel, the theme of a search for a scape-goat and a sign. The excited and angry Christians, in their search for a sign (exemplified by Ojo's apocalypse at the end of the novel) are themselves like W. B. Yeats's indignant birds. They are rightly speaking the sign itself.

At the end of the novel when Aissa had sacrificed her baby and the Kolu had caught her, broken her limbs and thrown her on the giant ants to die, the other converts, now led by Makoto are still looking for a sign.[1] Makoto picks up the cross for a sign and runs without stopping and plunges himself into the river. The rest of the converts, like the Gaderene swine, at the beginning of the story, rush after him into the river.

The crossing of the river is an important episode in the story. The natives had never crossed the river because it "had a deep mud bottom and in normal years was considered unfathomable" and they feared that it was inhabited by demons and crocodiles.[2] The fact that the Christians cross it suggests that they have torn apart the

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 210. [2] *Ibid.*

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veil of the myth and the superstitions connected with the river.

In a short story, Bush River, set in Africa, Cary tells us how a certain Captain Corner, a Colonial Officer, leads a group of Nigerian soldiers to attack the Germans in the Cameroon during the First World War.

> The duty of the party was to discover if it were practicable to drag a French 75 a hundred miles through unmapped bush to a certain rendezvous. The idea was to surprise the Germans with this gun, which ranked, in Africa, as heavy artillery.[1]

In this story Captain Corner riding on the back of a donkey leads his group of superstitious Nigerian soldiers across a river that had been tabooed.

The feeling of superstition and fear which characterizes Kolua response to reality is anticipated in Bush River where demons, crocodiles and Germans represent the threat. But Captain Corner, riding on his donkey, Satan, manages to swim dexterously across. Having destroyed the myth about demons in the water, the natives were able to cross the river.

The important fact here is the idea of not turning back. The whole expedition and its success depended on the successful cross of the river. The donkey's

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[1]Joyce Cary, Spring Song and Other Stories (Penguin, 1963), p. 14.

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determination to swim across with the master on its back is significant. The idea of having a certain kind of mind which fought persistently forward pervades the nature of the Christians and the converts. Thus, Mr. Carr's conversion to continue and not to stop the Kolu expedition sets the pattern for Aissa, Ojo and Makoto.

Joyce Cary would have agreed with Bernard Shaw that a,

> . . . genius is a person who, seeing farther and probing deeper than other people, has a different set of ethical valuations from theirs, and has energy enough to give effect to this extra vision and its valuations in whatever manner best suits his or her specific talents.[1]

History then is the ceaseless enactment by society of the ethical valuations of the men and women of imagination, because they introduce new ideas, fight and die for them. In this sense then Aissa succeeds because she projects this kind of independent vision and demonstrates her conviction in the new faith by the sacrifice of her child.

In Aissa Saved Cary presents us with a realistic and unromantic reality which he himself had experienced. Here he shows these men and women reacting against it.

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[1]Bernard Shaw, Saint Joan (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 10

In his days as District Officer, Cary underwent a period of adjustment of his views of Africa from what reality he witnessed.

> In late July, 1914, on his way to Nafada, he had passed through famine areas and was horrified to see people sitting in front of their huts, waiting stoically to die.[1]

He saw children with swollen bellies either suffering from starvation or disease. Smallpox epidemics were rampant and worms of all sorts were a common sight in drinking water. These "harsh realities of Africa" dispelled all the romantic ideas which he had had of Africa and he learned to think of Africa as a "desperately poor" continent. He found no virtue in tribal life, "it was so utterly stultifying for the individual that Joyce Cary was hard put to see the good in it."[2]

This explains, in part, why Cary saw the problem of African freedom, as a fact that concerned the life or death of the individual. Though I don't wholly endorse this view the solution to Cary was greater colonial involvement because withdrawal left political authority in

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[1] Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography (Boston: 1968), p. 98.

[2] Ibid., p. 99.

the hands of an ineffective administration, the need for a strong, organized form of government and the subsequent expansion of the services is the urgent plea that Cary dramatizes through the ignorance and sufferings of his characters.

If traditional African society according to Cary had any values, then those values have out-lived their usefulness. Cary's argument is for adjustment forward, not stagnation and surrender to the forces of nature. Cary's final attitude towards the poverty, disease, starvation - the harsh reality of Africa - is not only one of imperial and colonial involvement but also one of "moral indignation," at the nature of the social and political injustice of the society of "shifting values and abstractions that threaten the life of imagination."[1] In terms of the economic and social evils which he discusses in the novels, Cary is essentially a meliorist. Regarding the political freedom of Africa and the government of Africans his vision is futuristic and for greater colonial involvement. This is understandable seeing that he is a European writing from the basic understanding that

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent (London: Michael Joseph, 1957), p. 79.

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European institutions, especially British Democracy, are superior to the African. Hence, he sees in Africa a historical process during which the "higher" culture replaces the lower. The reason which he gives, and this is the point he makes in the novel, is that European institutions such as Christianity despite their basic similarity with Kolua religion, give greater opportunities to the individual than the African form of worship.

The novel ends, with a definite note of optimism. Apart from the increase in the education budget and the willingness of the Kolua to send their children to school, there is the concrete fact that "there is going to be a steel bridge at Akoko,"[1] and then added to all these is Bradgate's joy that "something is being done at last."[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 159.

[2]Ibid., p. 115.

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CHAPTER II

AN AMERICAN VISITOR

Joyce Cary's novel, An American Visitor was first published in 1933. When compared to Aissa Saved (1932) it is, as Golden L. Larsen brilliantly puts it, a

> . . . more significant novel, providing irrefutable proof of Cary's intelligent analysis of the cultural revolution of which he was a part as British Administrator in Africa. He showed through the character of Bewsher that Victorian Colonialism was impelled not only by economic acquisitiveness (represented by Cottee) but to an extent at least by admirable if limited idealism. Nationalism became the organising principle by which the untapped energies of the Africans were developed.[1]

To begin with, it is important to note that the novel does not altogether deal with the life of Marie Hasluck, the American visitor. Nonetheless, we cannot understand Bewsher's designs in creating national consciousness among

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent (London: Michael Joseph, 1957), p. 27. There is a fascinating similarity between the career of General Gordon in the Sudan and that of Bewsher among the Birri.

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the Birri, without knowing the reasons why the book was so designated. So far critics are not yet agreed on the themes and points of view in An American Visitor. Most maintain that the point of view, when detected, is inconsistent and diffused. Larsen has this to say of these separate aspects of the novel:

> There is in the novel a serious flaw: a general failure to attain a sufficient degree of subtle artistic statement of theme. The ideas float on the top, so to speak. The attitude represented by Bewsher received such caressing attention that the reader has little choice but to accept it as the correct one.[1]

Larsen's criticism is accurate to an extent, but he does miss the point because though the narrator's voice appears in the form of the occasional commentator, and there are many other commentators, such as Cottee, with equally powerful and convincing views, the novel does not lack an artistic statement of theme. Accordingly, it is a hopeless exercise to attempt to study the novel by relying totally on a lone commentator's voice. This tendency to detect in the multiplicity of voices and themes a flaw of narrative technique has been summed up by Jack Wolkenfeld. Wolkenfeld says that the voice that "suggests the dimension

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[1] Ibid., p. 32.

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of the unquestionably knowable"[1] is diffused among the other voices.

It is a false assumption to argue that because there is a coincidence of views between the main narrator and major characters such as Cottee and Gore, there is therefore in this "novel a serious flaw." I have already shown (p. 3) that in Cary's novels, form and content cannot be separated. According to Cary himself, the contention that,

> . . . the only truth a writer can give is a point of view, that the truth of a work of art is simply its coherence, its meaning as a work of art. . . . is now old-fashioned and generally on the defensive.

Cary's point is that the function of the artist is to use his technique to reveal a truth:

> The first duty of a writer is to compose a form of meaning which shall be coherent to the reader, even if that reader be himself. And the meaning is addressed finally to the emotions, the sensibility.[2]

We notice from these citations that Cary rejects the belief that the truth of art can be revealed through

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[1]Jack Wolkenfeld, _Joyce Cary, The Developing Style_ (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 70.

[2]Joyce Cary, _Art and Reality_, p. 134.

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the consistency and coherence of a single commentator's voice. The reason is that Cary maintains the truth revealed by a novel is personal and not absolute, consequently the author cannot give the whole truth because the latter cannot be known. "The most important part of truth," according to Cary,

> . . . is what humanity is suffering, is feeling and thinking at any moment, and this cannot be known, as a totality, to any person.

It follows that, "A novelist therefore can give only very partial truth in any one book, and that truth with an angle."[1]

In my study of An American Visitor therefore, I shall examine the major imagery and symbols and also try to show how they relate to the theme of mobilisation and social transformation. There is always present, the general Cary theme of the permanent nature of reality and the accompanying ideas about universal injustice and the everlasting tragic dilemma that permeates events.

In a preface to the Carfax Edition of An American Visitor, Cary explains why he had chosen to use an American for the title of his book.

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[1] Ibid., p. 134.

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> The original American visitor was a young wife with three children, who told me once that in America 'we believe that children should get their own ideas of right and wrong' . . . it was her practice to leave children of five and six to decide all moral issues for themselves, without guidance.[1]

The American mother, Cary argues in the same preface, belongs to the same tradition with the missionaries who distrust all forms of government intervention in African traditions. They want to reconstruct and preserve the African past. However, he always refers his readers to the experience of lawlessness in Africa and often makes use of it in political theorizing and fiction to make his point.

> I was (myself) a strong league of nation man - I was in a country full of social and tribal conflict where it was hard to device even the bare elements of security and a reasonable life, especially for the masses. I knew something at first hand about lawlessness as well as despotism. The everlasting conflict between authority and freedom was not an academic subject in Nigeria, it cropped up everyday in a country where the traditional frame was in collapse and law had to be built while the queue waited.[2]

The passage is indicative of a certain attitude and style in Cary's fiction - his ability to incorporate

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[1]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 9.

his political ideas in his fiction. It is this method of fusing political principles with fiction that enabled Hazard Adams to state that

> We see how a commentary on Cary's novel moves in one direction toward the political principles enunciated in Power in Men and the other toward emphasis upon the creative imagination of his characters. It is characteristic of him to return from political speculation to the 'unique centre of free power.'[1]

The significant point is that Cary understands the nature of the conflict that arises out of the unique situation in his Africa where elements of African and European cultures coexist. An American Visitor represents another approach at the problems of culture contact and change.

Thus, in my study of An American Visitor, it is not possible to separate Marie's ideas about freedom from Bewsher's dilemma of the creative genius since both are functional in the novel's theme of change.

Marie Hasluck, the American visitor, was meant to test her preconceived ideas of native freedom with the facts of Birri lawlessness. Having lived through the reality of Birri Marie, as Larsen states rightly

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[1]Hazard Adams, "Introduction," Power in Men (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p. xxx.

> . . . receives her education and passes from one attitude to the other, and it is for this reason that the novel is appropriately titled, even though its main business is about England and English men in Africa and not America and Americans.[1]

Marie Hasluck and Mr. Bewsher stand for two opposing conceptions of freedom and civilization. It will be seen from Marie's understanding of Birri that when Cary sketched her character he intended to show her as one of those who do not only hate government but who doubt the moral values of organized society. She also belongs to the group of anthropologists who believed that the real solution to the African problem was to rebuild the traditional past. This is how she sees Birri vis-a-vis Europe and America:

> In Birri there is nothing of what we in America and Europe call civilization. . . . 'The independent spirit of the natives and the rarely enlightened policy of the District Officer, Mr. Eustace B. Bewsher . . . has preserved the primitive culture of the tribe both from the so-called education of the mission and the development of finance . . . the Birri are probably the happiest and wisest people in the world. To pass from what we call civilization into this obscure district of Nigeria is like going out of a lunatic asylum where the keepers are crazier than the patients into a spring morning of the Golden Age.'

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, p. 36.

> 'Among the Birri you do not find . . . any uplifters, prohibitionists, Calvinists, Marxists, Freudians, nymphomaniacs, sadists, yogi standing on their heads or fundamentalists sitting on their tails . . . This simplifies life a whole lot and leaves the Birri time for such primitive pastimes as dancing and singing, making poems . . . hospitality and happiness. It will shock a great many civilized people to hear that the Birri are not only happy but seek happiness for its own sake. The idea of being miserable in the world in order to get into a better one has not reached Birri. They think this a funny proposition.' 'These people live in friendship, dignified, self-controlled, contemptuous of the grabber, the buffoon, the envious and the boaster, accepting death like sleep. Their sympathies are as quick and true as the instincts of animals, they feel as suddenly as dogs that know across a room's length when you think of them. They feel your look and turn at once their smiling faces like flowers to the sun.'[1]

Marie's reasoning about the Birri can be summed up as follows: left to himself, man was more peaceful than the man who lived in a society in which government action was felt. In this way Marie represented the school of thought which believed in deterministic progress. Cary defined the power behind automatic progress as a,

> . . . providence in nature, which, if permitted free play, would certainly produce a richer, a safer, a happier world, without suffering or crime, inequality and envy.[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 66.

[2]Joyce Cary, "Anywhere?" Vogue (March 15, 1954), p. 69.

It was Cary's intention to show through the life of Marie among the Birri that such an understanding of society and the history-making process is erroneous. First, it contradicted Cary's understanding of human freedom as creative action. Secondly, the belief in mechanical progress which attributed change to a power that was not human, depreciated the function of the creative imagination. Lastly, it aimed at a return to the past, and thereby ignored the demands of the present.

Here, it is necessary to establish clearly Cary's own understanding of society. Cary is aware of the fact that the notion of progress as conceived by twentieth century man is a very recent phenomenon.

> The Middle Ages never dreamed of it. They thought the world had bad and worse men. The only hope for them was that God in His mercy would save them from hell.[1]

During the Middle Ages human vision was apocalyptic and not demonic, that is to say, not earth-bound. Man's concern was not with the human drama called history but with transcendence. The sense of spiritual growth was evident but progress was never conceived of in material

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

terms.

> The whole notion of an advancing civilization is quite recent. It came in with the machines and education. All at once everyone, even the workers began to grow richer. The new industrialized nation made so much money that it could afford roads, schools, hospitals, all the expensive services and administration which are needed for even a small general improvement in millions of lives.[1]

However, Joyce Cary was not slow in detecting the flaw in the Victorian conception of progress and how the Victorians related it to liberty.

> Here was the reason why the Victorians were so suspicious of any legal interference with free competition. It seemed to them the whole secret of progress, and it was, they thought, a natural thing. Darwin had proved or seemed to have proved that competition had produced humanity itself. It was nature's method of driving life forward in the scale of intelligence. Why should it not be also nature's plan for driving civilization forward in the scale of wealth and comfort, security and peace, making it richer, wiser, more charitable and more happy. For free competition has certainly seemed to produce these results.[2]

The problem was even more rife among the liberals themselves who had thought of freedom as absence of restraint.

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[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.*

> Liberals preached a minimum of government interference in personal affairs. . . . The role of the state in this philosophy was somewhat ambiguous. Essentially its duty was to destroy all obstacles to freedom. So conceived in order that men might pursue their individual aims. But to many liberals [Cary belonged to the Liberal Club, and Power in Men, was his own contribution to the club] this equalitarian aspect of the movement was not at all attractive.[1]

In an interview Cary also said:

> I do not believe in miracles. I'm not talking here of faith cures - but some breach in the fundamental consistency of the world character which is absolutely impossible. God is character, a real and consistent Being or He is nothing. If God did a miracle He would deny His own nature and the universe would simply blow up, vanish, become nothing. And we can't conceive of nothingness. The world is a definite character. It is, and therefore it is SOMETHING.

Cary insists that even Providence cannot effect any change in the world, without human intervention.[2]

It can be seen from Cary's discussion of progress that he repudiates the medieval sense of progress as movement through the world to a Christian transcendental realm. He also rejects the biological concept of progress. But he allows for the consistency of revolution initiated by

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[1]Hazard Adams, "Introduction," Power in Men, p. xviii.

[2]Malcolm Cowley, ed., The Paris Review. Writers at Work. Interview with Joyce Cary (Viking Press, 1967), p. 58.

the men of imagination. And Cary's men of the imagination deal principally with the present. Government is not ignored either; in fact, Government,

> . . . subsidizes research, and research means new invention, of new shifts of power . . . and the speed of new discovery, and therefore of obsolescene, increases all the time.[1]

Cary further suggests that there are certain "props" which every Government sets up to guide against revolutions that tend towards Marie's form of anarchy. Education is a major prop. "Everywhere," concludes Joyce Cary, "Government's educate," for it forms the basis of a real "hope of the world."[2] It is only in this way that revolution can be geared towards organizing and enriching the values of organized society. In this way Cary saw a "direction in world development," and the direction was not only moving towards a greater degree of economic independence but to one of economic and political interdependence. Thus, he saw in his interpretation of history as process, a movement that will eventually lead to "international order and peace."[3] The future of Cary's Africa depends not in reconstructing the past as Marie suggests, but in making

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[1] *Ibid.* [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

good use of the chaotic present for a better future.

The preceding discussion of Cary's position in relation to human history shows that he is using his speculations about a future international community, to argue against Marie's brand of political freedom that wanted to isolate the African. This analysis proves that whereas Cary recognized the claims which tradition and the past made on the individual, he was more concerned with the present. In fact, in Cary's African world, the hope of the future depends on the decisions taken in the present. Hence to accept imperial rule in Africa was one way opened to Africans to join the international community, that is to say, to modify their present disintegrating cultural condition in a constructive way. Since history, Cary maintains, is not made by a natural providential power, the only possible maker of human history is man himself - the creative genius of the individual. It stands as a proof of how he conceived of

> The complex working of the creative genius of man producing a continuous revolution that compels all governments to seek international agreement and stability. The direction, the flow of world society towards a general law, a general security, can be checked but it cannot be reversed.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*

Cary's choice of the word "flow" to describe movement in history is of great significance; for in each of the four novels on Africa there is a major river and usually the major characters use boats, canoes and dug-outs or build bridges.

In Art and Reality, Cary states that the world is a unity, but, that in order to understand and account for how it operates, we have to divide it into two. Thus it is that Cary allows for an outside reality, which is the world of history as we know it, and an inner one made up primarily of feelings and emotions, and this is the mythical world (pp. 9-10).

Cary takes pains to make one other distinction concerning the nature of men, by showing that whereas the forms through which the human imagination dramatises itself may change, that is to say, whereas history deals with process, the inner world deals with recurrence. Thus civilized man is presently found still hovering around the borders of the primal forest. In this way Cary feels that he has identified a common denominator in human motivation. "Man," he says, "is still in his primitive emotional make-up, part of the universal real." Thus, according to Cary there are no unique races but prosperous nations just as there are poor ones. The trend is for the poor ones to

aspire to be rich; hence there is no virtue in poverty, or in the return to the past to reconstruct it.

Finally, what is persistently noticeable in man is the eternal "conflict between will and bodily machine."[1]

> No amount of willing, no amount of thinking can compel the body to be completely subservient. On the other hand, we are equally aware of their interdependence; mind needs body to exist and body needs mind for any purposeful activity; that is to say, this gap of which we are so acutely aware occurs within a unity. Without the gap between body and mind the individual would not exist; he would be merely a part of universal nature, controlled by instince,[2] with all the limitations of creatures whose lives are so controlled. It (the gap) is the independent reason of man in which his individuality, his freedom, resides. This gap is necessary to him as the division between the feet and the ground, which enables him, unlike a vegetable to move about the world by his own volition.[3]

Cary's interest in these theories is to establish a single standard by which human motivation can be judged. Also it is an endeavour to bridge the gap that exists between races, so that from such an approach, we notice

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[1] Ibid., p. 42.

[2] This is Cary's explanation of the original fall into the state of freedom. Severance preceded freedom. Satan crosses a similar gulf in Paradise Lost.

[3] Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 43.

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that Marie Hasluck's explanation of the differences between European civilization and the idyllic life of Birri suffers from an over simplification of the facts of human nature. As is the case in An American Visitor, Cary's point of view is that a return to the life of pastoral idyllism (as Marie's argument suggests) will not solve the individual's dilemma because men are always faced with everlasting chaos.

> Everyday we hear abuse of civilization and all its culture by the simple-lifer who wants to live like Thoreau and put off the corruption of the world. But Thoreau was a highly educated man. The real simple-lifer, the aboriginal, leads a very hard life by rules and tabus far more oppressive than those of any citizen of London or New York. It is the man of culture, the scholar, who really simplifies his life. It is only very wise and learned men who have freedom of a quiet mind, and they do not achieve it by running away from civilization and denouncing its culture and its scholarship.[1]

Marie's contention that the Birri are more secure because their life is more remote in time, is rejected. It will be necessary then to turn to the novel to see how Cary interprets the Birri from his own conceptual projection of man in relation to a reality that is highly muddled. It will be seen also that Cary's heroes, seek

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

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not the perfect world, but an understanding of their own position in the scheme of things. Cary never relinquishes the idea that man is always faced with the threat of disintegration into chaotic emotions but that he saves himself through creating. Complementing the saving act of creation is the sustaining presence of love and goodness.

In An American Visitor, then, the first actions of the novel are centred around events which the author uses with the purpose of disproving Marie's thesis that the Birri live in the "spring morning of the Golden Age." Cary achieves his aim by having the Birri contradict every aspect of Marie's contentions.

It is to be remembered that Marie Hasluck is an American anthropologist who enters an African village with the conviction that the traditional civilization and culture of the Birri is better and promises more security than the American and European societies. She belongs to that school of anthropologists whose methods are reconstruction of the past. We see then how Marie tries in the opening pages of the novel to convince the Africans, mostly the youth, to understand and to take the decision to throw out the whitemen from Birri. Marie eventually falls in love with Mr. Bewsher the District Officer of Alo; himself a supporter of the idea of the preservation of

Birri culture. However it will be shown that Bewsher's brand of freedom for the Birri is different from Marie's. Even in their new roles as husband and wife their ideas about Birri never coincide. Instead Marie eventually embraces Bewsher's. Mr. Bewsher represents Cary's creative genius in all its contradictions, and it is he as a practical man, who achieves the ideal form of fusion of the European and Birri cultures.

Thus, Marie is shown, through out the novel as a primitivist, par excellence. She represents the kind of persons whom Cary calls the simple-lifers, the aboriginals who "belong to the most modern school of anthropologists and believed in the Golden Age."[1] In order to see how Cary handles Marie's brand of romanticism - belief in the "noble savage and all the other resuscitated fancies of Rousseau"[2] - it is necessary to turn to a number of relevant incidents in the novel dealing with the Birri reaction against Marie's romantic ideas. The story starts as we are introduced to a confused and excited mob at the river port representing the point of cultural contact. Mr. Gore, the

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[1]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 66.

[2]Ibid.

assistant District Officer, is struggling exasperatingly to control the crowds as they press on, each section, hoping to get a place on the steamer that is to arrive. The author endeavours to explain that the reason for the scramble by the natives to move down stream is that there has been a drought. The District Officer, Mr. Bewsher, had therefore decided to send his assistant, Mr. Gore to see that the movement of the Birri should be done very smoothly. The significance of the occasion can be appreciated when we understand that the event was supposed to have taken place at the end of the dry season. During the dry season in Nigeria, the water level on the upper reaches of both tributaries of the Niger river, drops very drastically. An American Visitor is set somewhere on the Niger above Lokoja, the town at the confluence of both rivers. It happens that during the rainy seasons steam boats and larger vessels can go as far up both tributaries as to Bussa and Yola. It was during a low water season that the events in An American Visitor are supposed to have occurred. The Birri understand too well that if they do not join the steamer on this particular day, they will be left stranded upstream and this will mean death. It was imperative for the Birri to take the steamer and go downstream to Alo. As was the case in Aissa Saved, it

was a "time when the rains of the season were also overdue," but instead of having the crowds turn out for a religious revival, here the tribes are being moved downstream to avoid disaster. Here, we are dealing with a symbolic movement of a whole culture along the flow of history. Thus, Joyce Cary might have agreed with Jane Ellen Harrison that it is "idle to attempt a study of the ritual of a people without knowing the facts of their climate and surrounding."[1]

Joyce Cary has the ability to create a scene. In the following passage he shows how both the white Administration and the Birri were prepared for the event.

> The steamer did not arrive till three O'clock in the morning. . . . As everyone had foreseen there was then a riot. The hordes at the top of the bank rose up like an army and charged down the slope. Those in the front places who had waited longest were at once flung into the water and their goods scattered.
>
> Gore was seen for half a minute by the light of a burning load of corn waving his long arms and opening his mouth to an extraordinary extent, before he, too, was pushed over the edge.[2]

At the moment when Mr. Gore had succeeded in forcing the exasperated mob to pull back,

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[1]Jane Ellen Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 56.

[2]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 23.

> Then the old woman arrived and began to scream. Here they were and here they'd stay. What had they done to be turned out. They were going to Alo, and no one should stop them. They were honest good people who had never done any wrong. She would not listen to the suggestion that the steamer could not hold any more passengers. She didn't want to listen . . . she was fighting for her place in the scheme of thing. . . . 'Go back' she shrieked. 'What have we done? Tell me that. Who are you? These men are good men, traders of repute.'[1]

This represents the kind of urgent reality against which Marie Hasluck was writing about - a Birri that did not exist and may never exist at all. The desire of the Birri to join the steamer, the symbol of European civilization, has very little to do with issues such as mission education and European finance. To them, it was a matter of survival. Cary shows this emotional response by the Birri in the yells, confusion and excitement that characterize the behaviour of the Birri.

> A chorus of yells from somewhere down the bank made Gore turn half round. Nothing could be done for these people. It wasn't that they were stupid to understand the position but that they didn't want to. They weren't even thinking about it. They were feeling.[2]

It follows from the events presented that when the steamer finally arrived, the character of the Birri

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[1] Ibid., pp. 17-18. [2] Ibid., p. 18.

has already contradicted Marie's understanding of them. The event of the coming of the steamer re-enacts, not only a transition in the seasons but also a historical event in the daily life of the people. Here, Cary is again dramatizing the conventional theme of the conflict of European and African cultures. Earlier in the novel Marie encounters a group of youngmen who have had some experience of European ways of living. They are looking for paid employment from Marie.

> Eight of the worst blackguards in Gwanki were sitting in a row waiting for the white woman to come out of her tent. Since two O'clock through the hottest hours of the day they had been calling every minute or two.
> 'Mam, you wanta cook.'
> 'You wanta boy, Mam.'
> 'Missy Mahrie, this is Henry who ask you - you my fader and mudder - tree pound a month.'[1]

In An American Visitor, especially in the early part of the novel we notice from the violent reactions of characters such as the Fish and the facial expression of women, that the Birri are unmistakably unwilling to persist in the state of confusion and anxiety.

> The faces of the women assembled as in a grand stand on the banks, on the right and upper side of the market-place afforded especially a most interesting study of conservatism in all its

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

> kinds, ages and emotions, alarmed, wooden-headed, disgusted, suspicious, contemptuous, outraged in its finest feelings or merely wondering.[1]

Juxtaposed to this revolting reality is the following scene in which Cary portrays the Birri enjoying the calm and secure atmosphere on deck the steamer. The change in both the physiology and psychology of the Birri is remarkably portrayed. It should be noted that while Cary draws this well-laid scene, he also portrays a parallel one in which Marie, Henry and Obai are arguing as to whether they should expel the Europeans from Birri or not.

> Old Umoke had shut both eyes. The loud, regular beat of the stern wheel dashing upon the water like a mill, the trickle of the waves against the low gunnels, the thud of the engine, the drowsy murmur of conversation, which filled the stifling tween-decks with all those noises as appropriate to a ship as the smell of oil, rubber, tar and wet planks, gave to these people sensations of luxurious peace in which they visibly stretched their limbs. The screaming anxious mothers of the day before lolled among their packages with half-closed eyes and sleepy smiles. Their babies sprawled between their shining thighs like puppies. The grand fathers blinked at the children, the glittering water, which slid past in endless smooth undulations; at the far bank of the river and its forests marching past like armies of ragged infantry,

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 70.

> with occasionally a flag or an elephant. Their faces were like the surprised, smoothed-out faces of young children at play . . .[1]

In this scene the Birri are lulled to sleep by the calm and security provided by the steamer. The final test for Marie of her ideas about Birri arrives when she and Bewsher are among those to be attacked as the Birri attack the mission and kill an Ijaw maid. Surprisingly it is Marie, the advocate of primitive virtue who sends for government soldiers. At a point in the story, Umoke, a Birri Chief sends a note to Bewsher in which the Birri declare their submission to Bewsher. "All trouble finish . . . the Nok fear too much."[2]

Marie's reaction to the news is indicative of how far she has reversed her position in relation to the Birri. Marie says:

> 'What nonsense?' . . . Nobody could go to Nok. Nobody could go into Birri at all. They'll just kill you as soon as you put your nose into the bush.'[3]

The radical change of attitude towards the Birri by Marie and Chief Umoke, is significant to an understanding of the work of Bewsher among the Birri. When Marie was first introduced in the story she saw Birri as an idea for a

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 35. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 212. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 213.

romance; a romance of liberty. In this scene she does no more than curse the duplicity of the Birri.

> 'What about you, Monkey? Are you worrying about those wretched pagans? If I were you I'd never want to see any more of them again after the way they've treated you or the government either' . . . 'You've given them fifteen years of your life and all they've done is to try and cut your throat for you. It makes me so mad at the meanness and injustice of the whole thing that I'll just be glad if they get themselves shot up.'[1]

Through her love for Mr. Bewsher, she learns to re-evaluate the nature of the Birri. Marie Hasluck's response to disorder and disappointment is characteristic of Cary's African and European characters alike. The tragic view of life, one may rightly say, is an attempt to give man a deeper understanding of himself, in order that he can play a more significant role in the drama of the world. It is in this sense that Cary's characters destroy not only obsolete elements of tradition but recreate new roles for themselves. In these novels, the conventional role of the African in European fiction, as the stage-prop in a drama in which Europeans dominate does no longer exist. In the process of culture change and transformation, Cary's Africans, like his Europeans, act as agents of change.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

It is safe to assert at this point that Umoke's letter to Bewsher prefigures Birri willingness to sue for peace and the establishment by Bewsher of a richer form of culture and peaceful government. It is also symbolic of the acceptance of imperial government and the other forms of European institutions. The first movement in this novel ends at the point of Umoke's letter. Bewsher decides to go to Nok. He is subsequently killed and Marie Hasluck returns to England, into the civilization which she had earlier abused. In England she lives as the widow of Mr. Bewsher on an established income. Her adventures into Birri society, her return to primal nature, according to Cary has made her re-affirm her belief in the peace and security which civilized society guarantees.

Although it has been shown that, in her efforts to isolate the Birri, Marie Hasluck fails, but Mr. Bewsher's grand design of establishing an All-Birri political federation does not fail. Joyce Cary tells us in the preface to the novel that the character of Mr. Bewsher was meant to "give the picture of a different kind of ruler, Bewsher, and his dilemma, in contrast to the American anarchist mother," with the kind of mind that is "completely closed to any need of authority -- which trusted absolutely

to providence in the narrowest sense."[1] Bewsher "was in a way a kind of genius" and was the most qualified ruler for Birri. Cary's choice of Bewsher, the man of imagination, was meant to show how ineffective the idea of automatic progress worked. It is only the genius and the man of imagination who can affect change.

> The situation in family life as in politics is musique; it has to be dealt with by imagination, by a creative effort of the mind. And since only individuals possess imagination, there is always need of the individual ruler whatever he or she is called.[2]

From the explanation, it is clear that Mr. Bewsher's point of view is Cary's, that is, it belongs to that of the world of the imagination. Bewsher's function is then to "release the energies of the natives, energies imprisoned in tribal custom and stunted imagination."[3]

At the beginning of the story, Bewsher sends two young men from Birri, Obai and Uli, to go into the settlements and organize the All-Birri political federation. We see the working out of this plan, not only in changes that

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[1] Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 10.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, p. 33.

occur among the Birri but also on the persons of Obai and Uli. Uli's first act of assertion of his personality is shown in the murder of an Ijaw maid during an invasion of the mission by the Birri. In these and other instances, Bewsher's attempt is to create a feeling of an All-Birri consciousness. We are consistently reminded by the narrator that Bewsher is dealing with a potentially dangerous situation - one that might explode at any time. At one point in the story, the Fish, one of the most excited Birri, charges Bewsher for letting the missionaries and prospectors into Birri. He then leads an exasperated group of warriors to attack Bewsher. In the following scene the narrator wishes to emphasize not only that lawlessness and insecurity affects the Birri but also persons such as Marie and other Europeans who visit the reserves.

> The spears were lowered and Fish in a high angry voice, jerking his chin and eyes from one side to the other, began to explain his objection to the mission, to the whites, to the woman (with a chin jerk at Marie). What did they want, why did they come, why did the mission take their women, why did the woman ask so many questions?[1]

The above scene is a clear indication that the Fish's plight represents the desire, natural in all peoples, to seek justice and proportion. It is this need for peace

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[1]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 70.

and adjustment of claims, emanating from the people themselves that calls for good government and the enforcement of laws. By contrast it also follows that Marie's original understanding of the Birri as peaceful and unambitious people is naive and unrealistic. According to Cary's reasoning then, Government and the enforcement of law and order was not altogether an imposition of restraints from an exterior authority. It was requested by those below.

We notice then that one way of effecting culture change is to replace African institutions with European and this is evident in political institutions. There is something in Joyce Cary's revolutionary tendencies that is very un-Marxist. There is something, somewhere in the background, operating in the mind of the Marxist revolutionary, that assumes that the oppressed are totally innocent. Larsen rightly observes that in Cary "the native is corruptible and manifestations of moral perversion are most clearly seen at the level of native officialdom."[1] Cary has no axes to grind in this aspect. He gives both the oppressed and their oppressor their due. In Cary's world, neither the peasant nor the aristocrat is free from

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, p. 54.

contradictions. The peasant, in particular, is noted for his conservatism and superstition. This is how democracy operates: governments make adjustments in order to accommodate new demands from the people. It was from this knowledge that Cary stated that

> . . . just as no state can exist without police, if only to regulate conflicting purposes, so the world needed some power, imperial or international only to enforce law.[1]

In all these arguments it would seem that Cary's main concern is to reiterate the point which he dramatizes in this novel, that peace cannot come by a "natural development without enforcement of law."[2]

For instance, the first step which Bewsher takes in harnessing the expanding energies of the Birri is to organize a hunt. In order to quell the anger of the Birri, Bewsher, borne high in a hammock like the Yoruba god of thunder, Ogun, shouts "Meat! Meat." The whole of the rioting and violently aggressive mob, now under Obai, follow after their god-like Bewsher. Shortly after that Bewsher shoots a hippo and the Birri, elated, decide to revive the spring dance. The symbolic introduction of the steamer and the spring dance contribute significantly to

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[1] Ibid., p. 10. [2] Ibid.

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understanding the idea of change. Both are symbolic of transitional moments in the lives of the Birri and those of their society. In the narrative commentaries that follow, Cary is playing not only the role of the cultural anthropologist, but also that of the historian.

> The drummers were foreigners, Goshi men. But in Birri, as in old Europe of the dynasties, artists were privileged. They moved freely from village to village even in war time, sure everywhere of a welcome and the best entertainment. Goshi and Nok were at war at that moment about fishing rights on the upper fork of their common river, but the Goshi drummers were completely at their ease, fully of tenderest meat and the best beer, under the Chief's tree.[1]

A mark of Cary's success in depicting these scenes is that he not only recaptures the anthropological reality, but also rhythms, music and the mystery of the language of drums.

> The drums were now speaking, they said, 'Don't be in a hurry - don't be so impatient.' . . . Already girls and men were forming lines for the first figure of the spring dance and now a hundred voices called together, 'The Dance - the Dance.' . . . the big drummer, without even looking round, raised his big stick and sent out a thunder louder than the shouts of the whole village.
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> 'Bam - bam - bebom bam - dance - now shall you dance. Now you must dance (the must was sharp and clear) you can't help it, you shan't

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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> stop it. Without thinking, without ceasing.' The little drum was saying, 'This foot - that foot - bend the knee - this way - that way - shake behind.'[1]

There exists a language of the drums in African music. Both the drummer and dancer interpret an unrecorded, yet socially predetermined language of the drum.

Bewsher's shooting of the hippo creates the occasion for the revival of the spring dance. The dance itself had a remarkable ritualistic effect on the Birri. Cary attempts to recapture and dramatize just the moment when the life of the dancer is closer to attaining completion. The dancer immerses himself totally in the music of the drum. In the following scene, both the drummers and the dancers are meant to be re-creating a life that had become dull and inert. Here, the narrator assumes the function of a commentator, creating not only the sensations and feelings of energy but also painting a scene, a visual image. The symbolic drum beat that strikes the "bam - bam - bebom bam," seems to awaken everybody to life.

> Uli was second in the row of the young warriors' line, behind Obai, the leader. The drums had commanded him and he had risen from the ground. Their music had compelled him with a voice that

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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> was part of his own brain as Nok was part of his body. And their rhythm darting into every part of his mind like an electric charge had already made patterns in that chaos patterns of movement, of action. Now he knew what to do, how to act, and what he was doing was easy and right. His toes were curled, his ankles flexed, his back hallowed, his chin raised, his buttocks protruded, his stomach drawn in, his elbows held stiff, his palms turned up in a style that none could better.[1]

Cary picks out Uli from the line of dancers and shows how change takes place in his personality. The scene also delineates one of the climactic moments of a ritual dance, when the dancers, losing sight of all contradictions, immolate the self in order to attain wholeness. Uli's bodily movements carry out in action what is deeply felt.

At this point it is necessary to differentiate between the form of the changes that took place among the Birri. The response and reaction to change was divided between the younger and older generations on the one hand and between the conservative and liberal elements on the other. The account that follows shows exactly the attitude of the sectors immediately after the dance.

> On the third day of the feast the beer and the meat were finished. On the fourth two small children ventured out of the compounds and

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

> paddled gravely in the ford. Fish was smoking his pipe on the bank, a string tied tightly round his forehead showed that he suffered from a headache. . . . An old man was trying to lift himself out of a thorn bush at the foot of the bank; groans burst from his lips as he tried to bend his stiff, bruised limbs.
>
> But the expression was resigned and patient. All these people had the same look of calm resolution. They had exhausted all their desires for that time, they had spent every possibility of enjoyment and they felt the spiritual repose of paupers. There was no more escape from daily responsibilities . . . The women were relighting their fires, refilling their water-pots, grinding their meal. There was little talk, and that was business-like.[1]

To the conventional Birri the dance was just one of the annual spring dances that were being re-enacted annually. There was therefore no significant change in the lives of the older, more socially responsible but unimaginative adults. The young men reacted differently.

> Meanwhile it was known to everybody that the sixth, eighth and ninth classes and half the seventh were plotting an attack on Goshi mission under the Fish. The young men went into training and separated themselves from their wives. They ate no food prepared by women which might convey to them some women's weakness. They had even sent for a juju[2] man to take an

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[2] Better known as medicine-man; or possibly shaman. The word ju-ju stands for the French 'DOLL' and does not convey the rightful meaning of medicine-man as messenger of the oracle.

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oracle and choose the best day for the battle.[1]

The youth, acting here as devotees and neophytes to a god, isolate themselves as if for an initiation process. Cary was following the tradition very closely. In most West African communities adolescents are required to undergo a process of initiation at the end of which they become adults. If they are novices for the worship of a god, they are usually trained in isolation. Geoffrey Parrinder shows us that the "aim of training novices [was] to create new personalities [and] various methods are used to bring this about."[2] Apart from the fact that such neophytes could be made to learn new languages, one way of training was to go into seclusion. Among the Ibo of Nigeria there was (and possibly still continues) the practice that those young men and women who were to build the Mbari House, the house of the god of thunder, may never go home again until the work is completed.[3] The idea of seclusion (which Cary seemed to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[2] Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion (London: Epworth Press, 1969), p. 88.

[3] P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 18.

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have been aware of) was meant to support the fact that one "had gone away" (symbolic of death) and,

> . . . on returning to their families they say that they have come back from a far country from across the sea. This is a further version of the ressurrection idea. . . . Thus, not only during training but every year in spring time, the devotees retire from the world, . . . and return again to the world as from the dead. The emphasis on renewal of personality is recurrent and constant.[1]

Joyce Cary brilliantly recaptures this tradition especially in the portrait of Uli. Whereas the spring dance meant resolution to the adults, to the youth it meant engagement in war. The closest European parallel of this division between adult resignation and youth's reckless involvement (symbolic of modernism) is the Nietzschian Apollonian - Dionysian dichotomy.[2] In Apollonian terms, man moves towards redemption and resolution and calm repose. In the Dionysiac realm, one makes order of chaos. Order is not a given state, it is only willed. Thus one attains wholeness by willing, not by resignation.

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[1]Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion, p. 94.

[2]Monroe K. Spears, Dionysus and the City (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 38.

To the Yoruba of Nigeria, the equivalent of the Apollonian norm is Obatala, whose world represents the aesthetics of the saint. The modernist view of the world represented by Dionysus has its Yoruba counterpart in Ogun. Ogun is the darer and tragic actor.[1] It is with this knowledge that Cary selects Ogun to be the sacred saint of electricity to Mr. Bewsher and the Birri. An explanation of the role of Ogun among the Yorubas might clarify some of the ambiguities that cloud Bewsher's work among the Birri, and possibly explain the meaning of his death. Bewsher's main idea in Birri was to reinstate Ogun as the saint of electricity.

> His real idea was that since the typical pagan worship was in itself a cult of life, and especially of this life, so that to pagans the life and passions of men extend through all being, animals, trees, even the sun and moon, the thunder god would be an excellent representative or saint of material energy, of all-pervading electrical force. As he said, Thunder is literally the sound or voice of that energy. . . .[2]

Bewsher was working through the youth to establish the rich kind of culture of which Ogun will become the

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[1]Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," The Morality of Art, ed., D. W. Jefferson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 126.

[2]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 132.

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saint.

> . . . at the best, he never intended to make Ogun into a god, but rather a saint. It was always his belief that religion for the pagans should be rich with ceremony and many saints, simply on the grounds that religion entered already into every aspect and moment of their lives, and that each aspect required a reminder or representative.[1]

As god of thunder Ogun harnesses the electricity of Sango. He not only represents the cult of life but creative energy itself.

Another point about Ogun which concerns us is the tragic aspect of his life. Yoruba tragedy is based on the theme of the original severance. Ogun, as the original sufferer was the first god to have felt the sense of this breach. In his attempt to recapture wholeness, he plunged into the "seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche" and then emerged through the agency of his actions. Each time his devotees in ritual dance celebrate this process and their ritual re-enactment of the struggle to attain completion is evidence that they too are conscious of the existence of the ontological gap between

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 133.

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essence and being.[1] But the rites of Ogun are not aimed at redemption or solution. They are only a "celebration of the cosmic conflict."[2] The "significant fact of Ogun's creative nature is the affirmation of the re-creative will, irreconcilable with naive intuition."[3] Ogun's symbol of energy is metal ore which he extracted from the womb of the earth and with it he harnessed Sango's electricity. Ogun, is therefore, in one sense the archetypal artisan and artist. It was through his own redemptive action that Ogun himself became the first symbol of the union of contradictions.[4] It can therefore be argued that it was with this knowledge that Cary had his hero select Ogun as the cult of the saint of life. A few examples from the novel will show how the youth are emancipated and how they gain new personalities. Uli had been captured and detained at the Christian mission station. Drum beats coming from the

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[1]Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," The Morality of Art, p. 67.

[2]The closeness of vision between Joyce Cary and the Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka, is remarkable. Both possess a tragic imagination. Both envision an ontological gap between the self and the universal real. Joyce Cary in Art and Reality, pp. 41-44; Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," pp. 121-127.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 123.

bush re-awaken him.

> Suddenly Uli, who was seated just within the guardroom door . . . heard in the middle of the Alo drum tunes a broken rhythm saying something in Birri. These notes, though not loud, were clearly perceptible to his ear as words spoken in one's own tongue in the middle of some foreign babel, and they had the same effect. They filled Uli with curiosity and excitement.[1]

The mixing of the drum sounds is an indication that the warring Birri are no longer fighting between themselves. They have become one force, fighting from one front. The interchange of sounds and messages is accurately portrayed.

> 'Pare comes, Pare is on the road.' And at the same moment Nok answered by declaring its name, and Goshi from behind Pare in a faint sharp sound like the taps of a woodpecker repeated 'Goshi, Goshi, where are you, Nok'?[2]

The effect of the music and language of the drum on Uli is dramatic. He slips out of his functional mission clothes and joins the groups in the mysterious darkness of the forest, where he realizes to his amazement that the warriors are made up of the fighters from the All-Birri federation. The drum in African society is sometimes used

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[1] Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 198.

to relay messages and in this sense it can become a symbol of group consciousness. As Uli creeps through the dark forest each movement of his muscle displays the operations of the mystery of life itself.

> Uli's motion became circular. He passed behind a tree into deep shadow. Shading then his forehead so that the moonlight might not be reflected in his eyes he slowly raised his head to see the man's face. It was that of a Pare man with five cuts on the cheek and three on the forehead. The man was awake; his eyes were open and gazed passed Uli with the stare of an idol, . . . He was also confused at finding Pare men where he had heard the Nok drum. Could he have made a mistake in the direction? That had never happened to him before. For the moment he was confused . . . For another hour Uli sat side by side with the Pare men . . . He moved like one joint in a centipede; but to himself he seemed released, free; released from futility, free from boredom, once more Uli of Nok, a somebody in the world, his own world.[1]

It is to be noticed that Cary used the forest in this novel as he did in _The African Witch_ as a grove where personality undergoes change. This use of the forest appears in Shakespeare's _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ and in Milton's _Comus_. It is a common feature in contemporary African Drama and Ritual.

Bewsher himself feels this sense of achievement when talking to the Chiefs earlier in the novel.

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[1] _Ibid_., pp. 197-205.

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> 'I have wished for this day, and sometimes I feared that I would never see it. It is indeed a very happy day for me. . . . It is the very happiest day I have known to be here with all the Chiefs in Birri and know that they are friends together and will never fight each other. . . . The people are now brothers in peace and the All-Birri nation stands among the other nations . . .[1]

At the end of the novel, we are no longer puzzled by what it meant to Bewsher to return to Birri and to be killed by his own pupil, Obai, after accomplishing so much. An American Visitor ends with an optimistic note. It has been shown that before Bewsher's death he had established the idea of Birri federation. Bewsher himself reinstates Ogun, as the cult of energy. Marie Hasluck had been educated to re-evaluate her conception of European civilization. As the follower of the religion of life of Ogun, Mr. Bewsher embraces the tragic vision of life based on struggle and conflict. Since Ogun is the "primordial voice of creative man" Mr. Bewsher therefore instals Ogun as the cult of the artist, the symbol of modernism. "Ogun is the embodiment of will and the will is the parodoxical truth of destructiveness and creation in acting man."[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 166-167.

[2] Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," The Morality of Art, p. 126.

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Bewsher's sacrificial death is a blessing not only to Marie, but to the native people; it is also a blessing that frees the native, from a stagnant and sterile past. "It becomes" in Larsen's words,

> . . . the necessary act by which the flow of life and faith is released. Its counterpart in The Horse's mouth is the artist's production, the symbolic art of affirmation and release.[1]

From this conclusion we can take the narrator's commentary on Bewsher's program in Birri as the final statement of the Birri project:

> It is brought up here only to show that this Ogun project was not a wild fancy, but a suggestion, thrown out by a man who may have developed, like many Nigerian pioneers, some odd notions, but who had nevertheless a consistent idea of what he was driving at, to preserve and develop the rich kind of local life which is the essence and only justification for nationalism.[2]

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, p. 33.

[2]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 133.

CHAPTER III

THE AFRICAN WITCH

The African Witch (1936) is Cary's third novel on Africa. It is one of the early novels in which Cary has handled in a masterly way the theme of cultural break down and change. Unlike Aissa Saved, Cary's first published novel, it is less populated with characters and the issues are more clearly shown and easily perceived.

In addition to his careful handling of human motivation, he is able to handle effectively the conventional colonial African world of,

> . . . ju-ju, the relationship between colonial and native governments, the roles of the missionaries and local preachers, the necessity of education in Africa, love between men and women, Nigerian politics, and the communication gap between both individuals and cultures, as well as the basic Cary themes of preservation versus change and the necessity of finding or creating a system of belief for oneself in order to give life meaning.[1]

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[1]Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography, p. 322.

Although Cary did not introduce the symbol of bridge-building in this novel, he did introduce other aspects of the colonial scene such as the horse race and games like bagatelle and polo. Apart from his intention in presenting the basic reality of Africa, Cary argues in the Preface to the Carfax Edition of The African Witch that he had written the novel as an experiment in the drama of character, to find out what men live by, and the working of the religious imagination.

> What can be more fascinating than the work of the religious imagination, for good and for evil, on men's minds and so upon history. James's Varieties of Religious Experience is one of the most absorbing books in the world.[1]

William James saw religion as an individual experience devoid of the "theology of eccelesiasticism." Religion, to James, was the,

> . . . feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine. Since the relation may be either moral, physical or ritual, it is evident that out of religion philosophies and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow [and this] immediate personal experience [shall]

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 10.

> hardly be considered theology of ecclesiasticism at all.[1]

By turning religion into a semi-mystical-ultra subjective impulse, James made of religion the basis of all human motivation. "Man's religion," James had argued, "might thus be identified with his attitude, whatever it might be toward what he felt to be the primal truth."[2] James, while thus allowing for the separateness of individuals in so far as their relation to the "primal truth" is concerned, doubted and possibly subverted the traditional moral norms of society that had hitherto guaranteed truth and moral certainty to the individual.

What must have attracted Cary to James is the personal sense of isolation which James's understanding of religion entailed. The fact that the individual possessed the ability to intuit objective truth is at the root of James's conception of religious experience. Both Cary and James agree on the primacy of perception and experience as means of knowing. In Art and Reality, Cary has this to say about intuition as discovery. It is,

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[1]William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (London: MacMillan Ltd., 1967), p. 42.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

> . . . essentially the reaction of a person to the outside world. . . . a discovery of something real. . . . Something independent of [the person]. . . . Something new in or about the world. . . . it is direct knowledge of the world . . . direct acquaintance with things, with characters, with appearance, and this is the primary knowledge of the artist and writer. This joy of discovery is his starting point.[1]

According to Cary such an explanation guarantees the freedom of the individual to choose and to act on the facts of the immediate present in order to create. It also shows how Cary learns from James's understanding of religion to affirm the revolutionary impulse in his characters - the latter are portrayed as men and women who always look upon anything dogmatic and normative, as oppressive, inelastic and therefore stultifying. Lastly, Cary discovers in James's repudiation of the conventional theological and ecclesiastical aspects of religion, a recognition of religion as a mystery, as a 'man's total reaction upon life.' It was this knowledge that enabled Cary to say that "truth (is) an experience . . . highly subjective and irrational . . . at the same time personal to each reader."[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 16.

[2]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 11.

Cary presents this understanding of the religious impulse in human action as the cause of his return to the African scene to write a second novel.

> The attraction of Africa is that it shows these wars of belief, and the powerful often sub-conscious motives which underlie them, in the greatest variety and also in very simple forms. Basic obsessions which in Europe hide themselves under all sorts of decorous scientific or theological or political uniforms, are seen as naked in bold and dramatic action.[1]

The emphasis, as is the case with his portrayal of character in The African Witch, is put on the demands which emotions make on reason. We notice then that apart from the conflict between African and European traditions, there is also the parallel theme of conflict between the "civilized man" and his primitive emotional nature. Cary's main concern in delineating these conflicts is to free man from moral strictures and to show him as essentially vital. The men and women in society are not parts of a large machinery, or to use Cary's own words, cogs in the evolutionary wheel but,

> . . . individual living souls who are ready often to ignore even the primary needs of their bodies for such

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[1] Ibid., p. 10.

> ideal satisfaction as glory, or learning, religion or beauty.[1]

This belief forms the basis of Cary's conviction that perpetual conflict exists between the conservative traditionalist and the creative individual, between intuition and reason. In her study of Cary, Salz has said accurately that Cary saw,

> . . . the creativity of the Evangelical Church as the basis and background of the liberal political party in England, . . . this preoccupation with creativity in politics, and with the conflict between the man forever creating new ways to deal with situations, depending on inspiration, and the conservative man who depends on rule, tradition, and precedent. This constant conflict reflects Cary's belief that one of the fundamental tragedies of the world is the conflict between the new creation demanding recognition and the established form which will be changed and destroyed by the new - between the creative man and the conservative man.[2]

The passage is indicative of the fact that when Cary turned to Africa, it was from the point of view of his understanding of the existence of the conflict which

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[1]Quoted by Andrew Wright in <u>Joyce Cary, A Preface to his novels</u>, p. 40.

[2]Pauline June Salz, <u>The Novels of Joyce Cary in Relation to his Critical Writings</u> (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1961), p. 5.

he dramatized in The African Witch. Of the nature of the conflict in his novel, he has this to say.

> My book was meant to show certain men and their problems in the tragic background of a continent still little advanced from the stone age, and therefore exposed, like no other, to the impact of modern turmoil. An over crowded raft manned by children who had never seen the sea would have a better chance in a typhoon.[1]

It is evident from this passage that Cary recognized the complete and total impotence of the traditional African institutions to face those ushered in by men such as Aladai, the hero of his novel. It will be realized that Cary's interpretation of Africa in this way, was influenced by the belief currently maintained that 'Democracy,' for instance, was the given form of government. And also the idea, still dominant in Africa today, that certain aspects of European culture are superior to their African counterparts. It was therefore natural that Cary should introduce, in his third novel on Africa, a conflict between the African institutions of ju-ju and witchcraft hunting and European education. Thus, we realize that, like Democracy, European education asserts its superiority over tribal witchcraft, and finally

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[1]In the Preface to The African Witch, p. 12.

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supersedes it.

Cary saw two extremes diverging from the main stream of British Democracy: the communist or utopian which derived its creed of automatic evolutionary process, from Spencer; and the traditional primitivistic and dogmatic one of the tribe, this latter had its origin from the "resuscitated" ideas of Rousseau. Change, as a process, I have shown (p. 80) resides, not in an automatic natural process, but in the external adjustments made by individuals who are faced with an immediate chaotic situation. In this way Cary ignores any approach at his African problem that opts for a return to the past.

Unlike his contemporaries,

> Cary saw a tide moving slowly toward stability and a better life, started by the industrialization of the modern world - the same industrialization blamed by many for the oppression in modern life.[1]

Thus, judging from the preceding discussion it will be noticed that Cary could allow for a definition of freedom as absence of restraint if it meant that the individual was escaping from the tribal society into the industrial state. Despite Cary's rejection of the

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[1]Pauline June Salz, The Novels of Joyce Cary in Relation to his Critical Writings (1961), p. 6.

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Spencerian concept of evolution, he recognized a process in history which started during the industrial age.

> Every Government subsidizes research, research means new inventions, new shifts of power, new instability, change and confusion. The speed of discovery and therefore of obsolescence increases all the time.[1]

Cary's issue with Africa is that it does not allow for these "shifts of power," and too often for the new creations. Unlike British Democracy, traditional African society thwarts progress instead of letting human nature work and create change. As a closed system, traditional society does not allow room for man's real nature to operate.[2]

Cary's interest in Africa is derived from his knowledge and understanding of human history. In his African novels, African history is mostly interpreted in mythological terms. In African myths, Cary sees that the basic quest is that of man in search of richer meanings in life. Most Nigerian fertility gods, really have nothing to do with the government of the people. The main concern

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 7. Quoted from "The Idea of Progress" *CornHill* (Summer, 1954), p. 333.

[2] Andrew Wright, *Joyce Cary*, A Preface to His Novels, p. 39.

of the priests is to cause the great invisible powers to bring more food and strength and children. In this world of ritual, man hardly recognizes his own convictions or their source. Cary also presents us with another form of historical man - the European whose sense of history is 'scientific.' Cultural conflict results from the impingement of ideas from the 'scientific' mind on the 'mythic' mind. In the novels, Joyce Cary's interest is on the individual and his unique claim to individual consideration.

Cary's enthusiasm about the nature of British liberalism was bound to colour his understanding and interpretation of African reality. It is a flaw in Cary's thoughts in that he did not reckon with the frequent subversions and defiances of British Colonial Government in West Africa. Instead, he created characters and situations who tended to show that there were no governments in West Africa capable of challenging British authority. Government to Cary and his contemporaries meant British Democracy. The expression generally used to describe any activity that took place in West Africa before British rule was "Before Government came," suggesting that there was never a government before. For a fuller understanding of these contradictions of the British Liberal Democracy

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and its internecine operations in Nigeria and the Southern Cameroon, Talbot's book is an invaluable aid.[1]

A major conflict in the African novels is the struggle between the new creative and destructive forces and the traditional and conservative forces. This chapter examines those aspects of tradition in Africa which Cary used in his novels to see what use he made of them.

In the story of his third novel on Africa, The African Witch, Cary dramatizes the efforts of an Oxford-educated African to seize the Rimi throne. In the story, Cary shows the effects and power of a ponderous tradition, represented on one hand by Elizabeth Aladai's 'ju-ju' and on the other hand by the Rev. Coker's blood religion, on the minds of the Rimi people. The Oxford-educated Aladai, in order to bring civilization to Rimi, is compelled, ironically, to hate the culture of the Rimi, symbolized by ju-ju and the sacred crocodile of the swamp. Aladai promises to destroy his sister's ju-ju, shoot Coker's crocodile before introducing his new culture. The reforms which Aladai hopes to introduce to Rimi will take the form of, first, education, and then the rest of the other

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[1]P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), p. 2.

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institutions which form a permanent part of the cultural heritage of Europe.

The main story in The African Witch concerns the Rimi succession in which two rival contestants are involved - Louis Aladai, a Christian, and Sale, a Moslem. Louis Aladai rushes home from University, to register his claim with the local Colonial Resident, Mr. Burwash, for the throne of the Kingdom of Rimi. In doing this Aladai hopes to be able to rely on the support of his sister, Elizabeth, a dignified and powerful ju-ju priestess in Rimi. His uncle, Makurdi, a businessman, also pledges his support. But ironically, Aladai finds himself in the odd position in which neither his sister nor uncle Makurdi understand exactly what he is in search of. Elizabeth feels that the installation of Aladai as Emir of Rimi, will mean the reaffirmation of the dominant power of her ju-ju and her own personal power. Uncle Makurdi, who is a business-minded man, sees in the matter of the struggle for succession, only another chance to capture all the business in Rimi. Also, Aladai's friendship with the muddle-headed religious revivalist Rev. Saleh Coker makes matters complicated for Aladai. Coker's aim is to overthrow all forms of religion, including the Christianity of Dr. Schlemn and to establish the rule of the religion

of blood. It is important to note that none of the characters discussed so far are truly traditional. Coker's religion is different from the original Christianity. Aladai himself is something quite new to the scene, and belongs neither to the African tradition, nor to the European. Elizabeth, and Makurdi are also new and untraditional. We see then that the word traditional has to be used here with reservations, for the situation which Cary presents us is neither traditionally African nor genuinely British, it is something new (to use Cary's word). The necessity for change arises from the hero's attempt to solve the problem of the immediate present, without returning to a tradition that has in fact been invaded, that is to say, tainted.

Aladai himself starts by disagreeing with Elizabeth's ju-ju, Makurdi's merely commercial interest and Coker's blood religion. He thus finds himself in isolation and in order to succeed, he must repudiate the values of his own supporters, and alienate himself from the tradition of which he intends to be Emir.

Here, some definitions are necessary. The word "ju-ju" derives from the French, doll. Cary is using it here in a pejorative sense. The Africans do not regard their gods and medicine pots as ju-ju. In the context

with which Cary employs the word it is meant to suggest fear and terror. Elizabeth's function as the ju-ju priestess is even more ambiguous and therefore gives the reader the wrong picture. To begin with, the name 'Elizabeth' suggests that she is not really a 'traditional' African who has little or no contact with European ideas. In this novel, Cary does not distinguish between the medicine-man, that is the equivalent of the shaman, who is a doctor of medicinal herbs and the priest, who is a devotee and a medium to a god.

Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religions (1969), has shown very clearly the differences between priests, medicine-men and witches.[1] According to Parrinder, the function of the priest in West African religion is mainly to advise those who wish to worship on the necessary ingredients to bring for gifts and sacrifices to be made to the god. It means that his duties are really known at the time of worship, or during sacrifice, which may be daily, weekly or even annually, or when occasion allows. The form of the worship was usually a very simple form of

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[1]His study is centred on the beliefs and practices of "Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo and kindred peoples." The areas covered by Parrinder are the same from which Cary's anthropological knowledge is drawn.

ritual and it took the form of a salutation of the god in which he is called upon by his name and praise names and his blessings are requested.[1]

Attendance at such ceremonies was done with respect and reverence but not with terror and fear. The worshipper is often an individual with a complaint, although the whole village may be present. The temple of the god was often located in a very conspicuous spot, and such spots are not to be associated with "dark deeds."[2] The priest is a man, and occasionally a woman, who was attached to the temple and offered sacrifices. In most cases he was a devotee who acted like a medium to give messages from the gods to the people.[3] It is evident that Joyce Cary's Owule in Aissa Saved, belonged to this category of worshippers.

But the medicine men are those who are concerned with healing the sick and preparing magical medicines.[4] "The witch doctor is not a witch . . . but serves to hunt

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[1]Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion (London: Epworth Press, 1969), p. 68.

[2]Ibid., p. 61. [3]Ibid., p. 75.

[4]Ibid., p. 75.

out witches and cure witchcraft."[1] In The African Witch, Elizabeth Aladai is rightly a witchcraft hunter. She is not a priest for priests are never feared; they are respected as the "owners"[2] of the god.

The point which Cary wished to make is that the idea of witchcraft itself is false. Anthropological studies had proven that,

> . . . witchcraft is an imaginary offence because it is impossible. A witch cannot do what he is supposed to do and has in fact no real existence.[3]

What usually happens at a witchcraft trial, which Cary also reports very accurately, is that any wasting disease, mysterious complaint or unexplained malady such as polio was often put down to witchcraft. In societies where infant mortality was high the mothers attributed it to the work of witches. And who were these witches? The husband accuses his wife when the child dies that she is a witch. In a polygamous household, the wife with no children, accused the others of being witches.[4]

Joyce Cary's account of the witchcraft trial in The African Witch is accurately reported and he also

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[1] Ibid., p. 76. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 166. [4] Ibid., p. 169.

emphasises the point that it is the disease, not the witch, which destroys the babies. Aladai's solution to the problem of witchcraft trial is not very different from that suggested by standard works on the anthropological studies of Nigeria. This is how Parrinder sees it:

> Education will slowly dispel some superstitions. Medical child care will remove many unexplained diseases.[1]

From the beginning to the end then, Aladai is speaking for Joyce Cary on the evils of superstition and the necessity to introduce education. But the prince is faced with a more formidable threat to his scheme, the Colonial administration represented by a handful of Britishers who spend most of their time at games such as bagatelle and polo. All that Aladai humbly required of the resident, Mr. Burwash, was the support for his claim on the Rimi throne. In the first place then, Aladai is not a nationalist idealist, fighting to take over the Emirate of Rimi from the Colonial authorities. Instead he is fighting to take over a nominal throne from the senile Emir who has lost all authority over Rimi. In this struggle, neither the British colonials, nor the old Emir

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

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recognize Aladai. In the eyes of the other Britishers Aladai is nothing but "the cannibal Chief in a Balliol Blazer."

The estrangement of Aladai develops until the final failure of Burwash to establish a proper means of communication between them leads Aladai into the Rev. Coker's camp of blood religion. Here the estrangement is complete. Both Aladai and Coker, with a band of religious supporters, face British military might with spears and knives. The result of the military campaign led by Colonial Government troops to put down the rebellion in which Aladai and Coker are involved, is that the prince is killed. Thus the circle is complete, and order is restored with "Government" maintaining its unshaken calm. This novel, like most of Cary's novels, is sustained by the sheer force of Aladai in persisting and forcing his way through conventional strictures such as Coker's blood religion, Elizabeth's ju-ju and the "slow and sure" policy of Mr. Burwash. The name Burwash suggests emptiness, confirmed by his inability to act when required. Burwash has the British instinct of conservatism. He would undoubtedly sympathise with the old Emir, the symbol of traditional African monarchs.

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Aladai's desire to become Emir of Rimi was "to keep [my] people from getting into trouble."[1] This did not mean the end of Colonial rule, it meant the destruction and replacement of all those values that hindered the Rimi from getting an education with a European base like himself. Aladai, has learned from England that his Rimi (which he later identifies with his own personal fate) requires education and some degree of economic independence. This is the point which Cary intends to make, that the personality of the European educated African such as Aladai represents a mature stage of cultural contact and change. Aladai, unlike any of Cary's African heroes, is a very highly educated and cultured youth. His belief is that the fact of his European education alone ought to have given him the advantage over Sale, the other contestant to the Rimi throne. His having been to England gives him the added advantage over Sale, of enjoying the company of Judy Coote, a former Don of Oxford. Judy Coote asks:

> 'But, Louis, I'd no idea you really were a prince. How exciting it must be! . . . You should have told me.'
>
> 'I did not quite realize it myself,' said

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[1]Ibid., p. 52.

the boy, in uncertain voice.
'You seem to be a popular prince.' . . .
'There are many princes in Rimi,' he said.

It is ironic that it is Judy Coote who has to force Aladai to redefine his relation to his own Rimi. With Judy Coote, Aladai, is the thinking, reasonable, Oxford educated man, and without her, he falls back into tribal emotions. When Aladai is with Miss Judy Coote he talks a great deal of sense about civilization and the meaningless boredom of Rimi life. It must be confessed that Aladai's conception of civilization as the introduction of European education and the arts and culture of Europe to Rimi seems to represent a more comprehensive understanding of cultural change and civilization than the somewhat superficial utterances of Mister Johnson who identified a "lady-latrine" with civilization. Unlike Johnson, Aladai is convinced that in order to introduce "something worth calling civilization" to Rimi, something richer in values and better endowed than Elizabeth's ju-ju and Coker's blood religion, he had to destroy these values of ju-ju and kill the sacred crocodile. Here, Aladai represents Joyce Cary's views on the problem of superstition. The solutions which he suggests are the same solutions which Cary introduces in his political writings on West Africa, _The Case for African Freedom_. This is

what Aladai thinks of ju-ju civilization:

> 'Rimi civilization! You know that it is a joke. Can you compare it with yours? - and that means all Europe. Think of the richness of European peoples - the poetry, the music, . . . 'the greatness of every kind? . . . 'Rimi civilization! Do you know what it is? - ju-ju.'
>
> 'Not at all, Louis.'
>
> . . . 'It is soaked with ju-ju. You may say a body is not blood - but if you took the blood out, what would be left? The blood of what you call Rimi civilization is ju-ju - so crude and stupid - you do not know what they can do. My own sister - but I mustn't tell you. It was three years ago, and she won't do it again' -
>
> . . . 'No, no, Louis. What did your sister do'? . . .
>
> 'Do you know what a witchcraft trial is? - But I won't tell you now. It's too horrible a thing. And I stopped it. I told her I would go to the judge, and she was frightened.'
>
> 'What happens to witches here'?
>
> 'Just what happens to yours in Europe - they kill them.'
>
> 'Yes, we can't boast.'
>
> 'Yes you can boast' . . . 'You have stopped it - you have escaped from it - by your English civilization. And then you refuse it to us in Rimi'?
>
> 'Your friend Mr. Coker went to school out here, I suppose'?
>
> 'Of course, Coker is ju-ju too - it is what you call primitive religions. But you can't say that it is so bad as Rimi ju-ju. And, besides, I shall not let Coker do any nonsense in Rimi.'[1]

Louis Aladai's detestation of ju-ju and Rimi civilization represents Cary's attitude and the attitude of Colonial Government towards African institutions.

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, pp. 24-25.

P. Amaury Talbot, a contemporary of Joyce Cary in the Nigerian Colonial Service gives a true account of the work of the ju-ju in his own district - Degama, in Eastern Nigeria.

> The outbreak of war seemed a favourable opportunity for discontented natives to throw off the restraints imposed by (Colonial) Government and return to old customs, and disturbances occurred in various parts of Nigeria /‾and_7 in Aba District to the North-East of Degama . . . two messengers employed by the Native Courts were seized and dragged before the great drum . . . which stood in one of the ju-ju houses. . . . the unfortunate victims were forced to kneel at the end of the long, trough-like base, . . . and their heads struck off so that they fell forward into the cavity. The drum was then splashed with blood and the heads, still bearing the uniform caps, were placed thereon amid the skulls of former victims as defiance to British rule, which the insurgents hoped, was no longer powerful enough to protect its servants. . . . a policeman passing through the region with a prisoner, whom he was bringing down to Degama, was seized and done to death.[1]

In such instances Talbot tells us "vengeance, swift and sure followed these crimes."[2] The form of the vengeance was usually the destruction of the fetish and these acts of destruction were often considered by the Colonial authorities to be of necessity. In fact, in this particular case,

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[1]P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults, pp. 1-2.

[2]Ibid.

Talbot states that these steps were often taken with "great regret, for the drum was one of an interesting type and most elaborately carved."[1] It is evident from the preceding argument that Cary was merely using Aladai, the prince, as his mouthpiece to argue out a case for the Colonial policy of the destruction of African fetishes. When Aladai begins to define the differences between European and African witchcraft he loses his character.

Joyce Cary's intention in drawing the character of Aladai was to make him a convincing agent of "civilization." By civilization is meant the modification of Rimi culture and through the introduction of universal education to free the millions of Rimi from the bonds of Rimi ju-ju. Despite the fact that Aladai succeeds in exposing the ineffectual character of the Rimi political tradition and the "brutal" effects of moral values and superstitions of that tradition on the minds of its young ones such as Ibu and Osi, there is a flaw in his character because he has no foundation from which to fight. Aladai originally assumed that support would come from Mr. Burwash, the latter finally failed him.

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[1] *Ibid.*

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It is to be noted that Cary portrays the reality of Rimi, which Aladai is combating as one of terror and fear made concrete and personified in the person of Elizabeth Aladai at the witch hunt. A young woman of eighteen has been accused of being a witch and responsible for the deaths of several babies. Elizabeth the ju-ju priestess thinks that she can solve this problem of infant mortality through witchcraft trials. This is how Cary creates the scene of the trial. The reader's attention is drawn to the sick child who dominates the scene:

> A woman, following closely behind, carried a sick baby in her hands. The baby was visibly dying. It was no bigger than a skinned rabbit - a skeleton in a dry, stretched membrane. It was too feeble to move its arms and legs, but it cried ceaselessly, uttering a wail like a mouse's squeal, prolonged.[1]

Elizabeth, I have pointed out (p. 128) is really a medicine-woman, not a priest. Her hunt is meant to cleanse society of all evil influences. I am using ju-ju here to stand for a god. The ju-ju was traditionally meant to be an instrument of purification. It was the functions of its priests and priestesses to maintain through sacrifices the well-being of society, including such things as the

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 32.

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fertility of earth and that of the female population, so that they could bring forth plenty of children to maintain the prosperity of the society. For Elizabeth Aladai, the priestess in The African Witch, the ju-ju has become an instrument of terror perpetuating ignorance, suppressing the people and destroying any intelligent child that happens to be born free of disease. The problem with ju-ju worship is that it is an ancient institution that has lost its meaning in the face of scientific improvements and scientific minds. In the past the practice of ju-ju was a metaphor for fertility, and moral stability, but it has lost its dynamic function. The fecundative function is lost, only the death part of it survives. In this novel, Cary's criticism of the institution of ju-ju is also based on the fact that it represents a distortion of the original myths. That mysterious auro of potency, that sacred communion between the dead and the living that often belongs to a ritual scene is here in Elizabeth's practice of ju-ju substituted by an aura of terror. The witchcraft hunt, as an act of purification has lost its traditional significance.

It is evident that Aladai's disgust with the whole question of Rimi civilization is justified on the grounds that what is left of Rimi culture has lost its potent

powers. Aladai's answer to the question of sterility and death represented by his sister's ju-ju is to be found in his programmes for introduction of European education, economic and social expansion. In this way he hopes to substitute the traditional institutions with the new ones; thereby effecting complete change and destruction of the past.

To a Nigerian reader, the function of Aladai is imperialistic because while he is earnest to see the plight of the Africans in the face of the brutal forces of nature and the tyranny of Elizabeth, he fails to show the feeling for the past. In fact, it can be argued that Elizabeth represents a special form of tyranny which is not very different from that which Aladai was about to force the Rimi to believe in. The destruction of the Rimi past and the subsequent introduction of European institutions sounds a very good and easy solution to cultural change but it fails, despite its futurists intentions to show how the future security and peace of the Rimi can be assured.

As a bush officer, in the Nigerian Colonial Service for seven years, Joyce Cary had direct contact with peasants, blackguards and misfits of all kinds; persons who knew nothing or little of the events that were taking place in the larger centres such as Lagos, Kaduna, Ibadan, Enugu

and Kano. Cary's picture of the European educated African is somehow inconsistent with nationalist feeling at the time the novels were being written. It is in this sense that the author's work on Africa can be seen as imperialistic and oriented towards colonialist ideas.

The argument concerning diseases, poverty, lack of opportunity, which Cary has given is that he did not see Africa in terms of ideas independent of the living souls of individual persons; that instead he represented Africa as character, and by that he meant the individual struggling soul in its attempts to come to grips with the facts of existence whether, those facts represented themselves in the form of primitive Christianity, or in the form of a drought. The problem with such an understanding of Africa is that, while it succeeds in portraying a true picture of the deaths, disease, and poverty of the individuals who suffer, it ignores those larger political, racial and continental "consciousnesses" that disregard the matter of the bleak physical reality. It is therefore inaccurate for Cary to contend that political questions for Africans were insignificant when compared to matters of their subsistence. It is necessary to understand that Cary did not ignore the possibility of a strong government. Such a government was to come from abroad not from Africa. The argument is this,

the Government that is capable of organising and feeding the people must govern them.

It is ironic that whereas Cary saw in the Reform Bill of 1832, liberal political action that initiated the process of British Democracy, he could not believe that political freedom in Africa should precede economic freedom. Cary agrees that the devolution of political power gives freedom to the oppressed. But he contradicts this thought by showing that Britain cannot just withdraw from Africa because Africa has disintegrated. "An over crowded raft manned by children who had never seen the sea would have a better chance in a typhoon."[1]

We have noted that Cary's primary concern with Africa was social and economic. He argued that Africans could be better off economically by joining the European world market rather than living in isolated communities. From this understanding, he condemned all the persons who supported the idea of reconstructing African tradition and those who capitalized on the idea of African tradition, while they themselves lived and grew powerful on it. Cary is criticising the perfidy of the priests, such as

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 12.

Elizabeth, who turn the traditional functions of ju-ju, to meet the demands of selfish ends.

This is how Cary shows Elizabeth and her myth-making personality:

> Perhaps some ju-ju priests act solely on deduction, but it is not the usual thing, for it will mean that the priest did not believe in his own magical powers; and not only priests, but almost every human being, black and white believes that they have such powers. In Europe, a woman talks of her intuitions, a man of his luck, gardeners have a growing hand, and salesmen personality. A ju-ju priest is a medium and has the same temperament. He may commit frauds, but that does not prevent his believing in himself.[1]

Although the myth-making impulse is universal, the African ju-ju has an additional quality which the European lacks:

> In Africa, a ju-ju priest has a power of life, and death which resides in him, personally. He has knowledge and training; he has to be initiated, like priests everywhere but he must have a quality which marks him off from others - the quality of power. A woman may have the quality as well as a man, and then she may become a priestess. The power is real, and so no one would dream of setting it aside by artificial rules limiting priestcraft to one sex or caste.[2]

In the sense in which it is presented in this novel, Elizabeth's ju-ju is an ideal, personally defined

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 33.

[2]Ibid.

and maintained by her power. Her ju-ju cannot constitute a government in the true sense of the word, except the worst form of power seeking and most oppressive dictatorship to be run by Elizabeth's powerful personality. The most damaging aspect of Elizabeth's ju-ju tradition which Cary shows is that it does not allow for adjustment, growth and change. It becomes a form of contradiction of the traditional meaning of primitive myths, in which nature was never dead, but always kept alive.

At the time Cary was District Officer in Nigeria, a majority of diseases in Africa were still being diagnosed through the power of witchcraft, a situation that could no longer be left in the hands of the ju-ju priest. There are millions (in Aladai's words) requiring education, thousands suffering from diseases and all sorts of injustices. It follows that Africa, bound neck and foot by tradition and superstition, is destroying the seeds of its future. The grotesque and most pathetic figure of Osi that pursues Aladai throughout his career in Rimi, is a constant reminder that Aladai's case is valid. Cary argues through Aladai that although the impulse to preserve cultural values is universal, the Rimi are reactionary. Intelligent children such as Ibu are caught, tried as witches and put in stocks to die. Whereas Osi is already caught up deeply as the

sacrificial virgin to the crocodile god, there are still hopes that the Ibus might still be saved. It is evident from the preceding discussion that Cary is essentially a meliorist, in so far as he saw the tragic situation and provided solutions in the form of education and further expansion of social services.

Northrop Frye explains the nature of myths and why they form the basis of social life in primitive societies thus:

> Myths are expressions of concern, of man's care for his own destiny and heritage, his sense of all the supreme importance of preserving the community, and his constant interest in questions about his ultimate coming and going.[1]

From the way Cary has shown Elizabeth and her ju-ju, it is evident that in her myth-making designs she cannot provide a solution to the plight of the Rimi, socially, economically, politically or even in the matters of their existence and their end as human beings. She is shown, using the ju-ju as a temporary device with which she can terrorize the Rimi. This attitude by Cary towards Elizabeth's ju-ju can be understood more clearly in

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[1]Northrop Frye, "Silence of the Sea (1968)" in E. J. Pratt edited by David Pitt (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), pp. 135-136.

relation to what Northrop Frye rightly describes as the conservatism of primitive myths. They are "conservative because primitive societies are conservative (i.e. in relation to industrialized societies), and last a long time without change.[1]

One way of breaking this mythical understanding of existence is to reject it, and possibly substitute it with a better endowed system of institutions. In The African Witch, Aladai condemns it and physically tries to save some of the victims of the ju-ju trial.

At one point in the story Aladai is surprised by Dr. Schlemn, who informs him that the ju-ju priestess has been trying and detaining witches. Dr. Schlemn, a German-born missionary whose character is probably based on that of Dr. Schweitzer, is "devoted to the one cause - the alleviation of human misery."[2] He had been informed that a Christian girl, Osi, had been detained by the ju-ju priestess. Dr. Schlemn broke the news to Aladai, by soliciting Aladai's help.

> 'Do you mean at my sister's'? Aladai stared at him with wide open eyes.

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[1] Ibid., p. 136.

[2] Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 134.

'I hear of dis girl,' said Coker. 'She kill many people.' . . .
'Your sister is in charge of this ju-ju house - that is goot - because you can help,' (said Dr. Schlemn)
Aladai saw the extreme danger to himself of enraging the Emir, Elizabeth and the Resident at one stroke. He answered, hesitating between the phrases, 'But, doctor, I'm not allowed into town - and you see - it's rather critical with me.' He made a quick gesture with both hands, but he was frowning. 'I can't really believe that Elizabeth - she wouldn't dare -.'
'It is true. I do not say it is your sister. Where is this Cannon ju-ju? But I was sure that you would not agree that Rimi girls should be tortured, and perhaps murdered, for crimes that do not exist.'
'Excuse me,' said Coker, getting up, 'Dis woman is a witch.'
'She is accused of it.'
'She killed many people - she is a witch.'
'How can she be? There's no such thing.'[1]

We notice from the preceding passage that by joining Dr. Schlemn, who "knew the need of organization to drive the enormous forces of ignorance and fear," Aladai becomes ironically the instrument and agent of destruction of the traditional emblems of his own past in order that he might belong to the new form of rule. From the moment he joins Schlemn's scheme of organization to eliminate the enormous powers of ignorance he becomes constantly aware that "what Rimi needs is stirring up."

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

In The African Witch as is the case with the other African novels, the disintegration of the traditional norms precedes the disintegration of character. The actions of characters ironically are developed and determined not by events, but by the sterile physical and decadent moral background. The breakdown of what was regarded as the traditional, leaves characters such as the Emir to be faced with a blank emptiness and a bleak meaninglessness. Because they lack a centre of certainty, their own fall follows that of the society

On the one hand there are men like Louis Aladai who belong neither to the white world for which they are pining, nor to the traditional world which they are helping to destroy. On the other hand are the once powerful characters such as the old Emir, Aliu, who represent the physical and psychological breakdown of their world. They too have no authority over facts that have long since eluded them. Slow and sure but finally sitting on the highest point of certainty and security, is the Resident, Mr. Burwash, retaining the final word in the restoration of order and peace. On the whole then, any form of stirring up of the Rimi does not in any way upset the powerful and serene authority of the imperial Government. In fact, in the conflict the imperial Government stands for the final

authority, the objective real that will render the verdict in all matters of conflict of interest. Neither Aladai nor Sale wish to take over political authority from the British; they merely recognize British authority and wish to take up their nominal roles under it. It is certain from this analysis that Cary knew the power that resides behind political freedom but refused to acknowledge it. Political freedom, and therefore power, is as necessary as anything else. It releases energies for economic and social growth. But since Cary was once a Colonial administrator and a strong believer in British liberalism he could not acknowledge it; for it would have meant a contradiction to 'Democracy.'

A reading of Joyce Cary's African novels that too frequently pursues the actions of the characters and tries to make sense of their thoughts often ends up missing the point which Cary is making. We must follow Cary's characters from the physical background first, then secondly enter into the inner life of the person. In this way, one should be able to establish a connection between the too often ugly reality and the character's response to it.

It is my conclusion that it is not possible for a reader to understand the actions of Cary's characters without having been exposed to his political speculations on

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Africa. Just as a reading of the Political Trilogy is incomplete without the reading of Power in Men, so a reading of the African novels that ignores A Case for African Freedom will find as Walter Allen has rightly said that both the "white characters are revealed as essentially strange as the black."[1]

There are deep seated prejudices which the actions of the characters hardly reveal. Cary also has the tendency of pulling out passages from his non-fiction and putting them in the mouths of characters. For example, the conception of education by Aladai as the only solution to Rimi problem appears significantly in all that Cary has to say about Africa and freedom.

It is also a serious flaw that the characters cannot finally operate independently and decide their own fates. Occasionally a trend of consistent action is noticeable but this is often not generated by the actions of the characters - but merely the result of their having lived in a society. Thus the people are trapped and the solution usually comes from above not from the actors themselves. The sudden appearance of British soldiers represents an external force of intervention, and when they

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[1]Walter Allen, Joyce Cary (1953), p. 10.

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do appear, the troops restore order. The allegory is direct in all of Cary's novels, the need for the presence of the imperial government to continue in maintaining peace and order remains an unquestionable fact. The introduction of Dr. Schlemn in the life of Aladai also suggests a form of intervention. It is through Schlemn's efforts that Aladai finally invades the witch's prison to rescue the prisoners of witchcraft. For instance, the discovery of Elizabeth's prison house by Aladai and Dr. Schlemn is described as follows:

> Aladai pulled up the bar of the remaining hut and went in. The hut contained the foetid corpse of a boy and a girl, then filthy, who seemed unable to walk. She shrank away from Aladai to the furthest wall, staring like a lunatic and working her lips. She did not utter a sound. Aladai did not want the doctor to see the corpse. He quickly snatched up the girl in his arms, holding her like a baby, and rushed out, almost knocking the doctor over as he ran, 'Come on, doctor,' he shouted. 'Don't stop now.'[1]

The merciless and grotesque sense of reduction is characteristic of Cary and is a sign of the expression of his own, personal disgust. It is from such a background that Aladai derives his strength and weakness. This is the ironic touch. In the African novels Cary's distorted and monstrous rendering of facts is repelling. The question

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 146.

is, what was he aiming at? To show to his readers that "what is disgusting is by that the more pitiful."[1] This law which Mrs. Hilda Carr had learnt in Aissa Saved, is the very law by which the author is operating in his presentation of the facts of Africa.

It is evident from the preceding discussion that Aladai's arguments represent Cary's point of view. The rescue scene, so reminiscent of one in a romance, shows Aladai and Schlemn as the knights who rescue the young lady from the prison house of the witch or monster. Earlier in the novel, when Aladai had succeeded in controlling a mob, Judy Coote had remarked, "Really . . . he ought to be in chain mail."[2] The story of Aladai then is a fight in this nightmare of Rimi civilization to save as many people as possible. Osi in her present state of physical disfigurement, pursues Aladai as the concrete form of the nightmare of Rimi culture. At one point Aladai feels that he ought to make love to Osi, but she is too ugly, having been disfigured by the ju-ju. The power of the ju-ju on Osi, has gone so deep that she too has lost the sense of her own

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 146.

[2]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, pp. 53-54.

being. Osi is broken down both physically and psychologically.

One notices from the nature of presentation of the ju-ju that the author meant to direct the sympathy of his readers and to condemn Elizabeth, the symbolic monster.

At this point it is necessary to point out some significant aspects of his method of portraying character. Cary's method is to build up the personality of a character, such as Elizabeth, and suddenly reduce that personality to insignificance. For instance, the humiliation which Elizabeth receives from the Emir's master of the horse is a case in point. Elizabeth, through court intrigue is poisoned by the Emir's master of the horse. Bound hand and foot she is left to die in the bush. It is at this point, that we notice how Elizabeth's awful and serene personality has degenerated to that of a low person to be bound in cords. It is also of interest to note that after Elizabeth had been missing for some days, it is one of her former prisoners, the little girl Ibu who discovers her whereabouts through a mysterious method that approximates telepathy. Thus, the intelligent little girl, whose intuitions Elizabeth had mistakenly taken for witchcraft, become the saviour of the ju-ju woman. It follows that the decay which we have seen is symbolic of the decay of

Elizabeth's moral values. Cary is inverting the world of Democracy in order to show us how it will look like without Democracy.

Of significance also in The African Witch is the treatment which the old Emir, Aliu, receives from the hands of the author. At first the Emir is the only person who demonstrates a longing for his past. To him the present is decadence. He cannot understand why his favourite wife, Fanta, should smoke cigarettes. The latter point is meant to stand as an indication that there is truly speaking no untainted traditional 'native.'

Yet the Emir's magnanimity remains a matter of the past. He belongs to that age in which slackness and disloyalty in conquered peoples was treated with severity. The only significantly visible sign of his past is violence and blood. To Aliu, neither Sale nor Aladai can bring back his past because they are too weak.[1]

The heroic tradition of Aliu and then the ju-ju of Elizabeth are rejected by Aladai. Although, at the end of the novel Aladai does embrace the idea of blood and war, initially he fights to control the blood instinct. This was shown in his early mastery of the horse and his keeping

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[1]Ibid., pp. 180-181.

company with his tutor, Judy Coote. In the company of Judy Coote, he assumes the pose of a civilized man but in her absence he falls back into blood religion and war. If there is one thing which Aladai is bound to inherit from Rimi, it is the belief in war and blood.

The tradition of blood and violence is the only thing that remains through history. Later in the novel when Aladai embraces war and blood as the only means to solve his problem, he justifies the process which Aliu had earlier affirmed - that violence and the life of blood remain the only thing inherited of the past. "It is not a war" said Aladai, "if no blood is shed."[1] The blood symbol (as will be seen later) becomes the central image in the latter part of the novel. It will be noticed that, although Cary takes pains to portray the heroic aspects of Aliu's character, he finally undercuts him. During a visit at the Colonial Resident's office, the Emir is reduced to the size of a pillow placed on horseback. Cary is not satisfied with showing the physical break down of Aliu's court, he goes so far as to show Aliu, prowling the gulleys of his own town, a miserable wretch to be finally poisoned by a little girl, after everybody at court had deserted.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

> . . . a girl came with a calabash. The door shut quickly behind her. She was dressed like a bride, but she appeared in the last stages of terror. She walked a few steps, she fell on her knees. The Emir came up to her, took the calabash and said, 'Thank you, my child. I was hungry.' He asked her what had happened to all the people. Had they run away. She answered, 'Noking.' But he didn't attend to her. He took the calabash, collapsed on his hams, and ate without ceremony.
> The Emir suddenly dropped the calabash and gave a scream; jumped to his feet and ran about twenty yards, screaming; then fell down, rolled over on his back, kicked up his legs, and lay dead in that position, like a beetle.[1]

In the glory and fall of the Emir Aliu, Cary does not intend to have us learn anything about that tradition except the lesson that the Emir's past, his culture, like himself have crumbled. At the end of Aliu's life, he is transformed from a lion at war who could bite spear-shafts through, into a beetle. The Emir's personality crumbles both physically and psychologically as he runs about jumping and screaming. It is the weakness of the whole tradition on which the despot had based his faith. The whole cigarette-smoking court deserts him, while the walls of his citadels like the master himself, crumble into a heap. Faced with this form of moral and physical reality, Aladai could only anticipate the time when European civilization will replace that of the Rimi.

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 228.

The preceding analysis clearly shows Cary's position on Africa. The rise of men such as Coker and Aladai does not in itself suggest that they are the best kind of rulers for Africa, but their coming into being has created the necessity for stronger government than before. It is therefore not surprising that at the end of every one of these novels, imperial forces have to be called in to restore order.

In this novel Africans are shown unnecessarily blood thirsty and violent. The Emir's admiration of blood and war is reinforced by Coker's sermons on blood and Aladai's acceptance of blood as only visible evidence of war. In The African Witch, Cary does not only show violence in the Africans but he shows how the Europeans exposed to the African scene have learnt to be violent. Situations which could not have necessitated violent reactions in Europe are shown here as almost nearing explosion. Among the whites, Mrs. Vowls, "whose crankiness took the common form, among her type" expressed her own violent reaction against the Colonial government by insisting on the fact that "all the evils of the world were due to its Governments."[1] In all these representations, the Africans

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[1] Ibid., p. 70.

are shown to be more violent than the Europeans the reason being that the Rimi tend to show their "feelings too much."[1]

Cary's understanding of the psychology of Africans was very limited. He interpreted Africa as one part of an archetypal primitive society where the human beings at that level must necessarily behave in a prescribed pattern. It is naive to argue that in Africa human feelings are apt to be more violently expressed than say, in Europe. Cary was again being very inconsistent and somehow narrow minded. If the African continent was torn apart between the war years it was because Europeans and Africans were experiencing the immediate effects of the brutalities of the first world war, an event that was rightly not African in origin.

In a preface to the novel Cary says that he was using the African scene to dramatize the presence of violence in human activities. For instance, Mr. Rackham's rejection and hatred of Aladai was deeper and based on no reason. The origins of the hatred were physiological.

The question that arises from this analysis is what was Cary's novelty in the use of the African scene? The continent had been depicted by authors such as

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[1] Ibid.

Rider Haggard, and Albert Schweitzer as a barbaric land of savagery and cannibalism. A continent whose groves were infested by monsters and witches, consequently Africa had played this exotic role very effectively in European literature for years. The negro was always a part of an excited mob attacking the whiteman. Koyinde Vaughan has given a very succinct account of the character of this early writings and the role of the African in it. According to Koyinde Vaughan, in these early tales the Africans played either scenery props, picturesque crowds with spears and clubs or curiously unintelligent menials. Violence, bloodshed or lurid glamour, bestiality and orgies in these novels remained the sole prerogative of the African.

Based on Koyinde's explanation, we realize then that in Cary's The African Witch the African retains his proper place in a drama which could have been his which instead is replaced by the conventional conflict between the familiar caricature of traditional Africa and a new era - claiming to be progressive - ushered in by a colonial power.[1]

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[1] J. Koyinde Vaughan, "Africa and the Cinema," An African Treasury, p. 90.

Therefore, such an archetypal association of Africa and Africans with violence is naive. In fact, in order to reconcile himself to the duplicity and contradictions of his own nature and culture, Cary attempted to reduce all human action to a single impulse - the love of blood. It follows that Cary's use of European clothes in The African Witch is functional for they symbolize reason and civilization. Aladai in his Oxford blazer is rightly the "cannibal chief in a Balliol blazer."

Aladai's concept of civilization did not take into consideration the presence of these deeper impulses that determine the actions of all men. A similar pattern can be traced in the story of Mr. Johnson. The hero acts-out his power by stabbing Sergeant Gollup. Gollup himself kicks and beats his servants and his wife any time he feels depressed. Mr. Rudbeck spends his energy on road-building and when there is no road work he falls back into a state of depression.

There are however, two ways in which these impulses are directed. The first and more powerful is the traditional, which fights to retain what is already in existence. This is exemplified by the reaction of Mrs. Pratt at the horse race as Aladai and Coker intrude to ignite a series of violent reactions. The traditional practice was to allow

only the Emir and some dignified men dressed in turbans to sit with the Europeans.

The second and more potent manifestation of the impulse occurs with characters such as Coker and Aladai, whose purpose it is to destroy the symbols of the past before setting up their own. It is from this point of view that Aladai and Coker embrace the religion of blood, and according to traditional use of ritual blood, they and their blood religion are a metaphor for new life and the search for fertility.

Jane Ellen Harrison, in Ancient Art and Ritual, (1951) defines a rite as "something done," and in order to perform a rite one must not only feel the impulse, but he should be able to express it. The reason which Harrison gives for this pattern of stereotyped action is that individuals at a certain time in their lives begin to feel that the "life of nature which seemed dead should live again."[1] The desire for the new is what separates the two groups of characters in The African Witch: the traditional conservatives and the revolutionary creators. Aladai and Coker belong to the latter group, while the Britishers, except

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[1]Jane Ellen Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 35.

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Judy Coote, and most of the Africans are mindlessly violent and opposed to change.

Cary was aware of the fact that the preceding description constituted a consistent pattern in the working out of human history in all fields. In the chapter "Difference in Symbols" in Art and Reality, Cary attempts to show that the fashions of one generation can become insignificant symbols in another generation,

> . . . with a thousand associations which they did not possess in their own time. . . . The new significant symbol becomes the insignificant bore or the ridiculous, even disgusting, folly. The cry all the time is for the new form, even if it is inconvenient. . . . But because they are new, they are expressive. . . . they abolish the boredom of the convention, and force the eye to observe the object, the actual thing. And this relation acts both ways.[1]

The belief that "essentially, men live in a symbolic world," affirms Cary's belief in creative process in men. Each symbolic "system of any kind quickly becomes ineffective, a bore," because every generation is always struggling to create what they 'feel' are true values, and appropriate ways of living. In this way human history is the story of perpetual creation. Men like the Emir create

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, pp. 79-80.

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a heroic age and perish with it.

In fact the pattern of destruction of old symbols and the creation of new ones is made to look tragic in that the symbols of the heroic age pass away before the heroes themselves have died. Those who live beyond one generation, necessarily find their own symbols and idols crumbling as new ones are being introduced. In this case, adjustment is necessary.

In this way, Cary was able to justify not only the nature of African revolution led by the Aissas, Aladais and Johnsons but also revolution in the arts of his culture; those revolutions in art which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century to those of the first two decades of the twentieth century. In D. H. Lawrence, Cary saw the expression of a completely new form of intuition of "life as lived finally at the level of fundamental passion and fundamental needs, of an order of life not reducible to logic or rational judgment."[1]

The revolution in art, Cary argues, was what distinguished "all the other significant writers of the generation of Aldous Huxley, Viriginia Woolf and

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[1] Ibid., p. 117.

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Evelyn Waugh," from the past. They were,

> . . . violently in revolt against the presuppositions of the generation before, of that school dominated by Galsworthy and Wells, for whom life was seen in terms of sociology, who assumed that what was wrong with society could be cured by legislation, who imagined that the injustices and tragedies of common life could be abolished by taking reasonable thought.[1]

This search for a mysterious, almost mystical form of life, attracted Cary to turn to African tradition in The African Witch, to preach through the mouth and actions of the Rev. Coker, the religion of blood, and of the sacred crocodile.

In African traditional worship, the sprinkling and splashing of blood on the tribal fetish was a sign of appeasing the thirst and anger of the gods and the ancestors so that they "might be gently disposed towards them and grant plentiful harvests."[2] Among most Nigerian and African societies, blood was a sign of heroic action; the heads of the victims were often presented to the god of the community. In Degama, Nigéria,

> Any human head cut off in war is brought and placed on the drum with blood. No man [could]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[2] P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 11.

see the big Ikoro drum unless he [had] cut off a human head and presented it to this.[1]

In The African Witch Cary never wanted us to see the symbol completely in this way. His other meaning is that of destruction in order to allow for growth. The Nigerian poet Wole Soyinka has expressed this death and birth use of blood in these words: "Growth is greener where / Rich blood has spilt."[2] Blood as metaphor for violence and heroic action is partly shown in the attempts by Aladai to believe in war and blood. Aladai's belief is closer to that universal pattern of death and life, which Cary dramatizes in his novels. The struggle from the nature of the forces in conflict, was between Elizabeth and her tradition of accommodation and compromise on the one hand, and Coker's cauldron of disintegrating blood on the other from which emerges the creativity and rebelliousness of Louis Aladai.

Aladai, in the first part of the novel, despite constant threats to his life by the Europeans and Sale's followers, abhors violence and conflict. He hesitates to take Judy Coote into the Rimi settlement, fearing that he

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

[2] Wole Soyinka, Idanre and other poems, p. 65.

may start violent quarrels between his own factions and Sale's. He also wishes to remain in harmony with the orders of Mr. Burwash, the Resident, and those of the old Emir. In his approach to the Europeans, he remains cautious, solicitous and accommodating never wishing to start any form of disagreement. During his first encounter with rioting mobs in the Rimi settlement, Aladai mounts a stallion, subdues the horse and the mob and goes untouched. Here, dressed in his best European clothes, Aladai remained dignified, reasonable, careful and calculating. Even when he was ignored by the Europeans at the club, Aladai did not attempt to defend his rights. In the first chapters of the novel, he floats within the bonds of the traditional illusion and moral standards. His attempt is to retain what has been and to attempt a take-over without causing any violent revolt. Finally, Aladai's balance and serene style is upset after a fight with Rackham. Aladai never completely recaptures his equipoise, instead embraces Coker's blood religion by recognizing the necessity of bloodshed. He says this after the fight:

> 'I have come home to Rimi . . .
> 'Yes, it is war, now.'[1]

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[1] Joyce Cary, <u>The African Witch</u>, p. 210.

Aladai's failure to accede to the Rimi throne through reasonable and conventional means, and the rejection which he receives from the Europeans, who do not wish to see him enter into the world of their civilization compels him to return to Rimi - mainly dominated by the influences of Elizabeth and Coker. Aladai's civilization cannot be completely detached from Coker's blood religion, and Aladai seemed to have believed that civilization meant freedom from blood. He forgot that what compelled him to seek 'civilization' was the archetypal creative urge here symbolised by blood.

Besides, in order for Aladai to bring about his civilization, he witnesses the disintegration of both the old Rimi and that of his serene personality. This process of disintegration and creation is shown in his acceptance of war, his following of Coker into the forest for a change of personality, and finally his ability to retain the will to fight his way out of the forest from the shrine of the crocodile to the mission. Both Judy Coote and Aladai undergo the same pattern of falling into the seething cauldron of Coker's blood religion, and then climbing out of it.

On the other hand, failure of the "white governor" in assisting Aladai to assume the throne of Rimi triggers a set of irrational reactions from Aladai, the first of which

is to plunge into the chthonic realm for symbols to express himself. The first of the archetypal symbols which Aladai discovers is 'blood' - the blood of destruction and of appeasement. To embrace blood, Aladai rejects all moral strictures, restraints and the other pretensions of European civilization which had made him inactive.

Judged from the preceding analysis one realises then that Joyce Cary's dramatisation of man's dilemma in the face of facts is perceptive. The Christian mythos (as distinguished from the non-Christian such as the African) traces the individual's life in the world as a pilgrimage. On his pilgrimage, man ventures through failures and successes and then to final triumph. Faced with chaos man has to endure suffering in order to triumph over evil and death. This historical concept of human tragedy, assumes that a state of perfection exists toward which man aspires. The Christian mythos (as in Pauline eschatology) attempts to transcend tragedy by a leap out of the natural cycle into a purely spiritual kingdom of God.

Joyce Cary's return to Africa is not an indication that Africans do not recognize the claims and demands which the forces of evil make on man. The African, through his art and ritual, does not come to terms or make sense of the chaos of events through the anticipation of a future.

Everything that occurs has a cause, and therefore a solution (p.38). In ritual dance, the past, the future and the present are united. The gods, ancestors and the living, live and share together the same atmosphere of undifferentiated flux. One does not master the self intellectually; instead one acts and represents in archetypal symbols his yearnings and desires to resolve his dilemma. There is no great end for which he aspires. Because the Christian and therefore the European world, regards the gods as perfect, this view is different from the African's understanding of his relation with the gods. To the 'traditional' African worshipper, the gods are good and bad. The gods always desire to live and enjoy the best that men can produce. Thus in their own being the gods are incomplete. The goddess of the sea and rivers, Mami Watta, represents ideal beauty, and the most beautiful female, but at the same time she is noted for her ability to change herself into several ordinary beautiful women in order to have sexual union with men. Thus, the gods and the ancestors, do not only desire to see peace among the men, but wish to live and enjoy some of the best products of mankind such as yams, goats, fish, wine and heroic action.

Cary's return to Africa was not only a religious quest; it was a search, similar to the same movement in

Yeats and D. H. Lawrence for the essence of man - for what unites men, despite progress all over the world. "We have all something within us," says W. B. Yeats, "to batter down and we get our power from this battering."[1] The quote from W. B. Yeats shows that European understanding of tragedy has veered towards the two approaches - as an outward fate or an inner anguish of floundering man to come to terms with his own incompleteness and the disasters which surprise him. The choice lies between sainthood and heroism. In this traditionally Christian way of understanding tragedy, no adequate provision is made for the understanding of the basic essential drives of man. The desire to attain the ultimate vision of sainthood over-rides the obligation to participate in the human condition of death and life - a state in which all forms of escape are relegated. The problem with the belief that a recognition of the importance of Christian revelation can provide man with a central image, not only of continuity with the past, but also of the attainment of the ultimate vision, leads to abrogation of responsibility through self-abnegation. It leads also to the division of the body between flesh and

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[1]W. B. Yeats, Letters on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesly, August 1936, edited by Kathleen Raine (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 86.

spirit. We notice then that like Lawrence and Yeats Cary discovers in the mysteries of African worship and ritual an explanation to the idea of unity of being. In the Preface to the Carfax Edition of Aissa Saved, he stated that during and after the First World War, some Christians left the Church, "as if their faith in God was because he could stop wars."[1] Cary then argued that God is not the "final power in the universe,"[2] and the lack of this knowledge led respectable people to blame God for all minor and major problems.

Joyce Cary's understanding of tragedy must be sought from another tradition - he sought to rediscover, like D. H. Lawrence the source of human motivation, and the existence in man of an eternal polarity. He brought together the "civilized" men of Europe and their devotee, Louis Aladai, to live and share the same world with the "primitives" of Rimi, with the intention of rediscovering what unites them as men.

From the conversation between Aladai and Elizabeth, it is evident that Aladai has begun to lose some of his

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[1]Joyce Cary, Aissa Saved, pp. 7-8.

[2]Ibid.

pretensions to civilization and his self-consciousness. None of the major characters, except perhaps the Resident and his assistant, are free from the influence of blood and of the crocodile god. Blood, of course is a universal symbol of sacrifice and propitiation, but in West Africa the symbolic use of blood remained a ponderous weight on the minds of the majority of persons. "A belief in the efficacy of sacrificial blood in order to purchase the favour of the powers of fertility is world-wide," wrote P. Amaury Talbot, "but perhaps nowhere in past days did this dread libation flow in such streams as in West Africa."[1] In some regions brides and nursing mothers are required to have their bodies smeared with the "symbolic blood-red camwood" as a sign of fertility.

In The African Witch, the blood religion of Rev. Saleh Coker is inseparable from the worship of the sacred crocodile. Blood in the novel is related to the worship of the crocodile in that both are symbolic expressions of the desire to live. Blood is pure essence of being and is thus closely related to the Rimi belief in the kindness and also capricious nature of the sacred

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[1]P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults (London: Frank Cass, 1967), p. 128.

crocodile. Both blood and the crocodile are symbolic of assertiveness of nature in men. In most West African carvings, the tortoise, the snake, and the crocodile are among the various symbols of fertility depicted. The animals are worshipped because they can bring plenty of "chop and piccan" (children).

The basic desire of "blood and the crocodile" is not to die but to live. First, the sacred crocodile is benevolent. Second, it is wayward and hence not amenable to reason. The laws of reason and self-consciousness cannot operate in the condition of blood and of the sacred crocodile. The only way to handle both is through appeasement by means of sacrifice. This is the basis of the religion of Rev. Coker, that it is pre-human. Coker is a,

> . . . preacher of natural or primitive religion - herd communism, herd fear and herd love, blood ties and race hatreds. Such a religion is pre-human, even in its ritual of blood. Beasts fear blood, and drink blood. It is of special significance to them.[1]

It is man's essential struggle with the primal forces of nature, those forces that persistently pursue him irrespective of the level of social progress. It is

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[1] Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 209.

with this understanding that Oyin Ogumba describes the different ideas of the serpent:

> First there is the idea of the serpent in traditional African thinking as the original owner, the landlord of the swamps whose tenants the human community is and who therefore demands sacrifice and veneration dejure. In this role the serpent can be a benevolent spirit, though often capricious. Secondly, there is the more universal idea of serpent as a creature of prey, a malicious trickster and an enemy - physically and spiritually - to man, for the serpent misleads man into false hopes and expectations only to betray him at the crucial time.[1]

Mr. Ogumba's remarks about the nature and function of the serpent are accurate but there is a distinction to be made between the use of words such as "veneration" and spirit. The African does not worship the serpent, but rather the nature of the crocodile. Also it has to be noted that the word "spirit" in Africa has very little to do with rational truth in contradistinction to "flesh."

Wole Soyinka has made a very significant contribution in his attempt to distinguish between the understanding of tragic terror in Europe and in Africa. To the African, the "past," Soyinka maintains,

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[1]Oyin Oguma, "The Traditional Content of the Plays of Wole Soyinka," African Literature Today No. 5 (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), p. 110.

> . . . is not a mystery and although the future (the unborn) is yet unknown, it is not a mystery to the Yoruba but coexistent in present consciousness. Tragic terror exists therefore neither in the evocation of the past nor in the future.[1]

The significant point here is that African tragedy is not the pining for an ideal past or perfect future, for in Africa, the gods themselves are incomplete.

> For they were coming down, not simply to be acknowledged but to be reunited with human essence . . . just as man is grieved by a consciousness of the loss of the eternal essence of his entity and must indulge in symbolic settlements to recover his total being.[2]

The spirit-flesh dichotomy does not exist; instead, it is the search for wholeness by both God and man that causes tragedy.

> Tragedy, in Yoruba traditional drama, is the anguish of this severance, the fragmentation of essence from self, of essence from itself. It's music is the stricken cry of man's blind soul as he flounders in weightless void and crashes through a deep abyss of a-spirituality and cosmic rejection. Tragic music is an echo from that void; the celebrant speaks, sings and dances in authentic archetypal images from within the abyss. All understand and respond for it is the language of the world.[3]

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[1]Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," The Morality of Art, Essays presented to G. Wilson Knight by his colleagues and friends, edited by D. W. Jefferson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 125.

[2]Ibid., p. 122. [3]Ibid.

Soyinka argues that in this world, the "anguish of severance could not attain such tragic proportions if the god's position on earth (i.e. in man) was to be one of divine remoteness."[1] Given such a situation, Soyinka offers action as the only solution and means of saving man from total disintegration. The similarities between Soyinka's tragic vision and Joyce Cary's are so close that more than one critic has noticed it.

> And acting is therefore a contradiction of the tragic spirit, yet it is also its natural complement. To act, the Promethean instinct of rebellion, channels anguish into creative purpose which releases man from totally destructive despair, releasing from within him the most energic, deeply combative inventions which, without usurping the territory of the infernal gulf, bridge them with visionary hopes.[2]

The crocodile, by nature is a beast of prey, obsessed with the desire of living by destroying other animals and even men. It lives because something has to die. The rapacious nature of the crocodile explains that of blood. Both blood and crocodile feed on something else in order to live, and then blood has the other meaning of sacrifice and libation. In <u>The African Witch</u> the description of blood and its working on the Rev. Saleh Coker shows that it represents the tumult of the unconscious primal

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u> [2] <u>Ibid.</u> p. 123.

forces in their attempt to assert their presence. In doing so, blood has the ability of effecting the total disintegration of the serene personality. In the person of Rev. Coker,

> It rose within him like a geyser or a hot spring and broke out of him in panting shouts which excited himself and the people to religious ecstasy. Under the influence of his sermons, Coker often beat his fists on the mud walls of the church hut till his hands poured blood. The people imitated him. An old woman, had once cut herself with a knife so severely that she had lost the use of her left hand.[1]

Coker's geysers, like the Nietzschian Dionysiac impulses, show in the actions and outward manifestations of violence and cruelty, "symptoms of revolutionary change."[1] The disturbances created by Coker's blood are symptomatic of inner freedom in the man, preceded here by a total disintegration of form and serenity.

> In the Dionysiac dithramb man is incited to strain his symbolic faculties to the utmost; something quite unheard of is now clamouring to be heard: the desire to tear assunder the veil of Maya, to sink back into the original oneness of nature; the desire to express the very essence of nature symbolically.[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 157.

Coker's geysers with all their inner and outer destruction of order and form, here shown in the mutilation of the body, point out the direction which Coker and his other votaries have veered for inner freedom. Thus, in order to be free from convention the disturbances of blood must take place during which the thin veil of Apollonian consciousness, which had been hiding from them the whole Dionysiac realm, is torn. The total emancipation of all the symbolic powers in Coker and his followers parallels the break down of Aladai's self-consciousness.[1]

Coker's religion represents the source of human freedom and creativity:

> He (Coker was not a communist and reprobated the communists as anti-Christ. But the geyser, as it burst out of him, uttered pure original communism, the brotherhood of the pack and the herd expressed, in fraternal love for the like, in hatred of the like, sealed in the magical properties of blood. Blood love, blood hatred were the ethics of Coker's religion; its theology was the geyser, the hot fountain shot out of primaeval mud.[2]

The contradictions of the symbol of blood stand appropriately in Cary's world because they represent the contradictions of the nature of creation and liberty - that

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[1] Ibid., p. 28.

[2] Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 250.

it destroys in order to create. Creative liberty, Cary says, "realises the good as well as evil, in an infinity of new forms."[1] Cary's use of the tradition of blood and crocodile was for two ends. First to demonstrate the presence of the creative impulse in man. Secondly, to demonstrate that when man fails to act and create and thereby free himself from the blood religion and herd communism, he perishes in his anguish, not as an individual but within the 'tribal mob.'

Cary recognizes the assertion of blood and the subsequent contradictions of the creative impulse, but he condemns it at the point when the symbolic blood and crocodile become stocks, cast in the heaviest iron and hung on the necks of the individuals in the name of an unchanging tradition. Cary might have agreed with Northrop Frye that the myth-making impulse is universal but also that primitive myths are different in that they abhor change.

> The death-impulse is answered by the ferocity and destructive nature, but the life-impulse is answered by the energy and inner exuberance. . . . The energy of nature's response to human concern.[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 70.

[2]Northrop Frye, "Silence in the Sea (1968)," E. J. Pratt, edited by David Pitt, pp. 136-137.

The life impulse to Joyce Cary is revolutionary, it exists and dramatizes its presence by breaking down all that prevents it from operating. "Revolution is the earthquake caused because the thrusting forces in the body of society have been prevented from gradual adjustment."[1]

How does Cary resolve the contradiction that exists between the purely unconscious and unthinking part of man represented by Coker's brand of theology with Aladai's civilization? It has been pointed out that Coker's blood religion represents the archetypal source of all symbolic representations of man's yearning for completion, it is a return to the essential oneness of man, in order to prove that one's "Apollonian consciousness was but a veil hiding from him the whole of the Dionysiac realm."[2]

Cary suggests that a complete return to the realm of the dark chthonic powers may not constitute a solution to the human predicament in the face of the harsh realities of nature. Therefore, Cary shows that tribal and ritual emotions are not enough. His partial rejection of the daemonic powers can be seen in his treatment of the

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 60.

[2]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, p. 28.

character of Honeywood and how he contrasts this emotion-dominated character with Aladai's emotion and intellect, the latter represented by his culture and love of European civilization.

Aladai is,

> . . . worth six Honeywoods, both as a man and an intelligence; he was worth an infinity of Honeywoods, because Honeywood was a robot, a set of reactions, a creature ruled entirely by prejudice and as mass of contradictory impulses and inhibitions, which he called his opinions, and thought as his character. He was a wooden man danced on strings; and any one could make him kick.[1]

Aladai differs from Honeywood in that he is capable of independent action; and is therefore free and creative. Aladai lives and operates between the two extreme degrees of mob rule and mob psychology - first, the religion of Coker which attempts to usurp and anihilate the individuality of the person, and secondly the superficial prejudices of Honeywood which distort Honeywood's perceptions. The sheer will to fight, to retain his faith, the visions of the European civilization distinguished Aladai, as did Aissa in Aissa Saved, from robots and demoniacs such as Honeywood and Coker respectively. Aladai, like Aissa,

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 192.

reconciles himself not to the African tradition and the superficial prejudices of persons such as Honeywood, but to the logic of the immutable fact of human tragedy. Aladai says to Judy Coote:

> 'You think me a hot-air merchant, Miss Coote, but I am not so unreasonable. If people are killed, the Government - I mean your real Government at home' - Aladai like Jamesu, called England home - 'will take notice, perhaps they will realize that it is a crime in this country to let a whole nation - a loyal and peaceful people, who only want to be good citizens of the Commonwealth - live and die like their own pig - dogs who starve on every rubbish heap.'[1]

Joyce Cary has, thus far, led Aladai to the grove of the sacred crocodile only to compel him through action to reconcile himself with society. Joyce Cary recognizes the claims which both historical progress and the chthonic powers make on man, but his men are not doomed to perish in the abyss of the dark forces nor are they made to live on the illusion of determinist and utopian evolution. Therefore rather than reject the past, Cary shows how it exerts its claims on the person of the individual. Since Cary's world is made of character, as has been pointed out, the past like the present, exists as character is not empty;

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 267.

hence the inevitable conflict between the past and the present. The making of the future depends on the nature of this conflict. In Africa the conflict was made more potent by the merging of many forces of both the past and the present in the persons of the major characters under study.

There are, however, certain aspects of Aladai's past which, despite the claims they make on him, must be rejected. For instance, the blood religion preached by Coker assumes two forms. First blood asserts its claim on Aladai and Coker in the form of the Dionysian impulse that speaks from within. This inspirational and efficacious voice,

> . . . came from the dark like the crocodile out of the swamp. It was not . . . an idea. It was an impulse.[1]

Aladai is however able to use his European education to express this impulse in acceptable and progressive forms. Aladai is different from Coker in that he is able to use his brain and is not overwhelmed by this voice of the dark. Aladai rebukes Coker at the ju-ju grove:

> 'You spoil everything - do you want the soldiers to come and shoot you? You damn fool beast.'[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, The African Witch, p. 258.

[2]Ibid., p. 263.

The second way in which blood asserts its power, then, is in the manner of the beast, the terrible and destructive crocodile. This is the beast which Aladai plans to shoot. The crocodile for whom,

> Services were held in a clearing about a mile from the mission among high jungle. This place had been a ju-ju house dedicated to the crocodile ju-ju. The crocodiles had lived in a deep swamp which passed along one side of the clearing . . . certainly the crocodiles came to be fed - either with chickens and goats, or human sacrifices. The last reported sacrifice was in 1920, when a pagan from Kifi complained that his wife had been taken. The woman's body was found in the ju-ju place, split open, and officially known in Rimi, the inquest found murder against persons unknown.[1]

The distinction which Cary makes here is between the real crocodile as beast of prey, and crocodile as the archetypal serpent. It is interesting to see that it is Aladai and not Coker who is able to comprehend this dual function of the crocodile.

To Aladai, the blood of war encouraged by the inner impulses should not lead one to total reversion to the realm of emotions before making the process of historical adjustment and change possible. Aladai says to Judy Coote:

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 256.

> '. . . what would England or France or Rome have been without wars? No, don't laugh. I'm not thinking that Rimi can conquer empires. We don't want to. But we can a nation, a real nation with a soul, with freedom. There are millions of us, you know, and our rulers say, "You people are too stupid to think, to learn. You are only fit to be slaves, ju-ju worshippers" '.[1]

Aladai, being himself a man of character, admires European civilization because it represents the achievement of men of character, that is to say, individuals whose "character always made itself felt."[2] It is this idea of having a "real nation with a soul, with freedom," that Aladai intends to bring into Rimi. Aladai's attitude towards the shallowness of Rimi civilization, and his endeavour to introduce a richer form of civilization is also shown in the nature of the sacrifice which Aladai makes of himself and Coker's sacrifice of the victim of Elizabeth's witchcraft hunt, Osi, to the crocodile of the river. The sacrifice of Osi to the crocodile is not a ritual sacrifice. Once the girl had been thrown into the river to the crocodile god, Aladai's brain told him that "the ju-ju croc has got his victim for to-night."[3]

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 293. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 296.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 293.

Although Osi's sacrifice to the crocodile by Coker and his followers parallels Aladai's sacrifice of himself for Rimi, the latter is different, because it is not destructive. It is a fulfilment; as Aladai himself says: "the greatest chance - to die for Rimi."

To Aladai, the man of character, to die for Rimi means to make his character felt as the maker of history.

> 'Rimi, my country - I give my life -
> For love of Rimi.'[1]

This is Aladai's vision and it enables him to see more significance in life than the mere threat of nature. Coker and his group are still bound hand and foot by the threat of annihilation presented by nature. Aladai frees himself from the maul of tragedy and total annihilation by the dark forces of nature by his vision in the final sections of the book. As the British soldiers approached the mission station where Aladai had been camping for the last days of his fight to free Rimi from ignorance, he saw himself "now a prophet who can scarcely be bothered with human beings."[2]

The nature of Aladai's sacrifice can also be understood in terms of Joyce Cary's interpretation of the men of

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[1]*Ibid.* [2]*Ibid.*, p. 295.

imagination and creation. Man is born in the clutch of tragedy but the man of imagination makes order of events, and by his deeper understanding of facts and by his action, creates a vision which enables him to transcend chaos. Aladai, after learning that the German missionary Dr. Schlemn had been killed by Coker and his followers, says:

> 'He that is first - must be the sacrifice. It is very old, all this,' said the brain, in a European voice. 'I shall speak to Miss Judy about this. Why this lust for death? It does not seem natural. Nature wants to live - not to die. Why should the beast blood want to pour itself out? Why does the blood love pain as well as joy? What is this spite and jealousy in flesh? Why do people cut themselves for ju-ju? What is the god of nature - this reasoning of blood soaked for a million years in the agony of beasts'? . . . 'Schlemn was dead for Christ - and he, too must die for Rimi - he must give his blood for Rimi.'[1]

This explains, in part, why Aladai's European brain never deserts him through out his career in Rimi. In this way he is able to make sense of most of the disasters that surprise him. He never merges his individuality with the mob emotion of Coker's worship. His decision that "the greatest chance [is] to die for Rimi,"[2] is willed and forms part of his visions and hopes for the future.

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[1] *Ibid*., p. 292. [2] *Ibid*., p. 296.

Aladai's ideal is Rimi for which he hopes to fight and sacrifice his blood as propitiation. Despite contradictions in the life of Aladai and his final decision to fight rather than compromise his vision, Aladai never really surrenders to Coker's titanic powers. Because Cary is talking of individuals, not ideal men free from the forces of evil, the blood symbol defines not only the source of good but also of evil. The archetypal symbolism of blood, coming as it does, from the deepest impulse of human life, is similar in a way, to the Yeatsian egg of love and war. In Joyce Cary, good and evil coexist in "the magical properties of blood."[1] These contradictions act at the same time as the source of power and also of creative freedom. But since creative freedom presupposes isolation we notice then that it is the final drift of Aladai away from Coker's mob that justifies his death.

Death is inherent in humanity and man seems to be doomed to the heritage of violence, especially when he encounters persons such as Mr. Burwash with their conservative policy of slow and steady; the powerful influence of the conservative ju-ju of Elizabeth; the merely

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

commercial interest of Makurdi and finally the unthinking blood religion of Coker. Aladai must die because nature does not allow for a vacuum but his salvation comes from the fact that every genuine sacrifice is an appeasement of violence. Since according to Nigerian tradition the blood of sacrifice tempers the steel of violence, the death of Aladai restores order to Rimi. At the end of the novel, his death sounds a resonant note of optimism for the Rimi people. A new sense of awareness is evident in the action of the little Rimi boy who walks up to Judy Coote, and says: " 'You teach me book.' "[1] Without doubt, Aladai through the sacrifice of himself ushers in this sense of willingness to be taught "book" - to be educated - among the Rimi.

In The African Witch, Aladai, the prince attacks the feckless contents of his traditional society in order to introduce a powerful, energetic and virile civilization. An American Visitor and Mister Johnson, also tackle the matter of African tradition in the face of the threat presented by the invasion by new forces and values from Europe. In An American Visitor, the issues are directly presented: primitivism versus civilization. In Mister

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[1] Ibid., p. 301.

Johnson, the energetic character of Johnson dwarfs the issues. The following chapter discusses the aspects of tradition in Mister Johnson and attempts to show how Cary presented them, how he understood African tradition and for what purpose he used the traditions.

CHAPTER IV

MISTER JOHNSON

Mister Johnson, Cary's fourth African novel was published in 1939. In it he reverts to the themes which he had treated in Aissa Saved - the traditional conflict between the New and the Old. In Aissa Saved, Christianity, in order to assert its superiority over paganism had destroyed the latter. In Mister Johnson the road becomes the central symbol of the coming of European civilization. Johnson's road like the Christianity of Aissa cuts "through the primitive country, pulling down the revered cotton trees."[1] We notice then that in this novel, the process of historical change is lived and acted by Johnson.

In Mister Johnson, as is the case with the other three novels, the hero is acutely aware of the sense of disinheritance but he shows comparatively no nostalgic feeling for his past. It is part of Cary's technique and

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, Penguin, 1970, p. 165.

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point of view in these novels that his characters are mainly obsessed with the future. For instance, the original cause of conflict in The African Witch is that Aladai, the prince has been deprived of his rights of inheritance. We notice then that with disinheritance as a major approach towards acceptance of change, Cary shows in the four novels how the process of formal emancipation requires not a return to the sterile past but first a break with it, and second, an effort, as in An American Visitor and Mister Johnson, to create a new social order, possibly of a democratic nature.

In Mister Johnson, the process of change is dramatized in the form of the road-digging project, organized by both Johnson and his friend, Mr. Rudbeck. The road, like the Christianity of Aissa Saved and the education of The African Witch, is a dual agent of progress and destruction. Johnson's own power of creativity and destructiveness is shown in the songs which he improvises:

> 'Bow down, you king of cotton trees,
> Put your green heads in the dust;
> Salute the roadmen of Rudbeck.'[1]

We learn from the above passage that to Johnson, the road work represents the heroic and symbolic conquest of the

[1] Ibid.

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forces of nature. Here, Johnson re-enacts the function of the darer and conqueror of transition, who had appeared in An American Visitor in the person of Mr. Bewsher.

It is important to keep in mind that we cannot fully evaluate the character of Johnson without examining the contiguous events and facts in Jirige and Fada. Jirige is the village from which Johnson takes his wife, Bamu, the daughter of the ferryman. A significant aspect of this point is that the story begins with Johnson crossing the bridge on a ferry, and that the whole action of the novel is centred around Johnson's efforts to build roads and bridges. Similarly, Johnson's entry into Jirige anticipates that of the road and the motor-car - all symbols of European civilization. He "advances with the dignified steps of a Governor-General in full uniform, picking his way among rubbish."[1] At best, his subsequent struggle is to transcend this dirt. The point to bear in mind is that Johnson's life represents a form of aesthetic escape during which he lives a purely imaginative and intuitive life. Later on in the novel, he immerses himself in the life of the imagination as the road work is in progress. To him, the road remains the "great, the glorious, the

[1] Ibid., p. 29.

wonder of the world . . . " and he "lives in this glory . . ." expresses it in "every yell, in every obscene joke, kick, jump, or swing of the marchet."[1] On the whole, Cary's efforts in drawing the character of Johnson are to recapture the dynamism of life and the generative force. Johnson's character is symbolic of harmony of personality and purpose. It is my contention that in Johnson we see what the author rightly termed, the whole,

> . . . intuition of life as lived finally at the level of fundamental passion and fundamental needs, of an order of life not reducible to logic or rational judgement.[2]

The author portrays this generative force and vitality in Johnson in the following remarkable description:

> He knows in every muscle. It is there all the time, part of the music, the shouts, the rhythmic muscles, the yelling songs, the triumphant, intoxicating drums, the blue smoke of the fires, the trees toppling and crashing like cliffs, the suddenly exposed sky.[3]

In this passage, the author celebrates that kind of life which he describes as,

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

[2]Joyce Cary, *Art and Reality*, p. 17.

[3]Joyce Cary, *Mister Johnson*, p. 184.

> . . . spiritual and perpetual joy that children bring to us . . . the power of seeing the world as a new thing, as pure intuition, and so, renewing for us the freshness of all life.[1]

I wish to point out that to Joyce Cary, sterility is not only an aspect of 'civilized' and industrialized societies, as was the belief with some of his contemporary writers, but it exists in any society where the values are not subject to change and adjustment. As a matter of fact, Cary takes the pains to juxtapose the physical facts of Jirige to Johnson's vitality. In Jirige, nature is left alone without any form of human intervention. With the traditional men of Jirige we discern only "infinite boredom and disgusted resignation . . . expressed in their languid crippled progress."[2] This citation is opposed to the life which Johnson lives and also hopes to introduce in Fada.

Fada we are told is the ordinary town of the Western Sudan. It is characterized by no beauty, convenience or health. The town is compared only to the "dwelling place at one stage from a rabbit warren or a

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 48.

[2]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 29.

badger's burrow," to all its mud walls, "eaten as if by small pox." In fact, everything is "rotten," and "poverty and ignorance . . . have kept it as the first frontier of civilization." The citizens of Fada,

> . . . live like mice or rats in a palace floor; all the magnificence and variety of the arts, the ideas, the learning, the battles of civilization go on over their heads and they do not even imagine them.[1]

On the whole Cary's method is to juxtapose the two elements of sterility and dynamism and to attempt to reconcile both through the creative efforts of the dynamic Johnson. It is the lack of a rich cultural heritage that compels Johnson to seek deeper meanings in the life of the future. Aladai of The African Witch receives a similar treatment. In order to embrace the more ennobling aspects of European culture he is compelled to despise his own ju-ju civilization. Like Aladai, Johnson is so keenly aware of the revolting reality of dirt, sores on naked bodies, swollen stomachs and hernias, to attempt a return to the past.

Here, nature is as harsh as she is benevolent. So far as Johnson's mind persists in reflecting the ugliness of Fada it reveals to the reader an Africa that has

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[1] Ibid., pp. 110-111.

ceased to be the home of "the unspoilt primitive, the simple-dwelling place of unsophisticated virtue."[1]

Furthermore, Cary makes substantial use of his African experiences in that his close acquaintance with the peasantry gave him the opportunity to understand their problems. According to him, they had lived for centuries under the tyrannical rule of African despots. He seemed to have realized that it is characteristic of the peasantry to be superstitious and conservative. Although he recognized the position of the oppressed in the presence of the forces of change, Cary also attributed some of the factors that delayed progress to the conservatism of the peasants.

An understanding of the conditions of the artistic world from which Cary emerged might lead us to better understand why he thought and wrote as he did. Cary belongs to the tradition of writers who wrote between and after the two World Wars.[2] He did not express that experience in his fiction, except perhaps in the long poem, 'Marching Soldier.' At best he is more preoccupied

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[1] Ibid., p. 111.

[2] Walter Allen, The English Novel, A short critical history (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 413.

with the idea of vindicating the culture and civilization of Europe from the abuses of his predecessors and contemporaries. He was also aware of the presence in European capitals, particularly Paris where he had himself gained some knowledge of the bohemian way of life, of young Americans, (The Lost Generation, for example) in search of a tradition. By the time Cary's first novel, Aissa Saved, was published in 1932, the general sense of pessimism, disillusionment and the subsequent search for new values, were in vogue.

In his first novel, Cary attempts to justify that man can still have faith in his own world. Primarily, suffering and pain become means through which man learns to change from an attitude of naivety to one of experience. First, Cary had to arrive at these conclusions by depriving the world of any form of divine intervention. In Aissa Saved, neither the pagan god nor the Christian God can bring rain to the dying Kolu. Instead we are presented with a harsh reality, with its immutable laws. As a solution, Cary places man at the centre of the history making process as the creator and destroyer. On the whole, his point of view is consistent. In his fiction we see how the very naive and uncommitted from the start, become, through suffering, involved in life and learn to accept the

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contradictions that permeate it. For instance, Johnson, like his prototypes in the first three novels, learns in his prison cell to accept the injustices of the world. He changes from an attitude of naive intuition to one of awareness of the precariousness of his own position.

The reader is reminded that in Cary's world, to be free is to be self-conscious, and consciousness presupposes a severance of the individual from Nature. The point to keep in mind then is that it is the existence of the ontological gap between the individual self and total being rather than God's neglect of his duty that constitutes the basis of man's tragic dilemma. Cary further maintains that "there is no short cut across this gap."[1]

Mister Johnson belongs to Cary's world of freedom as tragic engagement and everlasting conflict. Johnson's revolt against chaos and sterility is rendered with more intensity because, as Cary maintains, the process of social upheaval in Africa has witnessed very violent changes.

Rightly speaking, Johnson is a catalyst to the society of Fada. He affects not only the lives of the Africans but also that of his superior, Mr. Rudbeck the

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 42.

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A. D. O. Malcolm Foster has stated rightly that through the work of Johnson Mr. Rudbeck crystalizes "his own conflicting ideas into a harmonious whole."[1] Both Johnson and Mr. Rudbeck secure money with which to entertain the labourers who dig the road. Johnson and Rudbeck acknowledge the fact that they are "obviously breaking up the old tribal organization, or its breaking by itself. The people are bored with it," and can thus be rightly termed the "blind instruments"[2] of the universal creative force.

On the whole, Cary's attitude towards Africa as seen in the activities of Johnson and Rudbeck, can be summed up thus: the author is primarily concerned with the plight of the poor and those who lack the opportunities of expanding their lives. Hence, he cannot tolerate any form of government that does not reckon with these problems.

Beside the fact that Cary's vision of Africa is influenced by his European background, his portrayal of the African is sympathetic. In his fiction, Cary has therefore reversed trends, ideas and attitudes about Africa. As a matter of fact, he criticises and repudiates all

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[1]Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography, p. 325.

[2]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 185.

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interpretations of Africa that prided upon the idea of making a romance of the poverty, the exotic and picturesque scenery of the continent. This can be seen in Mr. Rudbeck's earlier attitudes towards Johnson and the road work. We notice that at the end of the novel Mr. Rudbeck has undergone a process of change which leaves him virtually and personally involved in Johnson's fate. His attempts to convert Johnson into a thing by equating him with bags of coins never really succeeded. We can safely conclude that Cary's intention was to develop a greater significance about the problems and the individuals in Africa. It is my contention that in Cary's Africa, the poor are too stupid to be creative. Since to Cary, "poverty is a direct restraint to liberty"[1] he does not see any reason to glorify the condition of poverty; hence he demystifies the belief that the poor possesses the mark of the god. Since the majority of his characters have surrendered their wills to all the forms of natural forces, the readiness of men such as Johnson to fight against man's total dissolution, and their attempt to re-instate him at the centre of the creative world, represents what I consider to be Cary's primary vision.

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[1]Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 78.

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In the attempt to assess the relation between the sterile and the virile aspects of Mister Johnson, it will be realized that Cary intended to portray, first, the inability of the traditional Africa to give a rich and dynamic life to Fada; second, he criticises the Imperial Government, with its complicated and tortuous financial arrangements. For instance, Mr. Tring, the young and regular A. D. O. stands for everything that the administration requires of an ordered civil servant. From his clothes to his own body the signs of punctiliousness are visibly shown.

> Tring is a popular young man, thin, small, handsome, with very smooth fair cheeks and blue eyes. His shirt is clean everyday; his shorts are pressed down the sides so that they stand out like a Greek guard's kilt. He is hard working, shrewed, even tempered, obliging, and already people say of him 'Tring will go on. He's the stuff for a chief secretary.'[1]

The passage points out clearly that, Tring is an example of the "Apollonian man." His attitude is somehow opposed to Rudbeck's and Johnson's inventiveness. Rudbeck is the less meticulous and unsystematic man. He dresses and speaks unconventionally to his juniors. Rudbeck will say to Johnson: "What have you been doing, Johnson? You're

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 112.

bloody late!" In the same circumstances his colleagues will require that Johnson should kindly "explain this unpunctuality."[1] Thus when Johnson works with Rudbeck he is essentially vital. The distinction becomes evident when a comparison is made between the work of the traditional administration and that of Johnson and Rudbeck. Although the Emir of Fada and the King of England are both left out of the scene in this novel, much is known of the glory of the English king through the songs of Johnson. However, Johnson also manages to reveal the weaknesses of the Emir and his Prime Minister, the Waziri. Through the machinations of the Waziri, Johnson steals Government documents, and surprisingly uses the information from the stolen letters to reveal the bad side of the traditional administration. He reads out a portion depicting the character of the Emir of Fada:

> 'The Emir has always been useless and he is now dangerous. He has large debts and still levies illegal taxes, whenever he can. He cannot even be trusted to look after his own interests, as he is subject to violent fits of temper. He has recently had two of his Chief Ministers, the Waziri and the Master of the horse, flogged for some imaginary offence. The former has been flogged many times.[2]

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[1]*Ibid.* [2]*Ibid.*, p. 85.

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The Waziri we are told is a "skillful liar. You cannot trust what he says."

It is characteristic of Cary's style of portraying Johnson, that shown in relation to Mr. Rudbeck, Johnson is emotional, reckless and suffers a lot because of his lack of reason. On the other hand, in the presence of the Wazari, Johnson claims a sense of superiority quite uncharacteristic of his exuberant nature. His sense of superiority stems from his self-identification with England and the English King. For instance, when the Wazari suggests that Johnson should thrash his wife for being unreasonable, Johnson says:

> 'No, no, in England, Wazari, we do not beat our wives. That is a savage, low custom.'[1]

We notice that to Johnson, England means anything but the tyranny and insecurity typical of the rule of the Wazari. I agree with Malcolm Foster's accurate observation that Cary,

> . . . was in favour of colonialism insofar as it offered opportunities to expand the lives of the colonialized people but not when it became an alternative oppression to the one they already suffered.[2]

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 73.

[2]Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography, p. 329.

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Thus, Cary recommends a greater involvement by the Colonial government, if it meant greater freedom for the individual. Through his method of juxtaposing the vital and the sterile, Cary is able to reveal this truth about character and also to attempt a partial reconciliation of the two elements of the dynamic and the static.

An important question that arises from our understanding of Cary's position vis-a-vis the traditional and Colonial administrations, is the matter of the authenticity of the character of Johnson. Arthur Kemoli and David K. Mulwa have argued that in his portrayal of the African in _Mister Johnson_, Cary's style suffers from "gross exaggeration." From the picture which Cary portrays of Fada as a place full of dirt, naked bodies, babies with enormous swollen stomachs, the two critics conclude somehow authoritatively that "Mr. Johnson's world is unreal and even pathetic." Because Fada stinks with dirt, it is a false picture of Africa, and that therefore Cary's novel represents only one of those novels in which the "distorted picture of Africa and Africans by Europeans" was shown. According to these critics then, Joyce Cary, Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene and Elspeth Huxley, presented the same image of Africa and the African. The final question which the two critics ask about Johnson is this: Does the Johnson of

Fada represent a "true picture of the emerging African elite?"[1]

It is my contention that both critics of Cary's portrayal of the African elite in Mr. Johnson have missed the point. It is ironic that whereas both are able to presume a state of emergence and an emerging elite, they are unable to define it. The point to bear in mind is that in order to answer the question posed by the above citation one will have to define first the state from which the elite is emerging, and second, what category of African we are talking about. I am very convinced that there is no African elite whose desires and objectives are essentially different from those of Mr. Johnson. An elite, we understand to mean the vanguard of a cultural tradition, does not truly exist in Africa. The so-called African elite does not represent the same group as one would say, the Canadian, American, British, French, Japanese or Chinese elite. The African is unique in that the so-called "emerging African elite" which the two critics talk about represent the Europeanized part of Africa and this "emerging elite" has nothing to contribute to the

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[1]Arthur Kemoli and David K. Mulwa, "The European Image of Africa and the African," Busara, Vol. 2,ii (1969), pp. 51-53.

traditional values of Africa.

On the other hand, it must not be assumed that Cary's projections through character do not show signs of exaggeration. These exaggerations were used as a stylistic device to reveal something about the situation in point. For instance, there is an aspect of Johnson that can easily be taken for a flaw in character portrayal. Cary often gives to Johnson a language and a feeling of loyalty that is not very common to the class of people from which the character of Johnson is drawn. This is true also of Bamu, Brima, Rudbeck and Aliu. Through the practice of exaggeration, transpositions, parody and all forms of distortions, ideas are channelled through the characters. The reader is reminded that what constitutes a flaw in the delineation of character in this way is that craftsmanship instead of revealing something significant and personal to the reader, tends to unravel the ingenuity and ideas of the author. These two elements of technique co-exist in Cary.

Sometimes Johnson's utterances come close to those of West African military conscripts during the war years. Some of the aspects of his loyalty to England are rightly speaking, military in nature. The reason is that West African conscripts who fought in the war on the side of the allies, often felt that they belonged to the tradition

and culture represented by the allied governments - Britain and France. They had been promised a post-war glory and Mister Johnson is now living and sharing in that glory. Thus, when he suddenly shouts out, "Hi, you general dar, bring me de cole beer," he does so not as the enthusiastic poet but as a soldier in the barracks. The point to be kept in mind is that Johnson's idea of loyalty and patriotism are military: "England is my country, dat King of England is my king," and he could as well have added "for whom I am fighting."[1]

This point is reinforced by the farewell songs which he and the prison guards sing at the end of the novel:

> 'Good-bye, my little father, my little mother.
> I'm going for the whiteman's war. . . .
> Good-bye, my little river, my little village.'[2]

Songs and farewells featured very prominently among the departing sentiments of African conscripts who were drafted into the army. The main point remains untouched: why did Cary decide to use them and how did they help to enhance his theme of change and enrichment of culture?

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 211.

[2]Ibid., p. 243.

The significance is to be seen in the differences which Cary detected as existing between British colonial policy of non-involvement, and the French policy of assimilation. It will be seen then that apart from showing the decadence of the traditional African society, Cary was criticising the British colonial policy of Indirect Rule. British colonial policy, Cary was to learn, was a more disinterested form of administration than the French. According to the British practice of Indirect Rule, the Imperial Government worked side by side with the traditional African government. The French adopted a policy of cultural assimilation, of systematic and direct involvement that led to the eventual replacement of the traditional authorities. An example of the British attitude is the case of Mr. Burwash's policy of indifference and non-commitment in The African Witch.

An important aspect of Indirect Rule that concerns Mister Johnson and his patriotic sentiments is that the British colonialized African became a British subject without repudiating the traditional African society. Under the system, African Chiefs and their subjects, automatically became British subjects without having to live in England. The weakness of the system, and this is what Cary is criticising, is that, unfortunately the individual did

not even understand why he had to be a British subject; yet it merely occured to him that he was one; that he enjoyed the same privileges that were accorded all British subjects. Ip so facto, he continued to live his traditional life.

As a matter of fact, under Indirect Rule the individual was lost and had practically no rights to defend; since neither the African tradition nor the imperial was involved enough to be responsible forms of government. Thus the individual drifted in a no-man's land and perished in it. The traditional law had been made ineffective by the presence of imperial rule, while the latter refused to be seriously involved.

Joyce Cary seemed to have gained an insight into French Colonial policy in Africa. The African Senegalese troops did not regard the war as a colonial war as their British counterparts did. The Senegalese knew and felt that it was a war being fought to defend 'la patrie.' The distinction is essential because it shows what one would expect in the form of patriotic sentiments, from the British and French colonial peoples. To the Senegalese, 'la patrie' is France. French colonialized Africans could apply for French citizenship, simply by having attained a certain level of European education or by having fought

with a regular French army to defend France or her territories. The non-Europeanized society was not part of the French citizenry, as was the case with their counterparts in the British colonies. This policy of assimilation produced a class of Europeanized Africans who became more patriotic about France than the French themselves.

It is my contention that the enthusiasm which Cary assigns to Mr. Johnson is true only because it represents a vision rather than a presentation of the historical facts about Africa. That is why I wish to argue that through Mr. Johnson we are made to anticipate a time when British policy will change from one of no commitment to one of engagement. As to the matter of the "factness" about Johnson's representative role as the prototype of the emerging African elite, the patriotic sentiments expressed were not common in British territories. Johnson remains and represents only a dream of a future.

The reader is reminded that Cary did in fact anticipate such a time; for in An American Visitor, he bitterly criticises the British practice of Indirect Rule for the simple reason that it ignored the suffering individuals. In this novel, Cottee, a character whose views seem to have corresponded to the author's, says that the British ought to be involved with their Africans as

the French do:

> Why we don't even teach them (Africans) English. We behave exactly as if English books and English ideas would poison them . . . the French don't make that mistake. They think they can't do anything better than give people French civilization, French literature, French art. Ask a Senegalese how he likes being a conscript and he'll tell you 'C'est pour la patrie.' Ask one of our apes who he's fighting for, and he'll probably say H company, or Captain Stoker.[1]

From this citation, we notice that Cottee anticipates the ugly descriptions which Cary gives us of Johnson's Fada, as a place with no art and no culture. The ugly picture of Fada, in a sense, is only a projection meant to make a point. Fada is real only because it is "As if," (to use Cary's expression).

Jack Wolkenfeld has noticed a coincidence of point of view between Cary and Cottee. He observes that,

> . . . there seems also to be an attempt in this book /An American Visitor/ to make Cottee a major narrating centre and to channel a bulk of the information through him.[2]

It is with this understanding that I am tempted to conclude that through Johnson's patriotic sentiments Cary is criticising not only the ineffectual tradition of Fada but

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[1]Joyce Cary, An American Visitor, p. 97.

[2]Jack Wolkenfeld, Joyce Cary, The Developing Style, p. 70.

the colonial policy of Indirect Rule. Furthermore, Cottee's words represent Cary's final attitude towards Africa and Africans as portrayed in the four novels. From the first novel, Aissa Saved (1932) to Mister Johnson, the attitude of the characters is always a movement forward, involvement rather than withdrawal. It was from this understanding of his own attitude towards the uncommitted policy of Indirect Rule and the influence it had on the lives of individuals that Cary meant to justify Johnson's enthusiasm for the King of England.

A reading of Cary's African novels, that ignores the complementary facts of his political writings will be doing a great deal of injustice to the issues and the author himself. This attitude of ignoring the non-fiction might be one of the reasons to account for the fact that Wolkenfeld made the mistake to argue that Aladai of The African Witch failed as a character because he articulated no program.[1] But as a matter of fact, Aladai's emphasis on education and the introduction of European civilization are views which the author himself maintains in Power in Men and The Case for African Freedom. Aladai

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[1]Jack Wolkenfeld, Joyce Cary, The Developing Style, p. 15.

is created as a response to the miseries portrayed by Albert Schweitzer. The essential thing is that Cary tends to fall back too clumsily on surface realism, and this, I find to mean a possible flaw.

Mr. Johnson, in his attempt to revitalize Fada is constantly being dragged down by the intrusion of the author. This is brought out in the author's obsession with the revolting reality of Fada. Johnson's character looms in the background of this world as the effective force capable of impressing itself on both the British and native administration. We can see how this approach at showing Johnson as the driving force operates by observing the contrasts between Johnson's life and that of the Waziri. The Waziri is a living embodiment of sterility. A decadent homesexual, he turns the little boy Saleh, into a female. Saleh paints his nails with henna and "strolls after him, shaking out of his gown a powerful smell of musk."[1] The Waziri's love of the artificial is represented by colours, painted nails, smells and perfumes. At the same time as the Wazari pursues Saleh to satisfy his infatuation, the women of the harem are engaged in a lively

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 40.

discussion about the men who visit them at night.[1]

The Waziri's ineffectual sexual life is contrasted strikingly with that of Johnson. Johnson cannot bear very much ugliness because he cannot share in the life of emotional and physical degeneration that characterises the Waziri. The Waziri's moral and sexual perversions show a more explicit contrast with the engaging attitude that Johnson presents to his wife, Bamu. Johnson admires Bamu's real and imagined beauty. He knows how to attract Bamu to himself, and to dispel some of the fears which she expresses towards him; Johnson says:

> 'Where do you hide, little tortoise
> Under the leaves of the darkness.'[2]

On the other hand, the girls' song at the wedding dance, represent Johnson as the brutal serpent. The girls sing:

> 'I fear the snake he is dangerous to women
> See he has struck my poor sister
> She is swollen with his bite, she cries
> Out, "Aie, Aie!" '[3]

In the two passages above, Cary identifies Johnson and his wife with the two symbols of fecundity: the phallic serpent and the female tortoise. Johnson, the serpent figure, represents force and the girls' song shows that it

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[1] Ibid., p. 85. [2] Ibid., p. 50. [3] Ibid.

is from the serpent's bite that Bamu will become "swollen," that is, pregnant. Johnson in his sexual life as well as in his road-digging activity, remains the dynamic and powerful force of generation.

At this point, I wish to point out some remarkable similarities between Cary's use of the tortoise and the serpent and that of the traditional Nigerian beliefs. Among Southern Nigerians, the serpent is generally represented on the shrines of fertility gods, as approaching the tortoise. The two are depicted to symbolize fertility. P. Amaury Talbot in his study on Some Nigerian Fertility Cults, has pointed out very accurately that on the shrines of the male cults "the phallic serpent was found in a position of prominence . . . while the tortoise was seen, modelled alone in that of the goddess." Talbot goes farther to suggest that to most Africans the,

> . . . tortoise stands for feminine qualities of persuasion - sometimes, perhaps, not untinged by guile - as opposed to the more forceful male attributes.[1]

Apart from the fact that Johnson is essentially dynamic, he is also a lover of beauty. From the writing of the letter 'S' to the construction of a lady latrine,

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[1]P. Amaury Talbot, Some Nigerian Fertility Cults, pp. 6-7.

he is principally preoccupied with the creation of beauty. He is rightly then the man of the imagination, of order who "cannot bear to come near too much bitterness."[1] Like his boss Mr. Rudbeck, he has the ability of refusing to notice unpleasant things.[2] "The whole truth," Johnson explains indignantly to his friend Ajali,

> . . . don't agree for dirty little house lizard like you . . . You call me liar, I say you, yas, I'm a liar - How anyone can tell stink bug about de glory of God - he only make so bad stink he make me sick for belly.[3]

From this speech we notice that Ajali, Johnson's friend, possesses a limited imagination. In the following speech, Johnson further expresses his indignation about the unimaginative nature of the people of Fada:

> You show um a diamond, he tink um a broken bottle - you show um beautiful fine horse, he tink um a rock rabbit - you give um bag of gold, he tink um snake's head with throat full of yaller poison - you bring um beautiful girl, he say she little dirty goat - he creep on his belly all over everything like house lizard, he say all thing made of dirt.[4]

In this citation the limitations imposed on the vision of

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[1]Joyce Cary, Mister Johnson, p. 56.

[2]Ibid., p. 58. [3]Ibid., p. 117.

[4]Ibid., p. 118.

the Fada are dramatized in their inability to differentiate between a diamond and a broken bottle; gold and the head of a snake; a horse and a rabbit; and a beautiful girl and a goat. It is evident from the instances of Johnson's indignation with the Fada and their stunted imagination that his career represents, in a sense, a thirst of a soul after ideal beauty. When he sings "Oh, England, my home all on de big water," he expresses not only a sentiment and wish to live in the real England but a hope, a longing and vision that resolves momentarily the tensions of the heart. This thirst for ideal order and beauty presents Johnson as an archetypal rebel and artist figure.

The last stage of Johnson's life in Fada must be seen in terms of his rebellion and the subsequent result on his society and himself. In Yoruba mythology, the closest figure to the character of Mister Johnson, is the Ajantala. He has numerous prototypes in European tradition; and in this particular case he has much in common with William Blake's men of the imagination. As the Ajantala, he appears in the works of the Nigerian novelist Amos Tutuola as a violent but sensitive child. Right at his birth we are given to believe that the world appears

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to Ajantala as filth and chaos.[1] In Wole Soyinka's Idanre, he appears as the iconoclast, yet virile essence.[2] Here, we are treating him as the archetypal rebel. In which case he was anticipated by Aissa, Mr. Bewsher of An American Visitor and Aladai of The African Witch. He reappears in Charley of Charley is My Darling and also in the older Gulley Jimson of The Horse's Mouth. In each of these instances, the rebel is the divinity of Cary himself which he uses like an intoxicant to infuse power in his characters. As rebels, the characters are characterized by an ability to destroy and re-create, not only the works of art but society itself and its values.

Thus, the understanding of Johnson's role in relation to Cary's world brings up a question that looms in the background of Cary's whole fictional world - the question of morality. We are reminded that Cary's heroes and heroines are principally revolutionaries who reject their past in order to introduce a new set of values for their respective societies. In fact, according to Cary,

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[1]Amos Tutuola, "Ajanta, the Noxious Guest," An African Treasury, Collected by Langston Hughes (New York: Pyramid Books, 1960), pp. 121-126.

[2]Wole Soyinka, Idanre and Other Poems (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 65.

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Mister Johnson was written in the present tense because the hero has no past and lives perpetually in the present. The only character in this novel who expresses a nostalgic feeling for the glories of the empire-building days and of Pax Britanica is Mr. Gollup. He is eventually stabbed to death by Johnson. The lack of a feeling of nostalgia is a fact that separates Cary as a writer on Africa, from Africans writing at that time. Johnson, on the whole, depends on no tradition except that of his own creation. It is through his machinations that he and Mr. Rudbeck manipulate government funds in order to build their road. By ignoring treasury regulations both set up a system of private morality; in other words, they succeed in building the road in time only by ignoring the traditional budgetary requirements.

Since this novel represents Cary's last effort at expressing his idea of Africa as well as the fate of man, it is necessary to see how he thought of the world which he created. The question that crops up from Cary's belief in the work of the creative genius who is also a revolutionary is one of the relation between the personal and conventional morality. It has been shown in chapter 1 (p. 25) that Cary did not believe in any system of morality that was prescriptive, that is, a communually

pre-determined morality. Hence he was disgusted with tribal taboo, because it made no room for the creative abilities of individuals. We have also pointed out that Cary's interest in imperialism emanates from the fact that it tended to replace the tribal system, by creating new and expanded channels through which genius could dramatize itself. He criticised imperialism when it tended to become an alternative oppression to the one the Africans suffered.

The question then is, how does the tradition to which one belongs contribute to the formation of culture and moral values for the individual? If life and history are patterns of symbols, such that therefore each generation creates its own symbols by destroying the past ones, as Cary says, where then, is the basis on which culture and civilization are founded? How can genius become part of civilization and culture when it distrusts all the values and symbols on which the past had built its hopes? How, in fact, does the pattern of history as ceaseless adjustment assure the stability of the basic moral standards of society? Questions such as these led Robert Bloom to come to the conclusion that, "essentially

Cary takes pains to deprive his novels of a moral centre."[1] Bloom further argued that the "notion of a private universe which each man creates for himself . . . about ultimate reality and truth" leads us only to ask more questions about the meaning of such worlds. For example, Bloom concludes:

> If each man construes experience subjectively, we may wish to know whether there is a verifiable external and objective reality, whether men have access to the true nature of things, or must rest content with narrow individual fantasies. . . . As a result the doctrine of creating private worlds becomes a way of avoiding real commitment to any particular private world.[2]

Therefore, it is essential to point out that the basis of morality in Joyce Cary is personal. That is to say, Cary does not believe in any form of normative moral value on the grounds that norms, especially when morality is concerned, frequently turn into dogmas. As dogmas they begin to operate independently of individuals. Also, Cary does not believe in the realm of ideal spirit, that is, a state of ideal forms for which man aspires. Instead, we have in Cary, man in his initial earthings in his attempt

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[1]Robert Bloom, The Indeterminate World: A Study of the Novels of Joyce Cary (Philadelphia: University of Pennysylvannia Press, 1962), p. 44.

[2]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

to reconcile himself with his fallen state, creates. Man is preoccupied not with the wish to attain the realm of ideal and eternal truth in order to resolve his conflict, but with living in the act of creation; for this is the only way through which he can celebrate (not resolve) the tragic dilemma. To presume an ideal moral truth then is to suggest that there is a movement, or search for final redemption in Cary'w world. Always there is a struggle because truth is eternally partial. It follows that any norms set as a pattern of morality, turn out in the end to be mere illusions. Joyce Cary is therefore a Dionysian man as opposed and as complementary to the Apollonian norms. In the latter case, the individual moves towards resolution whereas in the Dionysian realm, man only celebrates the eternal creative dilemma and the spirit of his own revolutionary grandeur. The knowledge in understanding the relation between duality of the two essences is here complemented by the illuminations of Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy. This is much in evidence in Art and Reality where Cary states that "All novels are concerned from first to last with morality." It will also be noticed from the following citation that Cary already anticipated Robert Bloom's questions on the matter of morality in art.

"A novelist creates a world of action and therefore he has to deal with motive, with morality."[1] Cary also has something to say about the relation between art and the reader.

> We judge the value of the work finally by its revelation of a moral real. The power and quality of the artist's craft is in the force and authority of his revelation.[2]

The striking point about the above citation is that Cary is expressing a fact about art and morality, a fact which Mark Schorer has also noted very clearly in the essay, "Technique as Discovery." Mark Schorer states that,

> . . . the virtue of the modern novelist . . . is not only that he pays so much attention to his medium, but that, when he pays most, he discovers through it a new subject-matter and a greater one.[3]

To Mark Schorer, and this is what Cary's passage explains, technique does not only contain "intellectual and moral implications but (that) it discovers them."[4] It follows

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 165.

[2]Ibid., p. 166.

[3]Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," The Theory of the Novel, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 7.

[4]Ibid.

that the novel, because it is a work of art, must necessarily reveal a morality. This kind of morality or truth which a work of art, the novel, reveals, Cary calls the moral real.

> At a certain primitive level, all men agree . . . Courage, duty, affection, loyalty, self-discipline, truth, these are fundamental values . . . they differ only in their relative importance.[1]

Cary also maintains that there is a permanent form of reality. This he calls the objective real. It is that "which stands over against all dreams, all the creations of act, as a permanent character of nature, both in men and in things."[2] It is evident that as a novelist, Cary was aware of the questions of morality and objective reality which Robert Bloom failed to see. Thus when we turn to Mr. Johnson, we see at once that that world is not devoid of morality. Cary recognizes that the most obstinate form of reality against which all dreamers fight is human nature. Human nature realizes itself in both the good and the evil. The success of any sense of moral values depends less on the rules than on the goodwill of the people who

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[1]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality, p. 169.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 164.

are concerned. For example, at a point in <u>Mister Johnson</u>, Tring the new A. D. O. argues that Rudbeck and Johnson, in manipulating government funds have definitely ignored regulations. The Resident, Mr. Bulteel says,

> . . . all these regulations meant to keep a check on every penny of expenditure are a bit of an anomaly. Anyone who wants to swindle the Treasury could make a fool of the rules any day - and as for the honest ones [such as Rudbeck and Johnson] they only find 'em in the way of real honest work - as here with poor Ruddy's road.[1]

According to Cary the last act of freedom opened to a man is to break the strictures of society (this appears at the end of the novel in the shooting of Johnson by Rudbeck). But this does not suggest that society has no moral centre. To Cary, society is men, just as freedom is the collective power of men; morality is the result of the wills and actions of men as they act and interact. We notice at once, then, a difference between Mr. Johnson and his superior Mr. Rudbeck. Whereas Johnson lives a completely intuitive and aesthetic life, making very little use of his education and critical mind, Mr. Rudbeck can think and listen to advice. The Resident tells Rudbeck, "Remember that no administration can overlook a breach of financial regulations."[2] Rudbeck accepts it as true and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 126-127. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 160.

> . . . reasonable explanation of the fact that obstacles stand in the way of every constructive plan . . . He accepts this cheerfully and says to Bulteel, 'Ours not to reason why?'[1]

The degree of moral consciousness which we find in Rudbeck is hardly noticeable in the actions of Mr. Johnson. When Johnson had first broken into Gollup's store and stolen money, his friends, Benjamin and Ajali had been astonished by his triumph and it "seemed to them that Johnson defies the very laws of being; and still goes unpunished."[2] The sense of moral justice which the two friends feel is being abused by Johnson and it lays good grounds for argument against Johnson. It compels the reader to accept the treatment which Johnson receives at the trial, at the end of the novel. When Johnson's father-in-law, Aliu, strikes Johnson with a pestle he is enacting his own crude form of justice. Johnson's unthinking responses to situations makes his murder of Sergeant Gollup plausible, seeing that the poet's actions have never been guided by reason.

Whereas Rudbeck can listen to advice from his friends, Johnson believes too strongly in his "sojer heart," in his power. He sings;

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[1] _Ibid._, p. 186. [2] _Ibid._, p. 216.

He go by himself, no one fit to stop him
He full of fire, he full of hot, he full of strong
He make all dem friend' for his own heart.[1]

Johnson's failure to see things outside of "his own heart" accounts for his isolation and eventual death. This lack of communication between Johnson and the world of every day experience is shown in his final failure to enter into the life of Bamu, his wife. To her, he remains a stranger, not in the physical sense but in the sense of making reasonable adjustments of his moral values in order to accommodate her.

The death of Johnson presents and offers a remarkable solution to the problem of creativity and morality. When Johnson is caught and sent to prison, the human sense of morality affirms its authority over the private, without destroying the individual's imagination. Johnson's solution is to appeal to the mother figure, which he discovers in Rudbeck, the A. D. O.

The mother-child relation in African literature suggests the return of the child to the source of life and a rediscovery of the sense of certainty in mother love. Joyce Cary's Rebel Child, who deserts the mother and picks

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[1] Ibid., p. 209.

his way through rubbish heaps and dirt is portrayed in the short story "The Rebel."[1] An appeal to the mother is a sign of reconcilation, and a return to the womb of domination, and suggests renewal of life in man and nature. Cary also treats this theme in Aissa Saved and the act represents the power of sustaining human love and goodness.

Aissa and Gajere are making love in the ju-ju man's hut, as the couple are rolling themselves on the floor mat, they accidentally kick their two year-old son, Aba. The boy screams, and Aissa, on rising up takes the baby and tries to console and comfort him. She then forces her breast into his mouth. In protest, Abba withdraws his head from his mother's breast. Aissa continues to plead and comfort him by saying: " 'My dear, my darling, my little ape.' " Then we are told that despite this consolation the baby "knew very well he was not going to get any compensation for his injustice," a fact which the adults did not yet understand, about the nature of reality. But in what follows, we are reminded that the child did not runaway from his mother; instead he accepted

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[1]Joyce Cary, Spring Song and other Stories (Penguin, 1963), p. 300.

the loss and coiled himself in his mother's arms. Thus, Abba teaches his parents, that one can never receive enough compensation to justify the existence of evil and unfairness in things. But one does not go about destroying the world. By coiling himself into the mother's arms Abba undoubtedly accepts the warmth and love from his mother as the only thing that offers a sense of security in a hostile world.

The three words which Johnson applies to Rudbeck are mother, father and friend. As mother and father, Rudbeck and Johnson share a common emotional personality. As friend, Rudbeck is again, the other part of Johnson. Malcolm Foster accurately states,

> Johnson has penetrated too deeply into Rudbeck's consciousness, especially when he asks his superior to shoot him and apologizes for causing him too much trouble. . . .[1]

This is the crux of the novel, "Johnson's ultimate impact on Rudbeck." Both are united at the primitive emotional level. They share the same imaginative life and spirit as that which pervades Johnson's songs. When Rudbeck finally shoots his friend, it is the same spirit tearing apart the

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[1]Malcolm Foster, Joyce Cary, A Biography, p. 328.

veil of conventional morality. Johnson dies but Rudbeck remains to continue to re-enact the cosmic conflict between creative genius and convention. By accepting Rudbeck as mother, Johnson, the rebel recognizes the power of moral love and reality. There is therefore no resolution of the conflict. Instead, Rudbeck inherits it. And we assume that after the murder of Johnson, Rudbeck will be tried for the murder of Johnson. Thus, when the scene closes up Johnson has transferred his suffering to Rudbeck.

To conclude then we can rightly argue that in relation to the theme of change Johnson and Rudbeck are complementary characters "who between them contain the necessary qualities for creative achievement."[1] As an individual Johnson's work in the Fada and his death leave a significant impression, not only on Rudbeck's mind, but on our own. Thus Cary's ability in his novels to compel us to develop a new form of awareness about Africa and the people who inhabit is a marked achievement. This intimate sense of awareness represents what Evan Owen has rightly termed Cary's belief in the human person, his elevation of

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[1]Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent, p. 67.

him above all considerations of political and scientific progress.[1]

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[1]Evan Owen, "The Supremacy of the individual in the novels of Joyce Cary," Adam International Review, XVIII, 1950, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis of Aissa Saved, An American Visitor, The African Witch and Mister Johnson, I conclude that the problems of cultural contact and change constitute the central concern in these novels. The present study seeks to show that through different stylistic devices, Cary successfully transforms the social and cultural conflicts on the African continent into a significant pattern of judging human motivation.

Questions about African poverty, ineffective governments and obsolete institutions supply the bulk of the material of the novels. In order to accomplish the goal of a successful cultural transformation, Cary favours the idea of progress and cultural enrichment, and rejects all forms of stagnation and surrender to natural forces. Cary's solutions to the harsh realities of Africa do not only show his moral indignation at the nature of the social injustices to which Africans are exposed, but also his advocacy of greater involvement by the imperial government. Hence, his vision of Africa is futuristic. Although these

novels preceded the African independence movement, the visions of the heroes are essentially anti-nationalistic.

The various aspects of Cary's fictional world are united finally by his imaginative vision which is fundamentally tragic. Finally the discussion of the four novels reveals that Cary's heroes and heroines leave the world as undefeated men and women, who affirm the reality of their existence by transcending circumstance through the power of their visions of what they conceive to be reality.

ABSTRACT

Joyce Cary wrote four novels on Africa: _Aissa Saved_, _An American Visitor_, _The African Witch_, and _Mister Johnson_. In these novels Cary is primarily concerned with the problems of cultural contact and change. The purpose of the Thesis has been to explain from a close examination of the symbols and imagery in the works themselves, how Cary's intimate knowledge of Africa contributed to the understanding and interpretation of the process of the impingement of aspects of European institutions on the African and the ensuing conflict and subsequent social change and transformation.

Cary is concerned with the free individual and the way he acts out his creative role in society. He developed a coherent sense of ethical consciousness which enabled him to realize that there exists, in human society, a process of ceaseless change enacted by each generation.

Cary's knowledge of Africa is originally based on the colonial image of the continent as it was projected by Victorian ethos. Nevertheless, his originality in the

novels discussed in the present study derives from his vision of the African and his portrayal of his character based on an intimate familiarity with both.

Cary manipulates conventional attitudes towards Africa to show how misconceived some of these attitudes are. His recognition of the individual as a vital factor in society and his presentation of the idea of change as a historical imperative constitute the dynamics of his ideal society.

On the whole his heroes and heroines transcend circumstance by the power of their vision of what they conceive to be real.

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