

JOYCE CARY'S CONCEPT OF THE IMAGINATION

by

DOREEN KAROLINE DELL TEXMO

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Malcolm Page
Senior Supervisor

R. J. Baker
Examining Committee

Stephen A. Black
Examining Committee

R. J. C. Harper
External Examiner

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and examine Joyce Cary's concept of the imagination as embodied in the principal characters of his works up to and including the first trilogy (1932 to 1944), with the exception of Castle Corner. The imagination is an integrating and omnipresent factor in each of Cary's novels; it is used synonymously with sympathy, understanding, intuition, inspiration, faith, passion, emotion, and freedom at various points in the works, thereby indicating its all-pervasive and extensive nature.

Via the imaginations of his characters, Cary's central theme (delineating the opposition of freedom and authority) is developed and illustrated. All characters may be grouped according to the type and scope of their imaginations, as all possess it in some form, and the difference lies only in the way it is exercised--creatively or authoritatively, in the name of art or of the king, deferring to pagan ju-ju or Christian charms. Its destructive nature is inherent in the creative: fear and joy, tears and laughter, the Fall and the Creation are but a few of the ensuing and necessary opposites entailed. The tragi-comic nature of most of Cary's novels is a direct result of the paradoxical nature of imagination.

In the African novels, the imaginations of the natives are contrasted with those of the colonial administrators. In Aissa Saved the result of Christianity imposed upon the pagan mind is demonstrated, effecting an excellent portrayal of the religious imagination. In The African Witch, the focus is altered to the pagan imagination which triumphs despite the attempts of

the educated to enlighten. An American Visitor focuses primarily on the colonial administrators, contrasting the active and creative imagination of Monkey Bewsher to the more prosaic and materialistic ones of the other characters. With Mister Johnson, we are given the first truly "typical" Cary character, the rambunctious and resilient native Mister Johnson; an "artist in life," he creates poetry in his very movements.

In the novels of childhood, the imagination of the child is explicitly related to that of the native and the artist. Charley Brown, of Charley Is My Darling, is another Mister Johnson, continually in conflict with the ordered and tamed adult world. His imagination manifests itself in anti-social adventures, plots, and schemes. An inspiration of the child is equivalent to that of the artist; once the intuition occurs, it must be actualized, acted out, "put on canvas." In A House of Children, the children portrayed have been well brought up and trained to exercise their imaginations in socially acceptable manners; they act out their visions on a stage.

Herself Surprised, To Be A Pilgrim, and The Horse's Mouth, comprising the first trilogy, and each a first-person narrative, exemplify respectively the imaginations of the "eternal Eve," Sara Monday; the liberal-conservative lawyer, Thomas Wilcher; and the anarchic artist, Gulley Jimson. Cary's dependence upon William Blake's ideas is clearly illustrated; Wilcher represents "Abstract Philosophy" of the "Reasoning Spectre" which "wars in enmity against Imagination" or Gulley Jimson. The cycle seen in Blake's "The Mental Traveller" is also depicted; the female forces are embodied in Sara, who attempts to bind Gulley to her

more limited world, "catches his shrieks in cups of gold," as well as in Wilcher, who represents Reason, "the rock of law." Paradoxically, these same authoritative and ordering principles are seen within the creative artist, just as within Sara and Wilcher may be seen the tendency to anarchy and creativity. Both are artists in their own right, creating the worlds in which they live, excellently illustrated by the unique metaphorical construction each uses to describe his world. Through the "five windows" of perception the world is sucked in, assimilated, re-created and expressed in ways which are characteristic of the individual, always anathema to yet another individual, and a testimony to Cary's own protean imagination.

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Introduction

To date, there have been five full-length studies of Joyce Cary published, all within the present decade. The first, Andrew Wright's Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels (1958), is eminently readable, but quite general, utilizing autobiographical material, unpublished work, and reviewing Cary's political and critical works, as well as his poetry, short stories and novels. (An unpublished doctoral dissertation by Anthony Friedson, The Novels of Joyce Cary (1961), covers much the same ground although each novel is dealt with in considerably greater depth.) Robert Bloom's study, The Indeterminate World (1962), is even more specific, and elaborates upon the thesis that there is no moral center to Cary's novels--a notion that would seem to be refuted by Cary's own testimony in Art and Reality (1958), and which has been rejected by numerous critics. In 1964 Charles Hoffman published Joyce Cary: The Comedy of Freedom, an excellent study utilizing much unpublished material from Cary's manuscripts in the Bodleian Library (the Osborn Collection), and dealing primarily with the novels in a more systematic order than either Wright's or Bloom's more thematic approach. Molly Mahood, in Joyce Cary's Africa (1965), relies heavily upon Cary's letters and unpublished material and only deals with the African novels; in addition, she seems to use Cary's novels to make statements about Africa rather than utilizing her knowledge of Africa to discuss and analyze the novels. Of the full-length studies published to date, Golden Larsen's The Dark Descent: Social Change and Moral Responsibility in the Novels of Joyce Cary (1965), is one of the best. Although the material is approached thematically, Larsen's work does not suffer thereby, as does Bloom's. In approaching Cary thematically, Bloom misplaces the emphasis, while Larsen maintains his theme but does

not subordinate Cary's material to it. Larsen's seems to be an organic approach and Bloom's a mechanical one, applied rather than inherent; what does not "fit" is amputated or ignored. Larsen's is an incisive and perceptive work, providing as much inspiration as scholarly illumination on the subject of Cary's work. He recognizes Cary's view of the importance of freedom to the individual, and the entailed responsibility to create one's own existence. The value of this recognition to a study of Cary's use of imagination is inestimable.

Walter Allen's British Book Council pamphlet, Joyce Cary (1953), was excellent at a time when no other works existed on Cary, but like William Van O'Connor's Joyce Cary (1966), it is now too general to be very useful; however, it does serve a purpose for the beginning student of Joyce Cary. Adam International Review, which in 1950 devoted an issue to Cary, gives closer attention to the man and his works, incorporating an interview with three new prefaces and an essay entitled "The Way a Novel Gets Written," all by Cary. The issue of Modern Fiction Studies (1959) devoted to Cary is significant as a testament to his growing reputation and his importance as a contemporary novelist; the essays contained therein are by and large insignificant except for John Teeling's "Joyce Cary's Moral World," which effectively refutes Bloom's position that Cary's novels lack a moral center. Of the other articles on Joyce Cary, Marjorie Ryan's "An Interpretation of The Horse's Mouth," A.D. Hall's "The African Novels of Joyce Cary--I and II," Carlyle King's "Joyce Cary and the Creative Imagination," Kenneth Hamilton's "Boon or Thorn? Joyce Cary and Samuel Beckett on Human Life," Stephen Shapiro's "Leopold Bloom and Gulliver Jimson: The Economics of Survival," Ruth Van Horn's "Freedom and Imagination in the Novels of Joyce Cary," Hazard Adams' "Blake

and Gulley Jimson: "English Symbolists" and "Joyce Cary's Swimming Swan," and Kenneth Watson's "'The Captive and the Free': Artist, Child, and Society in the World of Joyce Cary" seem to be the most interesting, intelligent, and applicable to a study of Cary's concept of the imagination.

The various reviews appearing at the publication of each of Cary's novels are so uninformed and/or erroneous as to be quite useless. We have reviewers referring to Cary as "her"; admitting that they have not read the other books in the trilogy; assuming that the "Fascist" Jim Latter and Cary are one and the same; reading the African novels as imperialistic propaganda, and so on (see Friedson for an excellent review of the reviewers).

Of the critical attacks on Cary, Frederick Karl's is perhaps the most excoriating - but intelligent; he feels that Cary "seems unable to prolong any actual moral tension," that he does not "come to grips with people in whom real choice is involved," and that therefore "dramatic conflicts naturally diminish in interest"—which supports Bloom. But in that Cary was interested in character, in depicting the individual driven to impose his vision on the world, to be most effective, he had to view this drive from within the individual and to sacrifice a more objective and "moral" stance of his own to do so. Therefore, while granting that Karl's criticisms are partly justifiable, it must be iterated that they miss the larger point. Were Cary primarily interested in portraying morality or moral tension, we might listen to Karl, for Cary would indeed have failed. But in that Cary's intentions were to depict the individual caught in the tendrils of the creative imagination, Karl's complaints are simply not applicable. We must not criticize a sonnet with the standards required of an excellent ballad: a work must be criticized for what it is rather than what it is not.

Although Cary himself, in Art and Reality, makes a case for the "Morality" of works of art, it seems clear that this is inevitably a by-product of the primary concern with imagination. The reader supplies his own moral interpretation having viewed another individual's mode of existence as objectively laid down by Cary, the "Mother Groper" or mid-wife of the affair. In this way morality is seen to be subjectively dependent upon the creative reader.

In this study, judgments have been avoided, since Cary's emphasis was solidly centered elsewhere, and the moral ethic of a given character would be a side-effect of his imaginative intensity and its leanings, i.e., toward religion, art, adventure or a moral concept such as Duty or Honour. In that Cary primarily deals with Africans, children, artists, women, and men of faith in the works between 1932 and 1944, and only latterly with politicians, ex-soldiers, preachers, businessmen--individuals whose social roles demand a socially accepted morality or ethic--the emphasis on imagination over morality is as imperative as it would be in dealing with aesthetics. Children, who act from within and who have as yet no moral precepts to guide actions by; Africans, who act according to standards outside of western morality; artists, whose allegiance is to something more sublime than the utilitarian morality of the day: all must be seen as outside or beyond "the rock of law" and therefore judged by different standards.

This study is an attempt to deal with the ideas concerning imagination embodied in Cary's works and with the embodiment of these notions in action, thought, and the work of the artist. The discussion of the novels preceding The Horse's Mouth is primarily concerned with illustrating the way in which they establish ideas and aspects of characters which are finally culminated

In *Gulley Jimson*, Cary's supreme achievement. In *Gulley* may be seen the adventurous and precocious child defying the adult world, the frustrated and alienated savage puzzled by white men's ways, the inspired and idealistic colonial administrator who has an idea about a bridge and wants to actualize it, the man of faith who trusts the vision or the voice from within. *Gulley* is the synthesis of all the eccentric, rebellious, vital incorrigibles portrayed by Cary in his earliest works, in addition to being something much more, the creative artist working with symbols. As such, the section dealing with The Horse's Mouth is more extensive and intensive than previous sections dealing with earlier novels.

Finally, the debt to Cary's non-fiction works, Power in Men (1939) and Art and Reality (1958) should be acknowledged. These have been invaluable for their comments on the nature of freedom, imagination, intuition, art and reality. As guides to Cary's own creative processes and beliefs, they are much more explicit than his prefaces and more reliable than any given character who may or may not be Cary's chosen "voice." These works will be utilized in the final chapter, a discussion of Joyce Cary's own extensive imagination.

Chapter I

JOYCE CARY'S CONCEPT OF THE IMAGINATION

Joyce Cary's novels are centered around the themes of freedom and authority; both are dramatized through his rendering of various states of imagination. All his characters, from the militaristic Jim Latter to the anarchic Gulley Jimson, possess this to some degree in varying forms.

In the African novels, Aissa Saved, An American Visitor, The African Witch and Mister Johnson, Cary illustrates the imagination of the native, in many ways similar to that of the child or the creative artist. By contrasting it with the way of thinking of the white man or the colonial administrator, Cary illuminates its particular nature, much as the imagination of the child is contrasted with that of the adult. In the novels of childhood, A House of Children, Charley Is My Darling, and Castle Corner, Cary makes explicit comparisons between the innocent, unadulterated imaginations of the children and those of the Africans; as the children grow to maturity and are confronted with a moral, rational world which imposes itself upon them, we have situations similar to those of the Africans upon confrontation with Western codes of conduct, manners and morals. Even more explicit parallels are drawn between the way Charley Brown or Mister Johnson behave and think and the way the

creative artist meets the world. In the first trilogy, three different types of imagination are represented, each having seminal bases in earlier characters. Herself Surprised, Sara Monday's story, deals with the feminine mind and imagination, and the manner in which it imposes itself upon the masculine world. To Be A Pilgrim, Tom Wilcher's memoirs, deals with imagination embodied as faith, much as does Aissa Saved. Finally, Gulley Jimson's story, The Horse's Mouth, gives us the creative imagination; that is, the imagination manifested in daily living, and also in the created object of art, Gulley's paintings.

Although Cary has been called everything from an anarchist to a fascist due to a regrettable critical tendency to identify him with his characters (understandable in the light of his ability to obliterate his own sensibilities while writing a first-person narrative), it is still possible to determine that William Blake's philosophy has had a great effect upon Cary's own Weltanschauung, as it had upon Gulley Jimson's.¹ While at Oxford, Cary read Kant and Blake, but Blake especially, of whom he says in an unpublished essay, "[He] introduced me into a highly complex universe where what is called the material is entirely dissolved into imaginative construction and states of feeling, where matter, mind and emotion, become simply aspects

¹ Marjorie Ryan, "An Interpretation of The Horse's Mouth," Critique, II (Spring-Summer 1958), 34: "It seems clear that Jimson speaks for Cary in espousing a Blakeian individualism and anti-intellectualism; Hazard Adams, "Blake and Gulley Jimson: English Symbolists," Critique, III (Spring-Fall 1959), 13: "Cary is not Gulley, but he sides with the artist's vision; and that artist turns out to be a symbolist in the tradition of Blake."

of one reality."² Cary's own tendency to equate emotion, sympathy, understanding, faith, or passion with imagination is evident throughout his novels.

Blake's "The Mental Traveller," depicting the oppositions between the feminine, authoritative will and the masculine, creative power, dichotomizes the issue between freedom and authority much as does any work of Joyce Cary. The poem implies that this conflict also exists within the mind of an individual; Cary too knew that the struggle to realize one's freedom was not only hampered by external, social forces, but also by internal tendencies toward "the rock of law." Friedson, commenting on this particular phenomenon, observes that "In each of us, a drunken sailor rebelliously fights with his opposing half who is a crewman on the battleship of authority."³ Gulley Jimson, for example, is his own worst enemy; the same force that urges him to create also drives him to destroy. It is significant that his painting entitled "The Creation" is destroyed while being created, and even if external forces had not brought about its destruction, creation would have been adumbrated at the work's completion.

"The Mental Traveller," emphasizing as it does the cyclical nature of the conflict between freedom and authority, illustrates the way in which joy and pain, laughter and tears, comedy and tragedy alternate and rise in ascendancy only to fall again. The important fact is that of dynamism, of energy or change.

² Quoted in Andrew Wright, Joyce Cary: A Preface to his Novels (New York, 1959), p. 22.

³ Anthony Martin Friedson, The Novels of Joyce Cary (State University of Iowa, 1961), p. 502.

Only the state of entropy is to be decried, in Blake's world view as in Cary's. The eternal creations balance the perpetual falls. Just as Adam and Eve fall to rise again in renewed innocence, so too do Sara and Gulley, eternally falling and eternally rising. Cary "reminds one of Blake," according to Hazard Adams, "in asserting that the freedom of imagination in the fallen world is man's glory; he is also aware that in the fallen world the fact of freedom is also the fact of tragedy...."⁴ The fact of freedom is the source of "all our joy and all our pain," says Cary.⁵ "...the principal fact of life is the free mind. For good and evil, man is a free creative spirit. This produces the very queer world we live in, a world of continuous creation. A perpetually new and lively world, but a dangerous one full of tragedy and injustice."⁶ Constant failure alternates with constant fulfilment in this fallen world of freedom and imagination."⁷

The meaning to be found in human existence lies in what is done with this freedom, its manifestation through imagination; following Blake, Cary calls this meaning "eternity" and its discovery "imagination."⁸ What is eternal and "divine" in man

⁴ Hazard Adams, "Joyce Cary's Swimming Swan," American Scholar, XXIX (Spring 1960), 237.

⁵ Bernard Kalb, Saturday Review, XXXVIII (May 28, 1955), 12.

⁶ From an interview with John Burrows and Alex Hamilton, "Joyce Cary," Writers at Work: the Paris Review Interviews, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1958), p. 53.

⁷ Stephen A. Schapiro, "Leopold Bloom and Gulley Jimson: The Economics of Survival," Twentieth Century Literature, X, 1 (April 1964), 7, notes that freedom is synonymous with vision, imagination.

⁸ See Kenneth Hamilton, "Boon or Thorn? Joyce Cary and Samuel Beckett on Human Life," Dalhousie Review, XXXVIII (Winter 1959), 440.

is his imagination, but paradoxically, for only man who is born and will die possesses it: the limitations of existence must be endured "in order to see and enjoy its glories; for its glories they are, to be found nowhere else except in this 'fallen' (i.e. temporal) world."⁹ Blake reiterates this theme: "The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is, God himself...."¹⁰ "Imagination is Eternity."¹¹

Life and nature, the "Vegetable Universe," are but "faint shadows"¹² of the eternal world of imagination. Without the power of imagination there is no creativity, merely mimicry or imitation: "Nature has no Outline, but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune, but Imagination has."¹³ Art gives form to the chaos of the natural world; it is the man of imagination, like Gulley Jimson, who will impose this order. Yet he must destroy old orders to do so, creating a conflict with established values and the forces of authority; having defied these he is faced with another sort of absolute, his own creation, which becomes "part of the fixed character"¹⁴ of his world and therefore something which must be destroyed or superseded. Then his works are

⁹ Hamilton, p. 441.

¹⁰ "Laocoon," The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London and New York, 1957), 776. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited as Keynes' Blake.

¹¹ "The Ghost of Abel," Keynes' Blake, 1:3.

¹² "Jerusalem," Keynes' Blake, 77.

¹³ "The Ghost of Abel," Keynes' Blake, 1:3.

¹⁴ Joyce Cary, Art and Reality (New York, 1958), p. 20. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as AR.

accepted by the public, fastened on to by the imitators and followers, and he becomes a "prophet" or "visionary" as we are now wont, with time's complacent hypocrisy, to look upon such as Blake or Lawrence. The necessary pettiness of this "system" is ameliorated by the sublimity of a world in perpetual creation.

The discussion thus far has implied that only the creative artist has imagination; this is far from Cary's actual stance. Like Wallace Stevens, who perceives that "the world in which we live" contains "a world of poetry" and that it is up to the individual to "create the world,"¹⁵ Cary believes that "we do not merely perceive but actively make our reality."¹⁶ His positive view of freedom is based on this assumption, that to be creative is to be free, and "the creative power is free."¹⁷ Creativity is the function of the imagination: "In both Blake and Cary imagination turns the cold inanimate world inside outthe whole world is pulled inside man through the doors of perception....Power to drag the world into oneself is the root of man's potential freedom."¹⁸ And since all men exercise this power, and pull the world into themselves through their "five windows," all men, from the fascist Jim Latta to the ignorant native Akande Tom, illustrate this priority of the imagination, of the creative power.

"The public consists also of creative artists," Cary asserts

¹⁵ Wallace Stevens, The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination (London, 1940), p. 31.

¹⁶ Hazard Adams, "Introduction" to Joyce Cary's Power in Men (London, 1939), p. xxii.

¹⁷ Joyce Cary, Power in Men (London, 1939), p. 1.

¹⁸ Adams, "Introduction," Power in Men, p. xxiv.

in the preface to The Horse's Mouth:

Every living soul creates his own world, and must do so. The human child brings with it very little instinctive equipment for life....It has to create a three-dimensional universe for itself in its own imagination....Mother and father, brothers and sisters are each a unique experience to be seized upon by the imagination and built into a general conception of life. Everything that a boy encounters as he grows up, he ranges for himself in the order of his ideas, his taste, his ambitions, his will. As a grown man he will love like a poet creating a beauty for the soul. When he creates a home, the furniture he buys will seem like no other furniture. He will fiercely resent any attempt to take his home from him or destroy his property, because they are property in the deepest sense, unique to him. He has made them as a whole, and committed himself to them.¹⁹

Thus it is evident that the most common man, leading the most mundane of existences, and thinking nothing "original," exotic, or "unreasonable," can possess a fierce and tenacious imagination, as Jim Latter or Jock Rackham well illustrate. The only difference between theirs and the truly creative imagination is scope, depth, and perhaps the ends to which it is directed.

Thurber's Walter Mitty, for example, has a powerful imagination which is operant a good proportion of the time; he lives in it as much as in his everyday reality. But it is limited in its range, his imaginings emanating chiefly from the realms of pulp fiction, news media, and thriller films, and centering around himself as lady-killer, slayer of dragons, righter of wrongs. And it is inner-directed; that is, it is used chiefly for his own amusement and could be classed as only a minor rebellion from established modes of thought and action, like Lucky Jim's

¹⁹ Joyce Cary, The Horse's Mouth (London, 1957), pp. 319-320. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as HM.

faces or Mr. Polly's extravagant formulations of the King's English. It results in no tangible, permanent creation such as a poem, painting or statue. The imagination of the non-artist may yet turn toward art, but in the same way it fastens on politics or religion or the Red Cross Drive.

The relationship of this type of imagination to "art" is elaborated upon by Cary, leading us into a discussion of the revolutions of taste and art which occur within individuals and between generations, keeping the kettle on perpetual boil:

Now suppose this world includes some art. Suppose he has formed for himself a taste in pictures, poetry and music. Suppose he has given appreciation to (say) Watts, Tennyson and Mendelssohn (or Cézanne, Mallarmé and Debussy), then these artists are part of his created world. He owns them, he is fond of them, he feels with them, he reveres them as great artists and in that reverence he knows that he too has a share of greatness; his imagination, in front of Watts' "Hope," is suddenly enlarged; he reads Maud and is moved out of a narrow workaday existence into a romantic and exciting world. For this he will probably be despised by most of the next generation who, eager to make a new world for themselves, will get their thrills from Cézanne and Mallarmé [or Beardsley and Wilde]. (HM pref. p.320)

And the above individual will in turn despise the "new world" of the next generation; this phenomenon explains why so many youthful radicals appear to become conservative in middle age. In actuality, they have merely changed less than their world has changed; they have adhered to that to which they were once devoted and committed, remaining faithful to an earlier world and self.

The reason why the young revolutionary becomes the old conservative is not some disease of age, but simply the fact that he has created in imagination that world, a free revolutionary world, which is being torn from him. We live in the creation and it presents us with two kinds of tragedy: that of

the young genius who desires to create his own new world, in politics or in art, and is defeated by the academicism of those whose art and reputations are threatened by his innovation; and that of the conservative whose world is being destroyed.

(AR pp.91-92)

Many of Cary's books deal with this tenacity of a generation to its principles and its art, and with the ability or inability of various characters to adapt to the changes.

A Fearful Joy, To Be A Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth encompass several generations which inevitably clash and always contrast. And, of course, in The Horse's Mouth Gulley is continually making reference to and philosophising on this phenomenon. Because he recognizes its existence he does not mind the public's scorn; he knows they will change after he dies.

People want a "guide to life," according to Cary; they need "an idea of the world in which they have to succeed."

That is why any new creed presenting a complete guide is so sure of popularity among students, why Marxism, Fabianism, Nazism, Spiritualism, any new "ism" which offers a complete picture, even a depressing picture, like Spenglerism or behaviourism, has such an immense appeal to anyone under thirty. They set free; they give a coherent set of values, in which emotions formerly in conflict, and therefore frustrated, can suddenly find complete satisfaction.

(AR p.37)

To say that any creed can "set free" may sound a contradiction, but because the imagination is triggered and given something to grip and grow on, an "ism" may indeed be a liberating factor. In this case, imagination simplifies (rather than amplifies) existence. This simplification is necessary for the average person when confronted with "the turmoil of actual events" which is "a true chaos" (AR p.21). "Everyone...is presented with the same chaos, and is obliged to form his own idea of

the world..." (AR p.18). It is far easier for the imagination to fix on a pre-fabricated system that appeals, that grants a simpler view of existence. The world is in "everlasting creation" and produces an "endless revolution of politics and ideas" (AR p.21); the artist copes with this chaos creatively while the non-artist takes this "terrifying confusion" and narrows it down, gives it a form and name satisfactory to his imagination. The unitive, integrative aspects of the imagination are thus common to all men. "Airy nothing" is given "a local habitation and a name"; what is not present to the five senses may be called forth and acted upon, even such a concept as abstract as "Duty."

Cary tells the story of a friend of his, who, as a child, thought he could fly and jumped off the roof. "Luckily he came down in a flower-bed and only broke a leg," Cary drily observes (AR p.19). This flight of fancy or imagination might have had disastrous consequences; one cannot affront laws of gravity no matter that the dictates of imagination, just as "wrong ideas about...the wholesomeness of prussic acid" (AR p.19) often prove fatal. But people like Gulley Jimson (who falls from a wall upon which he is painting "The Creation") and Charley Brown (who finds himself balanced precariously on a drain-pipe while robbing a house) obstinately continue to challenge the laws of gravity and society while exercising their imaginations; "objective" reality is subordinated to a more subjective one. "Asylums and gaols are full of people who have forgotten or ignored" certain "obstinate facts" (AR p.19), and it is pure chance, or "luck," as Cary would say, which determines who gets caught and when.

The exercising of the imagination is inevitably an

anti-social act because it is an individual one. Every man is an artist in that he wants to see his "idea" on the canvas, no matter what the cost. His "inspiration" may be shop-worn or out-moded, but it needs expression. The difference between the children of Charley Is My Darling and those in A House of Children is that the former select anti-social methods with which to express their ideas and the latter have socially-accepted methods suggested to them; fundamentally, their ideas originate from the same source. In The Horse's Mouth Cary is asserting the primacy of intuition, that which comes from "the horse's mouth,"²⁰ over the forces of reason or logic that attempt to suppress it.²¹

And as if it were not enough that forces outside the artist attempt to thwart his expression of intuition, internal difficulties present an equally great problem to the "artist." Cary maintains that the fundamental problem of the artist is that "a cold thought has to deal with a warm feeling" (AR p.45); the gap between intuition and expression, or as in Gulley's case, "the idea" and "the wall," must be bridged. In dealing with this matter of primary importance, it is no wonder that other factors such as legal systems or moral codes are subordinated to a position of negative importance, giving justification to Robert Bloom's complaint that Cary's novels lack a moral center.²²

²⁰ Wright, Preface, pp. 124-125, sees the artist as "an interpreter of the vision of God to man."

²¹ Blake refers to this particular conflict as "Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination" in "Jerusalem," Keynes' Blake, 5:58, 70:19, 74:26.

²² Robert Bloom, The Indeterminate World: A Study of the Novels of Joyce Cary (Philadelphia, 1963), passim.

But since in every one of his works Cary is attempting to depict the subjective world of his characters' imaginations, it is inevitable that the forces which would thwart or stifle the expressions of subjectivity are given the role of "villain."

Cary is on the side of the "artist," who happens to be everyman; the primary paradox is that even those "blue-noses" who would stifle the Gulley Jimsons are themselves creative artists prompted to put their own idea on the wall, even if it takes on the characteristics of an official seal on an official document.

Chapter II
THE AFRICAN NOVELS

1. Aissa Saved

Aissa Saved is the first of Cary's novels; published in 1932 when he was forty-four, it is the result of much revision and many decisions, and took him three years to write due to his search for an appropriate technique and his doubt about the answers to questions raised in the book.²³ Mahood calls these three years "years...of continual self-exploration. During this time his interest shifted from Ethics and Ali [an educated native] to enthusiasm and Aissa...he came increasingly to feel that life demanded a faith and not a code, the spirit rather than the letter."²⁴ Cary, in his preface, concurs: "Ethics are important enough...but the fundamental question for everybody is what they live by; what is their faith...how sound is the faith...how deep does it send its roots into reality" (AS p.216).

It is by no means Cary's best work, in spite of his elaborate care with it, for it is far too diffuse and vague. There are over seventy characters in it; unlike his later characters,

²³ Joyce Cary, "Prefatory Essay," Aissa Saved (New York and Evanston, n.d.), p. 217. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as AS.

²⁴ M.M. Mahood, Joyce Cary's Africa (London and Boston, 1965), p. 123.

they do not "live." Yet their imaginations are not so much impoverished as poorly depicted. Ruth Van Horn sees in Aissa Saved a "completely unalloyed demonstration" of "the religious imagination,"²⁵ but although the latter is well-depicted, Aissa is not; the novel's ostensible focus, she is blurred, a fuzzy portrait.

The "fundamental question" for Cary "is what they [the natives] live by; what is their faith (AS pref.p.216). In the arduous process of coming to an understanding of his own attitudes and beliefs, Cary decided that "different people needed different kinds of faith; 'true' for them" (AS pref.p.218). It is through Cary's representation of Aissa's and the other natives' (mis)interpretations of Christian or Western concepts that we obtain insight into the workings of their imaginations, the nature of their faith.

Because the natives so obviously cannot grasp the concepts the white man attempts to impart, many reviewers have taken Aissa Saved to be a diatribe against the enlightenment or education of Africans. In fact, Cary seems more interested in depicting the incongruities of both pagan faith in ju-ju, the Christian faith in conversion, communion, etc., and the various combinations of aspects of these faiths, because of the inherently interesting nature of the juxtaposition of two different ways of life. Larsen says, "The real centre of the novel's meaning lies in the problem of communication among the various groups";²⁶ Black cannot think white. Aissa, as well as the

²⁵ Ruth G. Van Horn, "Freedom and Imagination in the Novels of Joyce Cary," Midwest Journal, V (1952-1953), 24.

²⁶ Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent: Social Changes and Moral Responsibility in the Novels of Joyce Cary (London, 1965), p. 23.

other "converted" pagans, assimilates Christian notions in terms of her own experience and background; the movement of the book, as Wright points out, depends upon Aissa's "alternations between Christianity as she understands it and the native religion on which she has been raised."²⁷ This "shortcoming" is not only peculiar to Aissa, but to most natives depicted. Brimah, for example, interprets the missionary's prayer, "'Enlighten these poor people in their misery and darkness, O Lord'" as an entreaty to God "to send the lightning on black men" (AS p.31). People must be able to communicate before they can understand one another; when communication is virtually impossible, an understanding or sympathy between cultures is more or less automatically precluded.

Aissa, "a half-bred Fulani girl with big soft eyes and a fine golden skin very attractive to any man" (AS p.14), is like Mister Johnson, full of life, "laughing...with her whole body" (AS p.22). Bloom sees Aissa as the first in a line of "incarnations of pure and indiscriminate vitality."²⁸ She likes to drink beer, to dance and sing, to make love; the missionary Carr callously refers to her as "a common or garden trollop" (AS p.24). The asceticism Christianity normally imposes on its lambs is ill-suited to Aissa's joie de vivre, but left to her own devices and mode of thought, she makes this religion more familiar and palatable. For example, she thinks of Jesus in terms of her lover; the description of her first Communion is sensual and orgiastic:

²⁷ Wright, Preface, pp. 58-59.

²⁸ Bloom, The Indeterminate World, p. 104.

... "The Blood of our Lord"; she gulped the dark liquid in case it should choke her. She was startled by the taste; it was not like ordinary blood but sweet.... Her mind was wholly preoccupied. Her attention was all directed inwards to find out what was happening to her. What would Jesus do inside her? What would he feel like? What would he say? She perceived a faint warmth in her stomach. She brought all her mind upon the place. She held her breath. But the feeling had gone already. Where was it? She found it again deeper and further in. It grew quickly, it was like the morning sun whose rays grow stronger and warmer every minute; it pierced through the cold muscles; it passed outwards through the whole body in waves of heat burning out all her cold wickedness. It was making her like Jesus himself, pure so that she did not want Gajere any more, brave so that she was not afraid of the pagans, loving so that she loved Jesus with all her heart, happy so that she had never been so happy. (AS pp.153-154)

Later, worked up to hysteria pitch in a hymn-singing session at the mission, Aissa has a vision of Jesus:

Jesus approached rapidly through the air breaking the light in front of him in two waves of glittering foam. His beauty surprised Aissa so much that she stood like a stick with her mouth open. He was a young man with a colour like her own..., that of a lion's back; his long nose delicately formed, his mouth full and curved like a woman's, his eyes big and sparkling.

Aissa stretched out her arms to him, smiling and astonished with joy, and cried, "Oh Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus, you come for me." She spoke English because she knew that it is God's language.

(AS pp.155-156)

Jesus stands close to her and says "You belong to me now, Aissa." She beats her breast: "Oh Jesus, I love you too much, I love you too much. I belong for your woman. I do all ting to please you. You beat me, you kill me" (AS p.156). The masochism here exhibited by Aissa is illustrative of a desire to make an object of herself; as such, it detracts from her subjectivity and vitality, the self-centeredness which is inherent to the character of imagination.

Her utter submission and perfect willingness to do as Jesus directs her foreshadows her final sacrifice; it reflects upon an earlier scene in which she is the victim of a Christian witch doctor who, with Bible in hand, determines the proper cure for an infected foot: "If your leg troubles you, cut it off; if your eye, take it out." He writes these words on a piece of "King's paper"--good medicine--and, with Zeggi's help, cuts off Aissa's leg at the ankle, cauterizes the stump with a hot knife, binds the paper to the wound "in a plaster of chewed tobacco leaves," and makes Aissa drink a mixture which includes some ink from the charmed words. "She mended at once" (AS p.104). The logic utilized here is quite simple: Since Aissa is Christian, only Christian methods will exorcise the Christian demon inhabiting her leg. The irony of it all is that this treatment does cure her, just as Elizabeth Aladai's charmed spit can kill a man who believes in it.²⁹ The power of the native mind over physical matter is far greater than that of the average Christian. When Aissa, cursing Jesus, decides to die, "everyone could see that she was dying" (AS p.137); she is found by Mrs. Carr and convinced that she ought to live, whereupon she sets her mind appropriately and becomes well again.

The will power, and consequently, the freedom here embodied illustrates the power of imagination when it operates as faith; turned outward, the power manifests itself as it did in the Spanish Inquisition, with a set of "Christian" orders designed to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven in Yanrin:

²⁹ Joyce Cary, The African Witch (London, 1936), p. 399. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as AW.

"No one is to have or keep any property which is abolished.

"No one is to use money which is abolished.

"No one is allowed to marry as fornication is forbidden.

"It is forbidden to drink beer, gin, whisky.

"All judges are abolished including the white judges. Only God is judge. All laws are abolished except the law of God written in his book.

"All books are to be destroyed except God's book.

"Those who do not become Christians are to be killed, and the white men who are not Christians shall be driven away." (AS p.182)

The strength of this faith emanated collectively accomplishes a "miracle" of sorts. When a group of Christians are threatened by pagans, their leader spins a cross which then points to a river normally thought impassable and unfathomable. Wading into the water, the leader cries out "'Follow, follow, follow!": "With loud cries of joy and gratitude to God all ran down into the water and followed his course, the tall men holding up the shorter, the children on their mother's shoulders" (AS p.210). It is their Red Sea.

Aissa has just given her child to Jesus: "I give you all, ma dear!" (AS p.206), basing this sacrifice on Mrs. Carr's assurance that she will be happy if she does the Lord's will asking nothing for herself, and on the Christian hymn: "All things I like best/I sacrifice to His blood" (AS p.49). She gives up Abba and "Ladije instantly cut off the child's head with a blow of his sword" (AS p.209). The blood spurts onto the ground "short of the cross." This is the Christian ceremony. When the pagans arrive, they find Aissa alone, crying "'Oh de joy, oh de joy'" (AS p.211). They drag her to the nearest ant hill and leave her there:

Aissa, confused and drowsy, continued to whisper her love and gratitude to Jesus until she fell asleep. In the morning when the ants found her she tried to drag herself away from them. But she could only wriggle in a circle. She rolled on them, thrashed them with her forearms, crushing them by hundreds. But they were soldier ants born and bred for self-sacrifice. Probably also on account of the bad season they were especially eager to get food for their community; they were totally careless of wounds or death. (AS p.211)

The parallels and hence ironies in this passage are obvious; the natives too have had a bad season and have had to sacrifice some of their own in order to ensure the fertility of the land. They do it willingly, for the love of Jesus and/or the good of their tribe. Christians or pagan, sacrifices still occur, and whether self-inflicted or imposed from outside, the community still benefits. As Bloom says, "Cary's penetration of the native religious imagination--both Christian and pagan--is the highest achievement of the book...."³⁰ As the ants tear at her body, creating "the warmth of flesh," Aissa begins to have visions:

Jesus had taken her, he was carrying her away in his arms, she was going to heaven at last to Abba and Gajere. Immediately the sky was rolled up like a door curtain and she saw before her the great hall of God with pillars of mud painted white and red. God, in a white riga and a new indigo turban, his hands heavy with thick silver rings, stood in the middle and beside him the spirit like a goat with white horns. (AS p.211)

The Kingdom of God is seen in her own image, although in Christian terms. The goat upon which Abba rides is "The Holy Goat" or Holy Ghost. God is anthropomorphized in the same way Jesus is, by Aissa's imagination.

Her child is sitting on an angel's lap having his cap set

³⁰ Bloom, p. 47.

straight for him; the angels seem to be "laughing at him."

Aissa fearing that he would cry and disgrace himself with the important company waved and beckoned to attract his attention. At once as if feeling that she was there he looked down at her and smiled gravely.

Aissa held out her arms to him and shouted, "Oh, you rascal." She could not help laughing at him. She was helpless with laughter. (AS p.212)

The conclusion of The Horse's Mouth seems to echo the essence of Aissa's final vision. As the wall upon which a delirious Gulley Jimson paints "The Creation" begins to crumble, his whale smiles at him: "Her eyes grew bigger and brighter and she bent slowly forward as if she wanted to kiss me"; the walls tumble down with Gulley and through the cloud of dust he sees "about ten thousand angels in caps, helmets, bowlers and even one top hat" (HM p.287). All are laughing, and Gulley says "God bless them. It must be a work of eternity, a chestnut, a horse-laugh"³¹ (HM p.287).

The doubts perpetually raised as to whether Gulley is of tragic or comic stature are analogous to our final doubt about Aissa: was she in fact "saved," and if so, from what or whom? She was not saved from the Christians, the pagans, or herself, objectively speaking, although all three would maintain that she was: the Christians will make a martyr of her; if it rains, the pagans will consider her their successful sacrifice; and Aissa herself has her vision of heaven that positively reeks of salvation. From Cary's point of view, this vision is the saving grace, the result of faith, imagination. As such it must also earn our reluctant commendations. Bloom's comment, that Cary

³¹ The marked similarities in these two conclusions is noticeable also in the final scenes of The African Witch and A Fearful Joy.

does not consider "whether religious formulations correspond with anything real," and that "he is committed only to the idea that energy, passion, and imaginative intensity exist and produce visions,"³² seems appropriate here. It is the fact of the operant imagination rather than its effect or cause that counts. Aissa both succeeds and fails;³³ like Gulley, her end is ambiguously depicted, and we can only be certain of one thing: the absolute value of living and/or dying creatively, with passion, intensity and spirit.

ii. An American Visitor

The title of Cary's second novel, An American Visitor (1933), refers to the American Marie Hasluck, a journalist from Boston who has come to Nigeria to write about the Birri. She prefigures the idealistic, but more sympathetic Oxford intellectual, Judy Coote, in Cary's African Witch. Various referred to as an "anarchist,"³⁴ "a sentimentalist and silly young woman" (AV p.193), a "dangerous agitator" (AV p.27), "anti-British" (AV p.29), a "Boston mystic" (AV p.150), a "true daughter of the Enlightenment,"³⁵ and a Rousseauian,³⁶ she is actually quite wishy-washy, a pudding of a woman.

At one point she writes to her publisher in America about the Birri as

³² Bloom, p. 48.

³³ Wright, p. 59.

³⁴ Joyce Cary, An American Visitor (New York, n.d.), p. 92. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as AV.

³⁵ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 18.

³⁶ Larsen, p. 30.

"...a civilization of athletes and poets, Greek in the beauty of its golden age, but more secure--savages truly noble, bound in the strong web of natural loves and duties as eternal as nature's own laws."
(AV p.193)

She becomes disillusioned with the natives when they very nearly disembowel Monkey Bewsher, her lover and later husband. Yet she wants and needs her ideals, and feels "an intolerable longing" for "the silly young woman who had seen in a little community of savages the pattern of an earthly paradise" (AV p.193).

It is odd that Cary puts the focus on her, as Bewsher is a much more complete and sympathetically drawn character. Bewsher, as his nickname "Monkey" implies, is a comic character, like Mister Johnson and Gulley. He is a white "Mr. Wog," but above all, an individual. "He combines an attitude of romantic paternalism toward his 'pagans' with the design of establishing a co-operative movement among them."³⁷ His ideal is unification of the tribes, significant in its illustration of the integrating factors of the imagination. Marie's "ideal" has to do with idolizing her savage innocents and her Bewsher, incorporating them into her "religion" rather than trying to understand them for what they are. Marie seeks security and love,³⁸ originally finding these in her ideals, but when there are no more "noble savages," then she must turn to other sources. According to Larsen, Marie is not destructive (just ineffectual) as long as "her dream of noble savages and the Golden Age" dominates her; since the power to destroy implies also the power to create³⁹

³⁷ Alan Hall, "The African Novels of Joyce Cary," Standpunte, XII (March-April 1958), 44.

³⁸ Mahood, p. 126.

³⁹ Larsen, p. 30.

in Cary's scheme, Marie's creativity is shown to be blocked also, ironically by her romantic ideas which even she suspects to be faulty. Her imagination is inferior to Bewsher's; Hall sees her "in strong contrast to Bewsher, inasmuch as her imagination and idealism are conventional instead of creative. Her imagination is not flexible enough to meet the situations...which constantly confront her husband and to which...he has always mysteriously been equal."⁴⁰

An unused passage of Cary's, quoted by Molly Mahood, indicates Bewsher's superiority to Marie, who feels that religion is an art of life: "To Bewsher life was a kind of art...."⁴¹ Just as the pagans' very movements and songs are their art, so Bewsher's ideas and enthusiasm, inherently creative, approach art. He has "a pagan capacity...for living in the moment."⁴² Sympathy, which is an important aspect of the imagination to Cary, is exuded by Bewsher; he understands the natives more than any other colonial administrator ever depicted by Cary. Unlike his foils, Gore and Cottee, he wants "to preserve and develop the rich kind of local life which is the essence and the only justification of nationalism" (AV p.133). The others look upon Bewsher's "odd notions" with scorn, but it is evident that Cary admires and favours him.⁴³

⁴⁰ Hall, p. 44.

⁴¹ Mahood, p. 141.

⁴² Ibid., p. 142.

⁴³ Mahood, p. 130, asserts that, in fact, Bewsher "steals the show" from Marie, who for this reason is neither as sympathetic nor as interesting as Cary originally intended her to be.

An example of Bewsher's imaginativeness is his inspiration to make Ogun, the thunder god, the representative or Saint of Electricity and Vital Energy:

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.

(AV p.132)

This is the same sort of notion that the natives would originate themselves when confronted by an alien concept, thereby causing the average missionary or administrator to despair. Larsen too has noted Bewsher's ability to operate on the natives' wave length, referring to his "essential religiosity, his clearness of vision, his sympathetic identification with the natives."⁴⁴

Bewsher is so strong and stable that he becomes Marie's mainstay, "one of the unshakable truths that she needs to prevent the universe from dissolving into chaos and flux."⁴⁵ On their wedding night, "'when some joker put an arrow through the nuptial net, she talked as if an arrow or two in the ribs wouldn't matter to the man'" (AV p.150). She calls it "guts," but she means "faith," says Cottee. Influenced by Dobson's love-is-stronger-than-guns theory, by her Boston mysticism, and by Christian Science, Marie ultimately brings about Bewsher's death by hiding his gun from him during a native raid. Typically and impulsively, he rushes out into the attackers' midst shouting and waving his arms; cut down by a spear immediately,

⁴⁴ Larsen, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁵ Bloom, p. 49.

he becomes a sacrifice on Marie's "You've gotta have faith" altar. Bewsher's death is very nearly comic; Cary never, in any of his novels, permits the reader to become involved emotionally in the death of a character, no matter how lovable. Whipping out the scissor case (Marie's substitution for his gun), Bewsher shouts to the crazed native, Obai, "'Go back, or I shoot.'" Obai retreats, then recovers his purpose, and stabs Monkey Bewsher:

Bewsher fell on his back with a look of ludicrous amazement and indignation. He was heard shouting something again about "bloody rascals," in a voice expressive quite as much of surprise as indignation. In fact, Bewsher's own feelings as he lay on the ground with two or three spears in his body, though, of course, full of official indignation, was not empty of a kind of amusement as if some part of his mind were remarking to him, "Well, old chap, the joke is on you. You're not going to get away with it this time." (AV p.229)

Cary quite leads us away from the futility of Bewsher's death, just as he did with Aissa's, and as he was to do with Gulley's, which echoes aspects of the above passage: "a chest-nut, a horse-laugh....I perceived that they were laughing at me" (HM p.287). And Marie, standing by Bewsher's grave, says "'Doesn't it make you laff the way I fell for it,'" referring to her "faith" that failed to protect her husband. "'It wasn't John Dobson's god--it was just the oldest kind of juju'" (AV p.237). This realization of her failure and of the shortcomings of her beliefs adds to the optimistic note with which the novel concludes:

"...I didn't see that if Birri was safe, Monkey wouldn't be Monkey, and if the world was meant to be a safe place there wouldn't be any men like Monkey, and if no one was to die or suffer there wouldn't be any love, and if no one was to get killed there wouldn't be any life worth living." (AV p.237)

In her acquiescence to Monkey's methods and theories Cottee finds something romantic; he is transported into

...another state of being, where men and women were born to heroic destinies, and life was the magnificent stage of their glories and their suffering; and it seemed to him...that the men and women who lived in this other romantic world...were the only ones who knew how to live at all. The rest were the cowards, like himself, who were afraid to love, who were afraid of being laughed at; who mutilated and tamed within themselves every wild creature of the spirit in order to be in safe and comfortable possession of their own farmyard... (AV p.238)

Almost immediately he negates himself, turns face and cynic as he views her objectively: "This ugly little woman a tragic queen, Monkey Bewsher a hero, it was absurd" (AV p.238). When she kneels by Bewsher's grave, he is appalled because he does not know whether or not to kneel with her, what "the proper procedure" is. He is afraid of being laughed at, afraid to love. Marie's final statement, the one with which the novel concludes, illustrates exactly the proper combination of imagination and faith: "'I'm not praying, but where Monkey is the ground feels kind of different'" (AV p.239).

Hoffman relates this "sacrifice" to that of Aissa Saved: "Aissa sacrifices her child and herself for love of Jesus; Marie, unknowingly and involuntarily, sacrifices Bewsher to the idea that God is love."⁴⁶ Her attempt to impose an ideal on a situation which she does not understand and her failure to put her trust in Bewsher's abilities (which are far superior to hers) illustrate the deficiencies of her unitive faculties, the poverty of her powers of sympathy and imagination. Cary's use of the Blakean theme of female domination is here portrayed at its

⁴⁶ Hoffman, p. 23.

most destructive; attempting to bind Bewsher to her rock of ideals, she kills the creative element in her life. After they marry, she tries (vainly) to remove Bewsher from his people, the Birri; his passion for them conflicts with hers for him. This is analogous to Sara's attempt to get hold of Gulley and nail him down to the domestic cross.

Her name, Marie Hasluck, is ultimately seen as ironic; she trusts to luck (faith), "stakes all on a sustaining goodness which is not really there."⁴⁷ Her faith is one that Cary would classify as being unable to "stand the knocks" (AS p.216). In a conversation with Bewsher, Marie asks if he believes God to be looking after him, and he replies "'I've certainly had uncommon luck'"; later he refers to the escape from Paré as "rather providential"--very like the narrator of Erewhon who says, "As luck would have it, Providence was on my side." The themes of luck and providence underlie most of Cary's novels; they seem to be the external sources to which the imaginative and faithful respectively defer as being responsible for the way events occur; they are bulwarks against the injustice of the world. The non-religious and unimaginative characters, like Cottee and Gore, depend upon intellect and reason or industry and hard work. Larsen, for example, opposes Bewsher's "creative" acts to those of Cottee, "a brilliant but deadly cynical exploiter of the troubled African situation,"⁴⁸ and Mahood notes that Gore lives by rule, Bewsher by faith.⁴⁹ "People like Gore" refuse "to

⁴⁷ Mahood, p. 129.

⁴⁸ Larsen, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Mahood, p. 140.

trust anything to luck or Providence,"⁵⁰ which makes them more responsible but less free and imaginative.

I would like to disagree with Larsen's interpretation of Bewsher's final act; although it does involve sacrifice, it is Marie's Christian-based sacrifice of her husband rather than a sacrifice by the man. Larsen says, "Both love and civilization are possible only through faith, an act of the imagination, and can be bought only through supreme sacrifice."⁵¹ Whereas faith is one aspect of the imagination, and destruction seems endemic to the creative process, sacrifice per se is not always involved or necessary. It is certain, at any rate, that Marie's act of faith was a less imaginative act than a foolish one, and that her triumph occurs after Bewsher's death when she realizes that she was taken in by "the oldest form of ju-ju," when she affirms that "where Monkey is the ground feels different." As far as Bewsher being a willing sacrifice to love and civilization, "a 'blessing' graciously given," with "the Christ-like power of reaffirming love for Marie,"⁵² it is simply romantic nonsense. According to Larsen, this "blessing" also "releases the energies of the natives, energies imprisoned in tribal customs and stunted imaginations";⁵³ but we are given absolutely no evidence whatsoever of this ensuing. Marie profits, but the natives remain unenlightened. Bewsher's actual motives may only be surmised, but it is unlikely that he was sacrificing himself to

⁵⁰ Mahood, p. 127.

⁵¹ Larsen, p. 32.

⁵² Ibid., p. 33.

⁵³ Loc. cit.

release "the flow of life and faith";⁵⁴ a re-reading of the passage would indicate that he acted on impulse, perhaps leaning on a faith in the natives as friends. It must be admitted that his act was not the result of a ratiocinative process, and that it does have to do with Bewsher's creativity and trust in the powers of sympathy; it is an unselfish act rather than a sacrifice.

iii. The African Witch

The title of Cary's third work, The African Witch (1936), refers to Elizabeth Aladai, sister to Louis, (aspirant to Rimi throne), and queen of ju-ju, yet the novel does not seem to be about her; rather, the novel seems to be a further exposition of the themes originating in An American Visitor and Aissa Saved. Not atypically, it contains the seminal bases of later characters, "types" which Cary elaborates upon in later works. The setting is again Africa, for good reason, as Conrad was well aware.⁵⁵ In the preface to The African Witch Cary wrote: "The attraction of Africa is that it shows...wars of belief, and the powerful and often subconscious motives which underlie them.... Basic obsessions, which in Europe hide themselves under all sorts of decorous scientific or theological or political uniforms, are there seen in bold and dramatic action...." (AW p.110). Africa is an elaborate metaphor for the irrational forces operant in man, black or white; the new, emergent Africa is represented by Louis Aladai,⁵⁶ while the old and still dominant, indomitable

⁵⁴ Larsen, p. 33.

⁵⁵ For an excellent analysis of Cary's indebtedness to and similarities with Conrad, see Larsen, pp. 1-21.

⁵⁶ Hall, p. 44.

Africa is represented in the person of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth hovers over the novel like a curse; "She is the novel's still centre; she sits at its heart like a spider in a web";⁵⁷ she is omnipresent, large, an object of worship, a potent force, a figure of darkness and destruction. She is Olympian, inscrutable, and her charms have observable effects on the physical world and its inhabitants. More a presence than a character, she is representative of Rimi "civilization" and its dependence upon ju-ju. Her intractability is analogous to the imperviousness of Rimi occupants to Westernization; the fact that she prevails, her seeming indestructibility, is emblematic of the impossibility of bridging the vast gulf between African and European sensibilities, of bringing about a significant change in any way other than the superficial.

The colonialists consist of a whole handful of bigots (who do not distinguish themselves much); the lame Judy Coote, an Oxford don, an "intellectual"; Dryas Honeywood, "a superb physical specimen" with a dull brother; Rackham, Judy's fiancé, admirer of Dryas, and preserver of the status quo; and Dr. Schlemm, a clear-thinking missionary. The Africans who distinguish themselves consist of Akande Tom, Elizabeth's "husband" and prototype of Mister Johnson; Louis Aladai, educated at Oxford, aspirant to the Rimi throne and brother to Elizabeth; and Coker, Louis' friend and mentor, a sort of Christian witch-doctor. Almost every possible combination of conflict occurs among these people; all represent different types of belief and modes of thinking.

⁵⁷ Hall, p. 48.

Judy Coote conflicts with them all at one point or another because she is intelligent and clear-sighted enough to recognize the shortcomings of their actions and thoughts. She likes Aladai at first, having known him at Oxford and seeing in him "a quick sympathy," a "real capacity for friendship, which is sympathy of mind" (AW p.16); only when he cannot stand up to the whites who disparage him and the natives who attempt to bring him back to the ju-ju fold does she begin to lose her faith in him. She becomes equally disillusioned in Rackham when he fails to control his dislike of Aladai and his admiration of Dryas; both are indicative of a nature deficient in sympathy and discrimination, one overly involved in the physical--as his interest in gymnastics and sports also indicates. Judy's own lameness, perhaps symbolic, is contrasted to Dryas' proficiency at dancing, gymnastics, hiking. The latter loves nature (Dryas - driad), "hills and trees." Judy denies that these in themselves hold any attraction for her: "'I love what poets have made of them for me'" (AW p.223). Her praise is reserved for man's creative acts and accomplishments; when she perceives Rackham's interest in Dryas she is saddened because the physical is in ascendancy and Rackham's imagination is subordinated to his admiration of unadulterated nature.

The determinant of the depth of reality experienced by an individual is the power of imagination, a subconscious conjunction of thought and feeling. At one end of the scale of reality is the flat surface of desolate, "raw, senseless nature," and at the other end is the profound production of the poet....⁵⁸

The "conjunction of thought and feeling" is equivalent to sympathy, something entirely lacking in both Rackham and Dryas.

⁵⁸ Larsen, p. 44.

Yet even Rackham can see that Dryas' brother, Dick Honeywood, is "a robot, a set of reactions, a creature ruled entirely by prejudice and a mass of contradictory impulses and inhibitions, which he called opinions and thought of as character....His will was the servant of nature, the crocodile in the swamp. He had no freedom. He was not a living soul, but a tumour..." (AW pp. 192-193). Rackham realizes that Aladai is "worth six Honeywoods," but still cannot control his fury when Aladai attempts to join the Scotch Club; all he can see is the cartoon cannibal chief in the Balliol blazer. When Aladai presumes Dryas to be his friend and dances with her in the jungle, Rackham thrashes him roundly, "to teach him a lesson." Until Rackham fights Aladai, he had fought for Rimi people; afterward, "he no longer distinguishes between the Rimi people and Rimi as an abstract."⁵⁹ The inefficacy of this type of European education is brought home quite clearly here; neither teacher nor pupil is able to stand one another, let alone understand.

Akande Tom, a prototype of Mister Johnson in his desire to partake of Western ways, is one of the more imaginative and enterprising characters,⁶⁰ attempting to communicate, to "bridge the gap in understanding and feeling."⁶¹ Tom's enterprise is the only hope for black and white man alike: "all progress is made first by the imagination."⁶² Without the benefit of an

⁵⁹ Friedson, Novels of Joyce Cary, p. 66.

⁶⁰ Cf. Van Horn, Midwest Journal, V, 24: "Tom is the precursor of Mr. Johnson, though his imagination is smaller, less poetic."

⁶¹ Larsen, p. 38.

⁶² Van Horn, p. 24.

Oxford education, he turns to a sort of sympathetic magic to make him "whiter"; along with a white linen suit two sizes too small for him, a cloth cap, cup-tie pattern, black sun goggles and red morocco slippers, he dons Christianity: "'Yaas, I Cristin man now, Loo-iss. I no savage man'" (AW p.151). In other words, he adds a cross to the bag of ju-ju he wears tied to his arm. Cary tells us:

...the difference, even in a snob's imagination, between a peer and a tramp is nothing to that in a savage's between himself and a white man. It is so great that the bush negro does not concern himself with it. His indifference to the white man and his ideas is founded on a feeling of difference so profound that his mind will not attempt to pass over the gap. Only the most enterprising, like Tom--men of ambition and ideals--attempt it. (AW p.209)

...the change was not only one of appearance, but of being and power. Akande's reasoning was not logical or definitive. It was part of his feelings. The whole process was one of thought-feeling carried on by every part of his nervous system...; and now... he felt to the end of his toes and hair the quality not merely of a white man, but all that belongs to him--the power of his engines and guns, the magic of his telegraphs, gramophones, radios, motors, ships, and his mysterious being. By wearing white man's clothes, it seemed to Tom's bodily and natural logic, that he became one with the white ju-ju....He did not even notice the huge bare chest, with the thick muscle-pads of a negro, under the bulging lapels. (AW p.210)

Again, the physical intrudes--Cary's method of informing us of the incompleteness of Akande Tom's transformation, of "the tyranny of...physical existences."⁶³ Meanwhile, over in the gymnasium, Dryas and Rackham work out on the parallel bars.

The Lawrencian power of the physical, with its primeval roots, is illustrated by the efficacy of Elizabeth's magic or ju-ju (as opposed to the "education" of the whites) upon all

⁶³ Larsen, p. 42.

it is applied to. She puts a hex on an enemy, spitting on his hand and cursing him: "'I eat you now'" (AW p.353); his hand swells up, the doctor cannot explain it, and toward morning her victim dies, "swelled up like a dead crocodile" (AW p.399). This may be contrasted with the resident director's lecture to Audu in which he explains the impossibility of witchcraft affecting the human body from a distance. "'I can strike a man with my hand--but I cannot hurt him with my mind, because my mind has no hands'" (AW p.356), he says, in terms cleverly designed to deal with the simple mind of a native. Audu reports to his friends "'He says there are no witches, because witches have no hands on their heads'" (AW p.356), washing his own hands of white man's nonsense. Harold R. Collins, writing about "Joyce Cary's Troublesome Africans," sees them as "childish" in their attempt to approximate "the habits and appearance of white men" and more or less pats them on the head and forgives their "ridiculous errors in social behaviour."⁶⁴ Child-like would be a more apt phrase to use; it is still condescending, but at least not inaccurate. Collins fails to realize that which Cary was surely pointing out: white men appear foolish to Africans too.

Aladai, with his veneer of Oxford education, alienates both the Africans and the Europeans; like Mister Johnson, he exists in the twilight zone between the day of European illumination and the night of African darkness. Neither here nor there, like the ass who wanted to be a dog, he is not quite sure himself exactly what he is. "He...has a foot in each world; he is torn

⁶⁴ Antioch Review, XIII (1953), pp. 397, 398, 404.

between the two and distrusted by both."⁶⁵ Education enables him to speak of Rimi in the abstract, which only confuses the natives: "They did not know what he meant by freedom; and as for justice to Rimi, they supposed that someone had misunderstood and repeated nonsense. Rimi didn't commit murders, or eat, or have children, or marry, or catch the fever" (AW p.143). Judy Coote is intelligent enough to have developed anti-intellectual leanings and chastises Aladai for using "slogans," for saying "Rimi" when he should say "the Rimi"; his shortcomings are revealed when he says "'It's all the same, isn't it?'" (AW p. 145). Because it is not all the same, particularly to his people, who suspect him as they suspect the white man and his "nonsense."

What is commendable in Aladai is not his ability to quote poetry, however aptly, in the club to the white men (as Hoffman points out, "Scotch and Wordsworth do not mix"),⁶⁶ but rather in his natural poetry, seen when he dances in the jungle with Dryas.

He was a poet expressing passion in rhythm, but, unlike a poet, he had immediate power of expression. It was not a remembered feeling carefully and elaborately suggested by an artful construction, but feeling in its real presence, directly carried into action.
(AW p.239)

The echoes of Wordsworth are intentional and ironic; Aladai had falsified his authentic level of understanding by reciting Wordsworth. Education is unable to confer imagination or creativity on its devotees, although it may stifle these qualities. In Aladai's case, its detrimental effect is painfully apparent.

⁶⁵ Hall, p. 48.

⁶⁶ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 30.

The distortion of Aladai's politics by Wordsworth is minor compared to Coker's spurious Christianity. The words and themes of his exposition are familiar, just as they are in a Black Mass, but Coker has de-emphasized the humanitarian and peaceful aspects of Christianity and emphasized hell-fire-and-damnation, sacrifice, evil:

"For the love of Jesus--no more rich man, no more poor man--white man love black man for the blood of Jesus--wicked men do not love--they go to hell--the rich man do not love--for blood of Jesus--they die, go to hell--they die--all wicked men die--all rich men die--all white men die--for the love of Jesus. If they no repent we kill wicked men--we fight for Jesus--all men love--white men, black men--all same to Jesus--all be same." (AW p.59)

It is in the similarity to the Christianity we know that the horror lies; the very fact that hell exists as a viable concept testifies to the cruelty inherent in this religion. The parody succeeds because it is closer to the truth than any non-parody sermon. Coker, Aladai, and Dr. Schlemm represent different types of "faith": "Coker, with his militant evangelism and his violent 'ju-ju of blood,' is a foil to Doctor Schlemm's Christian humanitarianism and Louis Aladai's faith in the emancipating power of education."⁶⁷ The only occasion upon which we meet all three of them together is Coker's "revival meeting" in the jungle. He displays Schlemm's shrunken head as his prize ju-ju. Aladai, rapidly shedding the trappings and layers of European civilization, returning to a "blood consciousness," feels "the moan... gathering in him until he felt that it would burst his throat," thinks "It was good to give one's life" (AW p.422).

The crowd, hypnotized by Coker's words, sways and moans,

⁶⁷ Hoffman, p. 33.

as does Aladai: "'We all must die,' moaned Aladai. 'He that is first--must be the sacrifice. It is very odd, all this,' said the brain, in a European voice. 'I shall speak to Miss Judy about this. Why this lust for death?'" Aladai continues in this vein, "'he must give his blood for Rimi,'" while his brain tells him this is nonsense, for what Rimi needs is peace, trade, schools; "'Rimi,' he shrieked, 'For Rimi--'" (AW p.424). Coker increases the tension to the breaking point, whereupon Osi, an accused witch, crippled from previous tortures by Aladai's sister, moves "crab-like" to the edge of the swamp and walks in. The air is rent by her shrieks as the "ju-ju croc" accepts the "sacrifice"--or, as Aladai's brain tells him, "the victim" (AW p.425). Friedson sees this swamp scene as an illustration of Freud's "mass psyche" in operation,⁶⁸ while Larsen sees it as illustrative of "the tyranny of their mere physical existences," resulting from a "poverty of imagination."⁶⁹ In that the individual is nullified and the crowd exalted, the imagination is subordinated to the physical, for although crowds may exemplify sympathy through common emotions and actions, they cannot create, but must destroy.

Regardless of his intellect's apprehension of the primitive and atavistic nature of this involvement with ju-ju and ritual, Aladai cannot prevent himself from declaring he will give his life for Rimi (AW p.429). The "primitive" nature of such a declaration is seen in proper perspective when compared to the fervor and widespread existence of western patriotism,

⁶⁸ Friedson, p. 67.

⁶⁹ Larsen, p. 42.

nationalism or chauvinism. Although "irrational," like love and jealousy, it is as infectious as a St. Vitus dance among a people, and within a man, however well-educated, as difficult to contain by logical processes as the growth of a cancer. Judy Coote, retaining her presence of mind when white and black man alike are giving way before something more powerful than learned things, is both frustrated and appalled by Aladai's intentions, by Dryas' "nonsense." She must bow to Dryas' puzzling admonition to "look at the Indians and the Irish" because she recognizes the fact that Dryas is at once "stupider and stronger" than she is, just as Aladai's "better half" is subverted by the more potent and prevalent half. This latter, represented by his sister and seen in Dryas, Cary refers to as "character," which always makes itself "felt." "Dogs knew it" (AW p.429).

Cary's own attitude is made abundantly clear in his description of Aladai's inevitable death: "Aladai, just before he went down, waved his arm, and shouted something about Rimi, but no one could distinguish what it was" (AW p.432). Dryas Honeywood disappears in the melée and is rumoured to have been murdered; the likelihood of her death is indicated by her physical pre-occupation, similar to the natives, and their common "unconscious drift toward death."⁷⁰ Rackham escapes a similar fate, probably due to some conventional ingenuity, and lives to tell his Irish tale in English clubs. Judy Coote, with her leg broken in two places and near death from starvation proves, "like other people whose physique seems to have suffered at the

⁷⁰ Larsen, p. 42.

profit of their brains and nerves," to be "very tenacious of life" (AW p.433). Larsen sees her tenacity as Cary's expression of optimism "in an otherwise dark novel."⁷¹ Despite her "sympathetic imagination," she returns to her ideals, her discussions and debates about the right of the Negro to be educated, putting her notions into practice in spite of the colonialists' protests, "the cliches of a thousand years":

"What would they do with it?"
 "Making them discontented."
 "Shakespeare for a lot of apes."
 "Slow but sure is the secret."
 "Give me the real old bush pagan."
 (AW p.441)

We have already seen what happened to Aladai, the fruit reaped from his English education, the chance it stands against ju-ju. Akande Tom, in case we missed the point with Aladai, illustrates equally as forcefully the impotence of formal education. He becomes Judy's willing and earnest pupil (he is near tears when he discovers that he cannot learn to read in a single evening); declares his fearlessness of Elizabeth Aladai and ju-ju loudly and brashly. His exultation and defiance only reflect his actual bondage, however, and Elizabeth, enthroned and "enlarged to the size of a giant" wordlessly exerts her power, reducing Tom "from man to beast," so that it is a gibbering grovelling "black jelly, protoplasm," "creeping like a lizard," with which we are finally presented. Having given up the Christian ju-ju and succumbed to the more potent ju-ju of Elizabeth, he again becomes her chief husband and "swaggers more than ever" --but the children laugh at him and "his figure is going"; he is "given six months" more of Elizabeth's favour, whereupon

⁷¹ Larsen, p. 43.

he will presumably be turned into a rat or a fish, the fate that befell her previous husband (AW p.28).

The African Witch is but another of Cary's works which delineates and describes the disparities between two completely divergent cultures, yet the sensation remains that the cultural differences are only the context in which yet greater battles take place, psychological conflicts within a person. In the introductory note, Cary states that the book "has been written as a work of the imagination and not as a picture of contemporary conditions in West Africa." This work is a more powerful presentation of the disparities than are the two previous African novels; it is psychologically more subtle and exploratory, and therefore more impressive and effective. Cary's rendering of the indomitable force behind the barriers erected by whites and blacks, their profound impassability and stability, is second only to his depiction of the intellectual, emotional, and imaginative predilections within the individual members of each culture, which create barriers no less impassable. As Walter Allen notes, it is not so much Cary's depiction of the clash of colours, but the "modes of being underneath the difference of colours."⁷²

Judy Coote could never have married Rackham because no sympathy existed between them, just as there was none between Dryas and herself; Aladai had to renounce his Oxford education because, in being rejected by his intellectual equals (often inferiors), he was driven to embody those qualities exemplified by his countrymen, with which he could sympathize and identify;

⁷² Walter Ernest Allen, Joyce Cary (London, 1953), p. 29.

Elizabeth, monumental and unchanging, is secure and powerful, without internal or external conflicts because she is so completely at one with her environment, and in this oneness is found another sort of sympathy similar to if not synonymous with the sympathetic magic employed by primitives to bring rain, make game plentiful, increase crops.⁷³ There Elizabeth's qualities of imagination end; she is primarily illustrative of the most destructive type of Cary's women. "She is woman triumphant rather than woman subdued," although Wright notes that, paradoxically, she can only "succeed to fail."⁷⁴ She is the "woman old" of "The Mental Traveller," binding her iron thorns around all men with whom she comes into contact, but until she herself is controlled and dominated by her own subjects, then Wright's point must be granted. If she triumphs, she fails as a woman, whose part must be to attempt to use her man's creativity for her own purpose and then be turned into raw material for his art and in turn be used, made creative by virtue of her own destructive tendencies. "The old Africa is undefeated in this story."⁷⁵ Blood is stronger than the sweet wine of sympathy.

Hoffman sees her final triumph over Christianity and white men's ways, the subjugation of Tom to a snake or lizard, as

⁷³ This sympathy is one manifestation of imagination, and will later be seen in Gulley's attitude toward his first (and very ugly) girl friend, in Sara Monday's ability to adapt herself to different men and "situations," in Mister Johnson's desire to make Rudbeck feel better although Rudbeck is shortly going to hang him.

⁷⁴ Wright, pp. 102-103.

⁷⁵ Hall, p. 49.

"an ironic parody of the Christian triumph of good over evil."⁷⁶
 Yet in the same way that Satan remains an attractive personality
 so too does Elizabeth; one must admire her triumph.

iv. Mister Johnson

Mister Johnson (1939) is Cary's fifth novel; following Castle Corner, it is still usually classified with the first three novels about Africa. Yet it is a work that belongs with his later novels which usually have a strong central figure of a comic, anti-social, picaresque nature; it deals with the themes of freedom, joy, and imagination so characteristic of the trilogies. Arnold Kettle feels that "the theme of Mister Johnson is the effect of the imposition of an alien code of morals and manners upon a native culture,"⁷⁷ but it would be more correct to apply this statement to the first three African novels which are about the effects of the British imposition of their way of life on the natives, and the disastrous results. In Mister Johnson this is assumed; Cary no longer "preaches." Mister Johnson is about Mister Johnson (who could be any nationality) not about Africa or Africans.

Mister Johnson is a type that could crop up in Piccadilly or the Bronx. Cary's own description of Johnson would support this view: "Mr. Johnson is a young clerk who turns his life into a romance, he is a poet who creates for himself a glorious destiny."⁷⁸ The emphasis is on Johnson's imagination, not his

⁷⁶ Hoffman, p. 31.

⁷⁷ Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (London, 1953), II, 179.

⁷⁸ Joyce Cary, "Prefatory Essay," Mister Johnson (London, 1962), p. . Subsequent references will be to this edition-- hereafter cited in the text as MJ.

skin colour. He has problems that arise not because he is black or African, but because, like Gulley and Charley and Bonser, he has more imagination (ego) than "common sense" (super-ego). His highly developed sense of and allegiance to self cause him to act in accordance with whim and impulse rather than logic or reason. His total obedience to inspiration lands him in as much trouble as it lands the artist or the child. He may be said to combine the most anti-social aspects of both, and he is treated accordingly.

The novel is about the exploits and personality of Mister Johnson, a third-class government clerk in Fada, Nigeria. He is young, about seventeen, and imbued with a sense of his own importance; yet the joy he takes in himself and in living makes his self-centredness not only tolerable but admirable. Although he is intoxicated with life, it is not a bad drunk; though he can't hold his liquor, it doesn't make him sick either (it does, however, speed him to an early demise). Johnson's problems, particularly his monetary ones, multiply as the novel progresses. Having no sense of the future and little of the past, the pay-later plan works badly both for Johnson and his creditors. Matters are complicated by the fact that Johnson works for the British government and is in continual difficulty with that institution. He files "tobacco, native" under "elephant poachers in the Fada Kurmi" because his superior, Mr. Rudbeck, once said that the tobacco was "all green like elephant dropping" (MJ p.61); he juggles the books to help his beloved Mr. Rudbeck build roads and is accused of theft, fraud, embezzlement, forgery and sojan gwona (MJ pp.124,125,192).

Because he also works for the Fada government, obtaining for the Waziri Rudbeck's reports and files on the Waziri, mere confusion becomes schizophrenic division. Although his fealty to the British government is overwhelming (he calls England "home" although he has never been there), his need for cash is stronger and so he consents to spy for Waziri. This is the first in a long line of breakings and enterings. He soon is committing petty theft in Gollup's store and then is forced to murder Gollup. For this deed he is executed by Rudbeck.

It is his desire to make the world in his own image that creates the problems. He wants everyone to be happy, like he is, and to this end he gives wild gin and beer parties, buys his wife, Bamu, expensive clothes and bangles, and "embezzles" for Rudbeck's roads. He knows what makes people happy because he knows what makes him happy; unfortunately, he has little knowledge of unhappiness and its causes. Cary says of him that he "serves his pleasure, but for him it is pleasure to admire and create happiness" (MJ p.121). Very much like Charley Brown, he keeps his nimbus of innocence throughout. Never do we consider him in the least vicious or depraved. His crimes are committed while "creating" happiness.

For Johnson, every thought is expressed in an action, and every action is an expression of his exuberance and joy. After meeting Bamu, he tells her "'You are so beautiful you make me laugh'" (MJ p.14). When he travels, he walks at a pace between a trot and a lope, and his action resembles a dance: "He jumps over roots and holes like a ballet dancer" (MJ p.15). The village children think he is mad, as the neighbourhood kids

thought Gulley mad. Both let their imaginations become manifest in action. Gulley hops up and down Greenbank Hard like a gargoyle; Mister Johnson, remembering he has forgotten something, "strikes himself on the forehead and kicks himself with his heel" (MJ p.44).

In the morning Johnson wakes up "tight with life." An extraordinary happiness welling up in him makes him want to leap into the air or yell; he is "light with joy" (MJ p.21). His happiness turns to panic when he thinks he is late for work, but his legs translate the panic into leaps and springs, "they are full of energy and enjoy cutting capers" (MJ p.22). Next, the happiness and panic manifest themselves in a song, which Johnson "improves" upon:

I got a lil girl, she roun' like de worl'.
 She smoot like de water, she shine like de sky.
 She fat like de corn, she smell like de new grass.
 She dance like de tree, she shake like de leaves.
 (MJ p.23).

Throughout the novel lyric interludes like the above occur, a technique Cary is to use later in The Horse's Mouth with Gulley's Blake quotations, always an expression of his emotions whether joyful or melancholy. When Johnson is about to be hanged for murder, he sings the sentry's song:

Fare-hoo-well, my li-hit-til house, my si-his-ter
 dear,
 They've to-hook me for the white man's war.
 (MJ p.226)

When working as Rudbeck's foreman on the road crew, Johnson elicits more action from his men by making the road live in their imagination. "A road to be finished next year is too dim and vague for the imagination" (MJ p.170). So

Johnson glorifies the labour itself. He hires drummers to beat out working rhythms till their fingers are bloody, and he supplies beer and songs to intoxicate more completely the workers. Cary compares him to a witch doctor "possessed by the spirit"; he "has no notion that he is tired. He doesn't feel anything except music, noise, the movement of the work, the approbation and nearness of Hudbeck..." (MJ p.178). He doesn't actually need to think that this glorious road, "the wonder of the world," is about to be completed, he feels it in his body, "in every muscle": thought translated into action.

He loves to see the effect that he has on the world, like Charley Brown. "He feels the wonder and charm of greatness. He can hardly believe that it is he, Johnson, who can produce such extraordinary effects on other people" (MJ p.81). This is comparable to Charley's emotions when his "gang" marvels at his daring, at his stories, his plans. Part of the creative, the imaginative person's pleasure is gained in this way, in adding themselves to the world and observing the results of the mixture. Whether it will explode, or be a boon to mankind, an invention or a painting, is unpredictable. One is as likely as the other; "creative destruction" or "destructive creation" becomes a viable and meaningful expression, like "savage innocent." Johnson makes the world he lives in, and if he also destroys it, chances are good that it will destroy him as well, as happened with Gulley and Charley. Dorothy Walters' comments about Gulley are applicable also to Mister Johnson: "As creator he is, inevitably, destroyer, But out of his destructions are born his 'works of passion and imagination' through which are

revitalized the spirits both of himself and of the world."⁷⁹

She quotes Barbara Hardy on the same subject:

The Horse's Mouth is about creative power and creative lawlessness....Mister Johnson is cheat first and poet after, Jimson is painter first and lawbreaker after, and Charley is both juvenile delinquent and infant prodigy....Johnson, Charley, and Jimson all create all destroy, and all have power, a power which is less the product of genius or courage or lawlessness than of vitality.⁸⁰

Mister Johnson's "vitality" is, like Gulley's and Charley's, of the mind and not necessarily the body. All three characters could be basket cases and still retain the same "vitality," still get into trouble, still be creative. Johnson's exuberance is seen even more clearly when he is contrasted with other characters in the novel.

His foils are the native Benjamin, the District Officer Rudbeck, and Gollup. Benjamin the post office clerk, is, although conservative, an admirer of Johnson. Like Plant in The Horse's Mouth he is too serious; mournfully he says of Johnson "He is very clever, but I am afraid it will not be good for him to look back in his old age and say "What have I done with my life?"' (MJ p.216). Both Plant and Benjamin are singularly devoid of joy and imagination. Rudbeck, however, has imagination to some extent. He is obsessed with the idea of roads, and although this is in imitation of Sturdee, a former superior officer, Rudbeck has assimilated and individualized it.

⁷⁹ Dorothy Jeanne Walters, The Theme of Destructive Innocence in the Modern Novel: Greene, James, Cary, Porter (University of Oklahoma, 1961), p. 160.

⁸⁰ "Form in Joyce Cary's Novels," Essays in Criticism, IV (April 1954), 187; quoted in Walters, p. 161.

"He admits to a warm admiration for Sturdee's work, but doesn't acknowledge that his own creations in Pada owe their being to anyone else's inspiration" (MJ p.52). Rudbeck is assailed by the same depression that an artist feels when his canvas or poem is complete, that a child feels when involved in a long-anticipated prank or a party. The road, like new art, speaks to Rudbeck of change and destruction.

"I'm smashing up the old Pada--I shall change every thing and everybody in it. I am abolishing the old ways, the old ideas, the old law; I am bringing wealth and opportunity for good as well as vice, new powers to men and therefore new conflicts. I am the revolution...I destroy and I make new....I am your idea."
(MJ p.186)

Rudbeck feels this rather than thinks it, as he is fairly inarticulate, but quite subject to moods and passions. When, having finally been persuaded by Johnson to shoot him himself rather than have him hanged by a native, Rudbeck defends the act as his own when his wife questions it: "...Rudbeck, growing ever more free in the inspiration which already seems his own idea, answers obstinately, 'I couldn't let anyone else do it, could I?'" (MJ p.251). With this the novel ends. Rudbeck's is an imitative imagination, but that kind usually proves to be the most tenacious and assertive, as illustrated by Jim Latter (Not Honour More).

Charles Hoffman sees Rudbeck's road as a "creative expression of his imagination as much as any of Johnson's schemes"⁸¹ and Gollup as a realist, "a violent, irrational man, a racist, a trader who cheats his customers"⁸² as opposed to Golden

⁸¹ Hoffman, p. 38.

⁸² Ibid., p. 40.

Larsen who sees Rudbeck as "singularly unimaginative"⁸³ and Gollup as "the feeling human being,"⁸⁴ "not rigid in his ideas," "a man of imagination and passion."⁸⁵ These conflicting opinions may be reconciled by remembering Cary's statement in the preface to The Horse's Mouth that "every living soul creates his own world" (HM p.319), and that Rudbeck's passion for roads, though picked up from a former superior officer, is a genuine passion, and that his road does have a genuine grip on his imagination. Hoffman's condemnation of Gollup is somewhat harsh, for the man really loves the people with whom he becomes most violent, his native wife, Johnson, his employees. When he manifests passion, whether love or hate, it is always violent, and it is therefore fitting that he should die violently, at the hands of Johnson, who respected him and was in turn respected by him. Gollup was impressed by the fact that Johnson wasn't afraid of him (MJ p.156).

Cary's remarks about Gollup indicate that he is an imaginative person of the same order as Mister Johnson. When Gollup is drunk, he becomes like one of the natives, ceasing "to calculate and reason; he wants to sing, to love, to talk, and to tell stories" (MJ p.142). Like Johnson, he wants to create an atmosphere congruent with his mood, "romantic and exciting." According to Cary, some men when drunk "innocently reveal themselves as philosophers, dreamers, saints, and poets. Gollup is all four" (MJ p.142). This should establish that Cary viewed

⁸³ Larsen, p. 66.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 61

Gollup sympathetically, as he did all his reprobates, delinquents and artists. In an atmosphere of "gin and poetic sympathy which belongs only to artists and drink parties," Gollup and Johnson--like Charley at his gangster's saturnalia and Gulley anywhere--"pursue their own creations simultaneously":

"Oh, when I tink of my dear good wife Bamu, how she say, I you wife, Mister Johnson, I fit to go with you always for richer or poorer--"

"The angel in the 'ouse--that's a real angel too. The light of the 'ousehold--making little 'eavens--and oo wants your bloody trumpets."

(MJ p.142)

This dialogue reveals something further about Johnson's character--his tendency to romanticize, to elaborate on fact, to compensate in his stories for the deficiencies of actuality. Johnson's idea of love is based on the store catalogues, observation of missionaries, and a few approved novels; it is "a compound of romantic sentiment and embroidered underclothes" (MJ p.16). Bamu, being in fact an ignorant and not easily impressed or changed savage, thinks Johnson mad, and in her own prosaic manner, does her duty by him, but no more. Johnson, however, wishes to see her as a civilized lady, fit to have tea with Mrs. Rudbeck. He tells Gollup that Bamu says of her home "!"Dis lil house my church, dis baby my boy to sing, here in my bress he drink dem God's wine!" (MJ p.142), an unlikely statement from the most literary of housewives.

He embellishes on a "conversation" with Tring to Ajali, the "sour chorus"⁸⁶ of the novel:

"When he see me, he take me by the han', he look in my eyes, he say, 'Mister Johnson, I hear all about dis famous work you do for Mister Rudbeck--"

⁸⁶ Friedson, p. 76.

I admire for you--I tink you bes' government clerk for whole province.' And he shake my hand--he say, 'God bless you, Mister Johnson.'

"What, Mister Johnson, he no say God bless you?"

"You say I lie, Mister Ajali?"

Johnson is angry because he feels that his description is even more truthful than Tring's bare words; that his speech, repeated in cold blood, could not possibly convey to a third party...the real effect of this remarkable experience.... (MJ p.117)

And to be sure, Johnson's description of the conversation is more true than a tape recording might be, not because it conveys Tring's sentiments more exactly, for it completely distorts them, but because it conveys the effect of this conversation on Johnson. This embellishment of actuality is like his stories about Bamu in that both embody Johnson's idealizations of his world, the way he would like it to be rather than the way it is.

Rather than being despised for this quality, he is loved for it; truth, for the savages, is not based on fact. Johnson "is among the most welcome and honoured guests in all Africa, men of imagination, the story-tellers, the poets"⁸⁷ (MJ p.208). His dances, songs and stories will remain to be retold long after he is dead. Friedson sees Johnson as inhabiting a sort of no man's land between two cultures, despised and ignored by the African and not understood and feared by the European.⁸⁸ Cary's remarks about story-tellers, Benjamin and Ajali's reluctant admiration, and Johnson's general popularity would seem to refute Friedson's too ready and too general

⁸⁷ Cf. Cary's An American Visitor, p. 82: "...in Birri ...artists were privileged."

⁸⁸ Friedson, pp. 76-79.

of subjective truth. One is reminded of Cary's story about the two children's drawings of a swan: although the one looked nothing like a swan looks, it was a "swannier" swan than the other (AR pp.48-49). Because his actions are not reason-based but inspired by his imagination, they are generally very natural and spontaneous. Johnson's notable lack of a moral sense (due partly to his inability to foresee consequences or to remember punishments) combine with his unthinking actions to bring about his downfall. He knifes Sergy Gollup while robbing his store, which he does to pay for a gun and beer party given to impress his friends, to do a deed commensurate with his self-image.

It is Judge Rudbeck's duty to hear Johnson's case, to recommend sentence, and to execute that sentence. In a state of devotion comparable to Charley's for Miss Alchin, and a desire to please, Johnson agrees with every interpretation Rudbeck puts on the case:

"Oh, yes, sah. I kill un--I understan'," Johnson says with a cheerful air. He is greatly enjoying the chat with Rudbeck. Gratitude makes him eager to please....He is ready to say anything that seems likely to be satisfactory.

.....
 "Oh, yes, yes, sah," Johnson cries. He has never dreamt of this interpretation, but now it seems to him true. Tears run down his cheeks. The marvellous Rudbeck has detected the truth he didn't know himself. (MJ pp.232-233)

Johnson thinks that Rudbeck will save him; Rudbeck's interpretation of "irresponsibility" seems to him "true" because it grabs his imagination and is commensurate with his image of the judge as a kind man and his friend. When Rudbeck receives news that Johnson is to be hanged he lapses into a state of rebellion or insubordination, which is (in addition to a

passion for roads) one of his saving graces. He refuses to carry out the sentence not because Johnson is so devoted to and trusts him, but because "regulations, conditions of the Service, and luck," his "mysterious enemies," surround and enclose him and he resents it, this necessity. Yet he finally capitulates.

Even on the night preceding his execution Johnson is happy. The whiskey Rudbeck sends to the jail is not seen as a condemned man's due, but as "the best whiskey in the world," "from England, from home" (MJ p.240). Laughing, Johnson says "'It's because he's going to hang me today. Oh! Mister Rudbeck is my friend--he's the best man in the world'" (MJ p.240). He sings a farewell song, "'Good-bye, my night, my lil wife-night, / Hold me in you arms ten tousand time'" (MJ p.244), writes a letter to Bulteel thanking him for his kindness and to Bamu thanking her for being a good wife, and finishes remembering all his happy moments. Rudbeck asks him if "the good time at Guta" has anything to do with his case, to which Johnson replies, "'Oh, no, sah--I jess remember he very good time. I nearly forget him'" (MJ p.246). It would have been, for him, a crime, an ingratitude, to forget one of his good times. This all makes Rudbeck very depressed and gloomy, and Johnson, perceiving Rudbeck's misgivings, endeavours to blacken himself and exonerate Rudbeck still further, saying "'I much more bad den you tink--I do plenty of tings behind you back--I steal plenty times out of de cash drawer...'" (MJ p.246).

When Rudbeck tells him it is time to pray, he continues

to think of things he might have said to cheer him up, "things of further consolation and encouragement" (MJ p.248). "His mind is full of active invention. He wants to do or say something remarkable, to express his affection for everything and everybody" (MJ p.248), to do something that will have an effect on the world. All the time he is paralyzed with fear. He has begged Rudbeck to hang him himself, but Rudbeck has called it out of the question. He is on his knees, "praying," when through his fingers he perceives Rudbeck returning with a rifle. Knowing he won't have to get up from his knees, he triumphs in the "daring inventiveness" of Rudbeck. Aloud he cries "'Oh Lawd, I tank you for my frien' Mister Rudbeck--de bigges' heart in de worl'" (MJ p.240). Rudbeck then "leans through the door, aims the carbine at the back of the boy's head, and blows his brains out" (MJ p.249). Earlier in the novel Cary had written "Johnson...worships Rudbeck and would willingly die for him" (MJ p.26), an ironic touch.

Hoffman sees Johnson's submissive death as a "surrender to a vision of glory,"⁹⁰ more or less his realization of a glorious destiny. This might be truly said of Aissa, but Johnson's glory is to be found in his life, his living imagination--death nullifies his "glory." Although one can argue, as Friedson does, that Johnson achieves "tragic stature,"⁹¹ his is still the defeat of the poet-rebel-anarchist by the forces of prosody, conformity, and order. A small triumph of the individual will occurs when Rudbeck shoots Johnson rather than hang him--but

⁹⁰ Hoffman, p. 42.

⁹¹ Friedson, p. 80.

it is not much of a gain compared to the loss, and Rudbeck does not know the reason for his action, although he defends himself to his wife. Larsen terms the act Rudbeck's "greatest act of courage"⁹² and a triumph of Johnson's faith, which seems to ennoble a situation which should only appal and disgust us. The creative individual has again come into lethal conflict with society, but even though Johnson is judged (and harshly), since he does not judge others himself, we feel that some mitigation of our indignation is necessary. The inevitability of the clash and the original and increasing odds against the free personality tend to augment a que sera attitude on the part of the readers; we can assign no blame. It is precisely this inability to be involved in any way that indicates some truth in Bloom's stance,⁹³ which is that Cary's novels have no moral center. Although Johnson has tried to create his own world and to live imaginatively, in the end he loses to an established order and his death is inevitable at the hands of that order. He is at once free and captive.

Mister Johnson prefigures Charley Brown, of Charley Is My Darling. They are alike in innocence, ingenuity, agreeableness: "'Yes, miss,' Charley says, so full of the wish to be agreeable that he can't bear to use the negative even when it is appropriate."⁹⁴

⁹² Larsen, p. 76.

⁹³ Bloom, p. 58.

⁹⁴ Joyce Cary, Charley Is My Darling (New York, 1963), p. 138.

Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as CD.

Questioned about letting loose Wicken's bull, Charley agrees with everything he is accused of. Lina says, "Charley, you don't mean that you planned all this?" and Charley is confused: "He has a moment of doubt. He has made his improvisation, he has hit upon free confession as the most striking and pleasing expedient. But he is not sure what details will please his friend Lina" (CD p.143). This is strikingly similar to Johnson's attitude during his trial under Rudbeck. Another time, as Charley is cat-burgling, he finds himself more or less trapped on a water spout, unable to move up or down, and at some distance from the ground: "His arms are trembling, his fingers are losing their power to grip. He begins to pray: 'Oh, God, oh, Jesus, save me, don't let me fall--don't let me be killed--I don't want to be killed. Oh, Jesus, you save me, I never do anything bad again--I never climb no more spouts'" (CD p.193). Johnson's appeals to Jesus also always multiply in frenzy and fervor as the situation increases in danger: it is the danger that makes both Charley and Johnson feel they do "bad"--not the deed itself.

The gang's urge to live colorfully is shown with greatest intensity in Charley, who becomes a cockney Mister Johnson. Like Johnson he is never so happy as when he is entertaining the group with some projection of his own imagination. Like Johnson he would steal any number of cars and bags to continue feasting his audience with parties. Also, like Johnson, his imagination--and that of his followers--is never satisfied with stale experience. He suffers from the restlessness of the artistic temperament.⁹⁵

Cary makes several explicit comparisons of children with natives and many implicit ones. In the same way that he

⁹⁵ Friedson, p. 121.

captures the quality of the child's world, he captures the plight and dilemma of the native who is suffering under the impositions of the white man's world. What white culture is to savages, the adult world is to children. In A House of Children Evelyn Corner twice compares the children with savages, remarking on the tribal affections, the sharing, the combination of gentleness and violence which both exhibit:

...our sudden taste for night, for breaking the conventions, our sudden warm feelings, our talks and even Delia's boldness were romantic, revolutionary. Their good and their bad, the warm friendliness, the feeling, which even I shared, that we had been brought closer together than ever before, in a fonder, more sympathetic relation; and their fits of irresponsible violence, even the discussions about happiness, love and so on, which seemed so important and original, all belonged to a form as old as mankind. Savages, too, in their harvest feasts, stay up all night, form suddenly tender warm friendships, to that you see the pagan warriors walking about hand in hand under the moon, and murmuring together over the fire all night; or suddenly they take a fancy to go and burn somebody's house.⁹⁶

The above passage is certainly applicable to Charley and his gang as well; the force which motivates them to rob and destroy is the same as that which knits them so closely together. One is not destructive and the other constructive; rather both are manifestations of delight, a joy in existing.

Another quality which children and savages have in common is the ability to undergo suffering and to ignore fears. This is partly due to their sense of wonder, their acceptance of the miraculous and the terrifying as aspects of a mysterious

⁹⁶ Joyce Cary, A House of Children (London, 1941), p. 96. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as HC.

and strange world. Nothing surprises them; their ignorance prevents them from altering the world or ameliorating their condition.

...I saw, later on, in Africa, during a famine and in a big outbreak of smallpox, the strange resignation of the people. I did not know what patience meant until I saw old men dying by the roadside, with dying children in their arms; or the smallpox camps where whole families sat all day, with their enormously swollen faces, waiting upon fate with a submission so complete that I had to have some of them spoon-fed. They had lost all confidence in remedy and even in food. I daresay they felt that the familiar corn might poison them. They were some of those millions who have died every year, in peacetime, for countless thousands of years, in misery which no war could exaggerate, and they accepted their fortune in such patience that they did not even resent it. They did not dream of blaming anyone for it. They were perfectly [sic] good-natured and ready to be cheerful. They laughed at a joke, especially if they thought they were meant to be amused.

(HC p.135)

Their allegiance to the present and non-concern with past and future makes them unable to remember past happiness or to foresee future suffering. If one does not compare one's present state to a preferable condition, it is simple to accept current sufferings as the natural state of things. Ignorance fosters superstition and religion, a belief in "fate" and a master hand. Because they cannot control their environment they accept it: Gulley knows injustice exists and that he can't set things right, so it doesn't bother him. Perhaps the reason that the imagination of the native and the child is so active is because they do not bother to use mental energies in controlling their world, but rather devote them to creating it.

Chapter III

THE NOVELS OF CHILDHOOD

1. Charley Is My Darling

Charley Is My Darling was published in 1940, a year before the publication of the more autobiographical A House of Children in 1941. Both contain germs of several incidents which are later developed in The Horse's Mouth, and both have artists, Mr. Lommax and Pinto, who have more than a little of Gulley in them. Charley himself is very like what we imagine Gulley to have been as a boy; he embodies the mischievous and youthful aspect of the "adult" Gulley. Certainly there are parallels between Gulley's description of the beginning of his infatuation with and pursuit of art (HM p.51) and Charley's primary attempts (CD pp.44,107).

Cary treats Charley as an "artist"; like other children, he is creating the world he must live in through trial and error. He organizes the chaos first one way, then another, and then stands back to see whether it will stand or fall, much in the same way that an artist will hold his thumb up to his painting.

Occasionally temptation (which Cary equated to the artist's inspiration) is too strong and leaves no time for reflection: "The imagination sees its opportunity, its prey, and instantly leaps upon it" (CD pref. p.ix). Children are born creators,

says Cary, and "with their powerful imaginations and weak control, the wonder is not that they do some wrong, but that they don't do much more" (CD pref.p.ix).

But the world in which the child delights, and which plentifully supplies fuel for his imagination, is also "a moral structure" which is harder to grasp simply because it is intangible. And unless the child has had the Ten Commandments drawn out for him, or told him in such a picturesque fashion that there is something for his image-making faculty to deal with, the moral world seems a colorless and unexciting place in which to dwell, and the child will do as Charley did and retreat from it in some confusion and/or commit a real crime:

...he will choose some valued thing to dirty or to smash because he identifies it with a world which obstinately closes itself to his imagination. For of course, the imagination is always looking for significance; both in the physical and moral world, that is its job, to put together coherent wholes, a situation with meaning, a place where the child does know, all the time, where he is.

(CD pref.p.x)

Charley Brown is a fourteen year old Cockney evacuee sent to the country before the intensive London bombing. The novel deals with his attempt to assert himself among the other children (it is necessary to overcome an initial bad impression made when he had to have his head shaved to get rid of the lice) and with his success at doing so through his ability to invent new and exciting adventures and to tell stories. Both talents spring from a lively and creative imagination; both land him in hot water, juvenile court and the remand house. He begins by letting out bulls, proceeds to stealing cars and handbags, robbing houses, and culminates by making a girl friend pregnant

and attempting to run away to America with her. Yet Charley's intentions are good. The adventures are conceived to amuse his friends and to alleviate boredom, not to shock people or to break the law for the sake of it. He is anxious to please and capable of deep devotion, spending whole days working on a rock garden for Lina's mother, realizing how much it means to her. Friedson sees Charley's preoccupation with the garden as "a need for any creative order";⁹⁷ Kenneth Watson notes "the practical skill, absorbed concentration, and sense of form"⁹⁸ that Charley brings to the planning and building of the garden.

Illustrative of Charley's creative potential is the following daydream centering around his future success at the Academy:

"And one morning Miss Leener will be looking out of the winder, just after breakfast, wen she says: 'Just look at that beautiful car--I wonder does it belong to the King or wot. I wish I ad a car like that,' and then she says: 'Wy, it's turning in at the gate--it muss be a mistake--oo can it be?' An then the shover--e as a blue coat juss like the car --e gets out and rings the bell, and Miss Leener says to im: 'You've come to the wrong ouse--hhouse,' and e says: 'Miss Leener Allchin I presume,' and she says: 'That's me.' Ere, ere, she wouldn't say that, she says: 'I am Miss Allchin,' and the shover says: 'That's right,' e says, 'wen you want the car, miss,' and she says 'Wot car?' and e says: 'This ere car, miss, wich is yours,' and she says: 'Wot do you mean?' and e says: 'Mr. Charley Brown as sent me,' and she says: 'Do you mean the famous Mr. Charley Brown, Royal Academy, the great artiss?' and e says: 'Yes, miss, Mr. Charles Brown.' Ere, Sir Charles Brown...." (CD p.153)

He dreams both of his own greatness (nothing is impossible for Charley) and of doing something for (or impressing) those who befriended him before he became a "great artiss."

⁹⁷ Friedson, Novels of Joyce Cary, p. 136.

⁹⁸ Kenneth Watson, "'The Captive and the Free': Artist, Child, and Society in the World of Joyce Cary," English, XVI, 50.

Cary is careful to enlist our sympathies and to point out that the "crimes" Charley commits are really "moral experiments," his attempt to give form to the chaos with which he is confronted (CD pref.p.x). Kenneth Watson points out that Charley does not indulge in "the common fantasy-life of the delinquent," but expands and realizes his ideas in action, "as there is a pressure to do in all healthy imaginations."⁹⁹ Coleridge's concept of fancy and the imagination must be recalled here to avoid confusion; the fantasies of the average "delinquent" are mechanical and imitative in nature, while Charley's imagination is organic and original.

Charley is not "evil," having no ulterior motives for his exploits but he discovers the existence of evil when others ascribe it to him. As in Graham Greene's essay "The Lost Childhood," this discovery marks the end of innocence and the onslaught of "sophistication." "Guilt" and "shame" are meaningless to Charley until the adult world forces him to accept these burdens. This is a mistake, according to Cary, for to the child temptation and inspiration are the same thing (CD pref.p.viii), and just as art is beyond good and evil, so must Charley's activities be construed.

He compares the child to an artist: "The imagination sees its opportunity, its prey, and instantly leaps upon it"; "The child is a born Creator" (CD pref.p.ix). The child, like Gully, has a birthday every day; as in Dylan Thomas' "Fern Hill," he creates his world anew daily: "and the sun grew round that very day." Both in a figurative and a literal

⁹⁹ Watson, p. 50.

sense Charley is an artist. He imitates Lommax who in turn is an imitation of an artist, espousing vociferously "artistic" ideas and adopting an "artistic" stance, more for the sake of his audience and his own image than his work. When asked if bulls have eyelashes, Lommax replies "'That's naw matter, Miss Lina--if this is my bull and ah wants an eyelash on him, he's damn well got to have an eyelash'" (CD p.32).

Charley imitates Lommax:

He draws first a red bull with black eyes, then a black bull with red eyes. He then draws men, houses, a cow in a field with red clouds raining black rain. He draws blue slates on the houses, blue lines on the sky above the clouds. He then makes a blue bull with black eyes set in red circles. He gives it red horns and finally draws curled red strokes like flashes of lightning radiating from it in all directions....

"Rotten," he murmurs, but it seems to him a masterpiece. He is red with excitement and surprise. (CD p.44)

He shows this work to his teacher, who enthuses but asks if perhaps the bull's hooves aren't "rather near his head" (CD p.46). In Art and Reality Cary discusses the effect of education on the imagination and artistic attempts of a child. A child of seven had asked if he should draw a swan for Cary.

"Yes, a swan"; and the child sat down and drew for half an hour. I'd forgotten about the swan until she produced the most original swan I'd ever seen. It was a swimming swan, that is, a creature designed simply to swim. Its feet were enormous and very carefully finished, obviously from life. The whole structure of the feet was shown in heavy black lines. The child was used to seeing swans on a canal at the end of her garden and had taken particular notice of their feet. Below the water the swan was all power. But for body she gave it the faintest, lightest outline, neck and wings included in one round line shaped rather like a cloud--a perfect expression of the cloud-like movement of the swan on the surface.

I was admiring this swan when an older child in the room, aged thirteen, looked at the drawing and said contemptuously "That's not a bit like a swan. I'll draw you a swan," and produced a Christmas-card swan, of the commonest type.

Yet the second child had all the qualities of the first, intelligence, sensibility. A few years before she had had the ability to see for herself, to receive the unique personal impression. She had lost it by the education which emphasises the fact, measurements, analysis, the concept....It is said that when you give a child the name of a bird, it loses the bird. It never sees the bird again, but only a sparrow, a thrush, a swan.... (CD pp.48-49)

This he calls the "ruin of aesthetic intuition by conceptual education." Yet he realizes that it would be futile to attempt to keep the child naive, fresh and original as what results is an "imitative childishness." He sees no way out of this dilemma (AR p.51).

Children are taught to draw representationally as a rule, so that often they will trace another picture rather than draw their own. The importance of colouring "inside the lines" is an adult-conferred value, as is the importance of colouring bananas yellow and oranges orange. Lommax, for all his braggadocio and verbosity, does encourage his pupils to "express themselves" and teaches them how to appreciate a picture:

"There is naw such thing as inspiration, Jimmy," Mr. Lommax never minds contradicting himself, "and orriginality is merely a fashion among the young leddies in the arrt schools--naw, naw, naw, but look at the corrn--it's sunk a wee bit, but it's rrich still--it's the corrn that increeased a hundred-fold--d'ye see that--it's treemendous, that corrn --you can hear it growing...you can see the heaviness of it, like a gravid wumman when her hour has come--naw, naw, that's metaphysical--ah'm talking nonsense--it's not a wumman, it's corrn--the corrn-iest corrn ah ever pented...." (CD p.135)

In praising the "cornyness" of the corn Lommax brings to mind Gulley's lesson to Coker on how to look at a painting

to see that "the jug of jugs" is before her. "A jug can be a door if you open it" (HM p.91), he says, and so could "cornn." Charley, however, needs little instruction in his art, as his imagination is quite free. Tired of naming rivers in Geography class, he is sent out of the room.

He retires to his final refuge, the W.C., plays with himself for a little, draws anatomical and flower pictures with his fingers on the damp tiles of the lavatory wall, and then perceiving a likeness between the forms of their sexual members, elaborates these patterns till they run together into a tropical forest of human orchids and flowering flesh. (CD p.107)

These drawings are the result of boredom: "He is as silent and absorbed as a monk in contemplation of the visions produced by his own devotion, yet, like a monk, he is secretly bored, and he knows it" (CD p.107). Charley is not devoted to his art, it is still a past-time, a substitute for real adventures of the flesh. His starved imagination soon initiates projects that were better channelled into graffiti on the bathroom wall. He turns his energies to building a rock garden and when he loses that, becomes restive; soon after this, he and his gang begin burgling in earnest. His "delinquency" comes about through boredom, a craving for excitement, the desire to explore moral and physical worlds.

Charley and his friends talk in their secret cave in the quarry; it is equipped with "furniture" and has more attraction than a real home, its appeal to the imagination being stronger.

But all their talk is full of repetitions, attempts to catch in a few worn words feelings as strong and deep as they are fresh. Thus they are like four dumb poets to whom the smallest experience has the effect of a revelation but who are compelled to express these powerful original feelings in mere sighs or cries. Moreover, they have not the faintest idea that there is anything

remarkable in the force of their wonder, their affection, their hope, their criticism of the world, and so they try to express them, not for the sake of each other but only for themselves. Their talk is half ejaculation. (CD pp.122-123)

Mute poets attempting to find expression, they encounter the obstacles of the factual and moral world.

In A House of Children Cary (as "Evelyn Corner") expresses his own wonder as a child. He remembers a boat trip with his aunts; listening to their gossip he saw aspects of known people, "so strange and mysterious that they had all the excitement of Arabian tales with the added wonder of fact" (HC p.75), and he relives "the wonder, that pressure, the sense of being wedged between firm thighs" (HC pp.5-6). So Charley and his friends, in the security of their cave, feel the wonder and anticipation;¹⁰⁰ to fulfil their expectations they indulge in pranks. Evelyn and Anketel are in a perpetual state of "joyful terror" lest the wolves attack (HC p.28), or as in the case of Charley and company, lest they are discovered in their cave by other children, or in their house-breakings by the owners. Like the more "law-abiding" children of A House of Children, Charley and company carry out their schemes "simply for the pleasure of seeing the creature of our imagination taking its place in the real world and acting upon real people" (HC p.84).

The stories in his head about American gangsters come to life when the "gang," in the midst of a robbery, decide to have a sumptuous banquet prepared by their "moll"; under the

¹⁰⁰Anticipation is the natural state of children, to whom everything comes as discovery..." (HC p.28).

chandelier they enter into an adult and magic world--which soon disintegrates. They destroy paintings and the chandelier, Lizzie is "perplexed" and "anxious," Bert's dance becomes "wilder," Harry has "been sick four times," Charley is intoxicated with wine and glory and destroys paintings as though he were "performing a task." What has happened is that their expectations have not been fulfilled; the gap between the "idea and the will" or "intuition and its expression" (AR p.45) has not been bridged. Charley and his gang find their exploits more boring than the planning of them. Not interested in profit at all, they steal only trifling and unlikely things, so that the police are baffled, symbolic of the public's puzzlement by the artist's creation, the adult's perplexity at the child's irrational behaviour.

Charley's adventures (both projected and realized), like those of any incipient picaresque, involve the opposite sex and are amatory in nature. His choice is Liz, a slightly deaf, soft-spoken and gentle country girl. They talk of running away to "Ammurca" and Charley spins stories of gardens with statues and a house which will have a bathroom with silver taps "with ot and cold on em." Yet when Charley hears an older friend talk of marrying and settling down, he is appalled:

"I wouldn't get married. If I'd saved anything I'd go round the world."

"Noa, Lunnons far enough. We'm going to Lunnon for the honeymoon. Afore us settles down. Won't be able to afford any more travelling, I reckon, when the family begins to come."

101 In A House of Children Cary speaks of living all day "in the sense of something to come" and at last, climbing into bed, would ask "'But what am I expecting?'" and it would turn out to have been doughnuts for tea, "already eaten...without any sense of fulfilment" (HC p.28).

Charley, astonished at this dull scheme of life, cries: "And that's all you want to do all your life."
(CD p.210)

He is still young enough to dream, innocent enough to expect great things from life. If he becomes like Gulley expectations will be justified; if like most people, his expectations will seem laughable.

Although he is not lying and is sincere when he constructs this vision for Liz, his horror at settling down is equally sincere. His imagination is faithful to whatever construct it is fashioning or fastened on at the time. He "is possessed by it, carried away like a rider on a wild horse."

When finally, as happens to Gulley and Mister Johnson, Charley stacks up enough sins and anti-social deeds that he is forced to pause in his headlong dash through his world, it is seen that he has accumulated a considerable moraine of crimes and sins for which he must atone. With Liz pregnant, and a string of thefts, breaking-and-enterings and escapes from gaol to account for, it is no wonder Charley is bewildered. He is like Sara Monday in Herself Surprised who "can remember but not reflect"; his deeds were done and past in the course of youth's natural inventiveness and forgetfulness. That others remember and are shocked surprises him just as Sara in her eternal present was surprised at the construction put on her past by the judge.

Charley, to the accusations that he has been unkind, inconsiderate, dirty, and sinful to Liz, continually repeats, "it wasn't like that." And "all his love-making with Lizzie, which an hour before had the beauty of its happiness, now

suddenly takes ugly and squalid shapes." He is resentful and bitter, angry and ashamed. Something still tells him, however, that "it isn't like that." This is the destruction of innocence; when adults who have forgotten what it is to be without a firm knowledge of the adult moral world are shocked by what is only naivete, offended by what is only guilelessness. They make Charley feel guilty, they make him cry (his tears satisfy them so much more than any inarticulate confession could), "but now, underneath this violent hysterical emotion, there is fury like steel, a deep resolute anger. It is the protest of all his honesty against a lie, and a defilement"(CD pp.272,276). His anger is the main augury of a hopeful future for an adult Charley--unless it turns into bitterness. Part of the novel's memorability is the unspoken question at the conclusion: will Charley conform or will he retain his vitality of imagination and do as Gulley does?

He and Liz run away but are apprehended on their way to America. As the police tell them to say goodbye to one another, they both begin to cry; then, with departure imminent, feeling the need for some sort of ceremony, they kiss. "It is the first time they have kissed" (CD p.287). Kenneth Watson notes "the essential dignity" of their behaviour in contrast to the rudeness of the adult world which will not leave them alone.

Charley is taken out to the waiting car and ordered under the hood, "into an opening so small, dark and narrow that he is sure it can never contain him. 'They'll smother me,' is the first thought that occurs to him..." (CD p.288). And

from inside, a policeman calls, saying that the girl has fainted. The policeman plans to give her tea and sandwiches, but the latter have "mustard in." Charley's policeman says, "'That's all right--she can't be too particular, can she?'" (CD p.288). The conclusion leaves justifiable doubts as to whether or not Charley will be able to rise above the pettiness of this treatment. Like all of Cary's novels except perhaps A House of Children, Charley Is My Darling ends on an ambiguous note; there is still hope for him, just as we still hope for Gulley (or Wilcher or Sara or Tabitha or Nina). Though we know they die, they have led good lives and accept their fates. If they can reconcile their ends, the reader must do so.

ii. A House of Children

In A House of Children Cary describes Anketel, the youngest of the children, quiet, and with a more than usual sense of wonder:

I remember Anketel, at about five, after coming out of the cave at Knock beach, pointed to the top of the cliff and said: "There was a sheep eating grass on the top all the time." His expression for some time afterwards showed preoccupation with this sheep, and finally he went back into the cave to know what it felt like with a sheep overhead.

(HC p.38)

Golden Larsen calls the cave an image that represents clearly "the cave of experience,...or Evelyn's own consciousness."¹⁰³ Another cave, a sea-cave, attracts him equally, reminiscent of Charley and his friend's feelings concerning their hut-cave in the quarry.

All of us had since looked into this cave at every opportunity, but only from the Shell Port. We would wade out at low tide and stare down the

¹⁰³ Larsen, Dark Descent, p. 84.

crack. I have seen Anketel thus, in all his clothes, wet to the armpits, gazing into the twilight with the absorbed concentration of those who peer through a fence at a murderer's house, after he has been hanged. He could see nothing, but his imagination was at work. I had told him, of course, that the cave was a million years old, older than the fish.

(HC pp.39-40)

Anketel is also to be found with his wet feet in the air, having tried to lift the water up with his feet. When asked if he thinks that water "will stick up there," he replies thoughtfully, "'No...I was only feeling at it.'" The narrator, Evelyn Corner, comments: "I was thirty years older before I appreciated the force of the 'at'" (HC p.54). A similar source of delight for the narrator was the notion of the earth as "a floating planet": "I would feel it like a ship under my feet moving through the air just like a larger stiffer cloud....I can remember jumping on a piece of hard ground, as one jumps on a deck...to enjoy the feel of the buoyant ship beneath me" (HC p.19).

This technique of the grown man looking back on his childhood combines the advantages of an adult "eye" trained on the scene, with the veracity and impact of the autobiographical, to be seen later in the two trilogies. Charley Is My Darling is told in the third person by a sympathetic (but not sentimental) author, and what it loses by use of third person is compensated for by the employment of the present tense, which gives immediacy, as in Mister Johnson.

Cary, in A House of Children, makes the same point that he made in Charley Is My Darling: children are born creators. The main difference between the works as far as content is

concerned is that the Corner children have poetry and plays to satisfy their creative urges--means of "self-expression and self-discovery" denied to Charley:

Like the evacuees, they are "all trying to learn and longing to know--but at the same time continually deceived by grown-ups," but the deception leads to self-knowledge, not self-destruction as it does for Charley. The Corner children have their aunts, who represent stability and order, affection and love..., and they have their tutor Pinto...who provides an outlet for their creative energies.... 104

Pinto is much closer to these children than is Mr. Lommax to Charley. He lives with them and although officially their tutor, he plays a far more personal and important role: "Pinto did not teach us. He spent time with us and continued his own life. But that life happened to be one of the imagination. It was he and my father who seized for us, now and then, out of the passing show of things, a sharp picture, a clear experience" (HC p.11). It is his father who points out a whale "ocean bathing too": "I felt the magnificence of sharing bathing-places with a whale" (HC p.11). The adult Corner-Cary has retained this experience because the child's imagination was stimulated by the idea of the whale. "We were all constructing a private and ideal world for ourselves, out of such material as came our way, Pinto's quips and cranks, my father's stories..." (HC p.43). They are enabled to construct this world in socially accepted ways, being part of an established household, having the security of relatives; their world is solid, established, secure, as opposed to Charley's.

Pinto tells them stories; one in particular seems to be

104 Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, pp. 60-61.

the germ of the Beeder episode in The Horse's Mouth: impoverished in London, Pinto has been asked to take care of a friend's rooms; to raise money to eat, he is obliged to pawn the furniture so that when his friend returns Pinto is found sleeping on the bare floor in an empty room, just as the Beeders returned to an empty flat to find that Gulley has pawned everything for food and art supplies. Of these stories, the narrator comments that perhaps it was only in Pinto's imagination that they existed (HC p.42).

Pinto chastizes them for mocking Delia, who aspires to be a concert pianist and affects certain "artistic" idiosyncrasies; calling someone affected, he says, is "the meanest thing you can say about anybody who's trying to study an art," and to Delia "'Don't you let them turn you into another cabbage stalk'" (HC p.123). Another time, when one of the children is accused of "showing off": "'...it's wicked to tell him he's showing off ...because he might believe it. That's what bad critics say to every original genius, and...it's because they're dead themselves and they want to kill everything else that's really alive'" (HC p.77). These comments obviously represent the seed of Gulley's beliefs. Except for the lack of a certain note of irony, the indignation and subject matter are typically Gulley Jimson.

The children invent plays which they perform themselves. One of Cary's most humorous scenes in these novels of childhood has to do with the disastrous performance of one such play. Owing to too few rehearsals, and too much confidence in the beauty of their lines, the play flops. The children are aghast

that this thing of wonder, which they have created themselves, could turn out to be so horrible.

The first play that the narrator sees has an effect similar to that experienced by Chester Nimmo (Except the Lord).

From the rising of the curtain I was completely astonished and I did not recover from that surprise throughout the performance, or for a long time afterwards. My sensations were so new that I had no kind of comparison for them; they were experiences of a new kind.

The poetry played upon me directly as warmth and cold, mist and rain; carrying both feeling and idea. I never could separate the idea of little Jack Horner, who sat in a corner, from the rhymes or the picture. The whole thing, the rhymes, the vision of the shy little boy in the corner, the thumb going into the pie and the last mysterious remark, were all one piece of my experience. It left me wondering how Jack pulled out a plum with his thumb, and why he said he was a good boy, but the story was ineffaceable from the first time I heard it. It made at once a deep and permanent impression on my mind, which retained nothing of the multiplication table nor any of the moral precepts fired at it by my nurses and grown-ups.

Children are born poets and singers. They sing to themselves in the cradle and delight in the simplest rhymes. They feel them by a direct experience just as they feel everything in life directly, without analysis or reason.

(HC p.223)

The imagination is the antithesis of analysis and reason, as stated earlier. So is life, chaotic and anarchic. And those who are closest to life are those who are involved with the concrete experience, the present moment; we see this talent for abnegating the past and future in these children, in the artist, Gulley, and the native, Mister Johnson. As Nietzsche says of his Übermensch, "his best creation is...himself."

Evelyn Corner turns to writing poetry, but is distracted by diving lessons, by the beauty of the act of diving.

My epic, as I saw it last, in an old exercise book, when I cleared the attic, stopped in the middle of a line and had drawn over it, in blue chalk pencil, little crude sketches of diving men. Yet the quality of our living experience could be translated only into the experience of poetry which people would not read. They prefer, I suppose, to live it, if they live, in any true sense of the word, real lives: and that is even easier to-day than it was when we were children.
(HC p.239)

Golden Larsen sees Evelyn Corner as "the initiate being received into the adult world of freedom and moral responsibility,"¹⁰⁵ but it is difficult to conceive of an adult with more freedom than the children. A House of Children, like Charley Is My Darling, is about growing up, "the passage from the life of live sensation into that of ideal conception."¹⁰⁶ "Freedom" is thereby abrogated somewhat because "moral responsibility" comes under the heading of ideal conception.

At the age of eight, Evelyn Corner and a red-cheeked boy stand aloof from the games and sugar-cakes at a party, saying "'Silly, aren't they'" (HC p.67) every so often, despising and yet envying the other children. "I didn't stop being a hopeful and foolish child....But I was drawn aside for a moment from the stream of childish sensation" (HC p.67). This marks the advent of adulthood, the standing aside and watching, analysing, instead of participating, acting.

I don't mean that nature or some mysterious power ended my childhood at eight years old. I don't know when my childhood ended or if it is all ended now. The only certain distinction I can find between childhood and maturity is that

¹⁰⁵ Larsen, p. 88.

¹⁰⁶ Joyce Cary, Osborn Collection, Box Number 30, Holograph Sheet in paper folder numbered "5"; quoted by Hoffman, p. 64.

children grow in experience and look forward to novelty; that old people tend to be set. This does not mean even that children enjoy life more keenly than grown-ups, they are only more eager for experience. Grown-ups live and love, they suffer and enjoy far more intensely than children; but for the most part, on a narrower front. For the average man or woman of forty, however successful, has been so battered and crippled by various accidents that he has gradually been restricted to a small compass of enterprise. Above all, he is perplexed. He has found out numerous holes and inconsistencies in his plan of life and yet he has no time to begin the vast work of making a new one. He is like a traveller who, when he has reached the most dangerous part of his journey among deep swamps and unknown savages, discovers all at once that his map is wrong, his compass broken, his ammunition damp, his rifle crooked, and his supplies running short. He must push on at high speed, blindly, or fail altogether and fail his companions. I think that is the reason for the special sadness of nearly all grown-up faces, certainly of all those which you respect; you read in their lines of repose, the sense that there is no time to begin again, to get things right. The greater a grown man's power of enjoyment, the stronger his faith, the deeper and more continuous his feeling of the waste of life, of happiness, of youth and love, of himself.

But for children life seems endless, and they do not know a grief that has no cure. (HC pp.66-67)

Almost a relapse into sentimentality, this passage still explains well what happens to children, or the child in us. The difference between the adult and the child is one of degree, not kind. The moral problems and other abstractions that the adult has learned to cope with can be ignored by the child; he is free to live his life of the imagination. Not until responsibility is forced on him by the opinions or pressures of others will he forego it, either. Charley Brown and Mister Johnson are two good examples of "children" who try very hard to live the way they want to, but who are finally coerced into accepting responsibility for their deeds. This entails

Mister Johnson's literal, and Charley's figurative death.

Chapter IV
THE FIRST TRILOGY

1. Herself Surprised

Herself Surprised, published in 1941, is the first novel in the trilogy including To Be A Pilgrim (1942) and The Horse's Mouth (1944). Friedson calls it Cary's "first attempt to present three narratives in such a way as to allow the reader to arrive at three levels of truth": "(1) the truth which proceeds from the subjective world of each narrator; (2) the objective truth about the personalities of the narrators, which is deducible from the combination of their subjective statements; and (3) the transcendental truth which Cary wishes to emerge from both the subjective and the objective truths."¹⁰⁷ The three worlds which are viewed are those of Sara Monday, "servant, wife, mother, and above all, a woman";¹⁰⁸ Tom Wilcher, conservative lawyer, Protestant, employer of Sara; and Gulley Jimson, artist-anarchist. These three persons represent three viewpoints on freedom and authority set in three social areas: "domestic life (Sara), political life (Wilcher), and artistic life (Jimson)."¹⁰⁹ Each world infringes somewhat on the

¹⁰⁷ Friedson, Novels of Joyce Cary, p. 192.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁹ *Loc. cit.*

others, so that Sara will round out our picture of Jimson by telling us what he looked like ("a little bald man with a flat nose and a big chin. His head was big and hung over so that his face was hollow in the middle"¹¹⁰); Gulley will give us his opinions of Sara and Wilcher in terms of their relationship to him, debilitating or otherwise ("Sara could commit adultery at one end and weep for her sins at the other, and enjoy both operations at once" HM p.22); and Wilcher, although his comments on Sara and Gulley are not as imaginative as Gulley's or Sara's on him, gives us a clear picture of the world they share, its social, political, religious movements and changes.

Sara's story is ostensibly being dictated from prison, to the penny press, for monetary rather than expiatory purposes. (Sara, like Gulley, Charley, Mister Johnson, is almost continually plagued with pecuniary problems, the only difference being that she is usually trying to save some money for her funeral, whereas the others are trying to catch up on past debts.) The story of her life as we hear it is divided into three phases, each characterized by the man around which she has centered her existence at the time:

The first phase (from 1879 to 1919) is centered around her marriage with Matt Monday, the son of her first employer. The second phase (from 1919 to 1924) covers the years from Matt's death and her ensuing common law marriage to Jimson, to the year when she is abandoned by Jimson and goes to work for Wilcher at Tolbrook. The third phase (from 1924 to 1937) takes Sara from her employment by Wilcher to the time when she was sent to prison¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Joyce Cary, Herself Surprised (New York, 1948), p. 43. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited in the text as HS.

¹¹¹ Friedson, pp. 197-198.

The time spent married to Matthew Monday, an "encircling and suffocating encrustation,"¹¹² threatens creativity because it festers, and encourages the status quo; she breaks away from the social conservatism of Monday and his family through the influence of Rozzie Balmforth, a gaudy barmaid friend of Sara's who is looked down upon by Sara's in-laws. Sara's other "influence" at this time is Gulley's "wife" Nina, a shy woman who believes people ought to "look at the trees and forget our stupid selves" (HS p.55).¹¹³ Rozzie and Nina pull Sara in opposite directions and represent opposite tendencies in her; they are the feminine counterparts of Gulley and Matt respectively. It is significant that Nina dies, as does finally Monday, while Gulley and Rozzie live on to pull Sara from "pleasure" into "joy," from order to anarchy, from an at least overtly moral world into one in which Gulley and Sara cohabit in every way.

Gulley's entry into Sara's life comes when she and Matthew are "supporting art" and take Gulley into their home; conflict occurs when Gulley insists on painting Mr. Monday with "his nose so big and his forehead on a slope and his chin so little that he looked like a goose peeping out of a jug" (HS p.52), and refusing to alter it because "'he's not my husband...and that's the way I see him'" (HS p.53). Larsen calls Gulley "an agent in the destruction of Sara's created world"¹¹⁴ because he shows her husband up for what he really is, his "creeping ways," the

¹¹² Larsen, Dark Descent, p. 114.

¹¹³ Cf. Dryas Honeywood, in Cary's The African Witch; her love of "hills and trees" is contrasted with Judy Coote's love of what poets have made of them.

¹¹⁴ Larsen, p. 116.

"ridiculous side" to him. When Sara wants to fight Gulley's interpretation of her husband, Matt actually defends him; looking "smaller and older," he tells Sara, "he's seen me as I am --and he's brought it out in the portrait!" (HS p.54).

"The insipience and emotional shallowness of the world represented by the Sara-Matt Monday relationship reveals itself in Matt's regressive self-pity, jealousy, and wasting away to death, and in Sara's increasing instability as she oscillates between the emotional extremes represented by Rozzie and Nina"¹¹⁵ --and Gulley and Matt, we might add. Sara's choice of Rozzie over Nina is aided by Matt's and Nina's convenient deaths. The highly structured world of the Mondays gives way at this time to the more anarchic world in which Gulley and Rozzie live chaotically and happily.

After Matt dies, the three spend much time together. Sara says of Rozzie "she warmed me up with her go"; "to do anything with Rozzie...was a living pleasure. She made the sun warmer and colors brighter and your food taste better; she made you enjoy being alive" (HS p.100). The week Sara spends with Rozzie in Brighton she does little but laugh: "I suppose I laughed more that week than ever I did in my life before, and again I nearly laughed my hat off....People must have thought I was drunk. So, I was drunk, with laughing and something else..." (HS p.104). And she is the same way with Gulley, even after she finds out that he has also proposed to Rozzie and that he doesn't intend to marry her (Sara) because he has a wife somewhere in Glasgow. "It was wonderful how little he

¹¹⁵ Larsen, p. 116.

needed to make me laugh..." (HS p.114), Sara says of Gulley; and it is reciprocal, for Gulley speaks of the joy that she has given him, and says "'Look how happy we are'" (HS p.117). At this time she notices "what a lot of mad people there were and what a lot of nonsense talked, quite as bad as Gulley's, and no one troubling their heads about it" (HS p.117). The laughter and the joy are signs of imagination for Cary, of a sympathy, an ability to cross the line between self and other.

And though Gulley beats her occasionally, they do give one another joy: both are forms of touching, of connecting, which is the work of the imagination. In The Horse's Mouth, Gulley observes of Sara that "There was always something about Sara that made me want to hit her or love her or get her down on canvas. She provoked you..." (HM p.73). (Wilcher too observes that Sara always made him want to pinch her.) Later, after Gulley has killed Sara by pushing her down the cellar stairs, he has a conversation with her in his delirium:

"Yes, Gulley, you broke my heart as well as my poor nose and my poor back." "And yet you always say it was a good time." "A lovely time." "We weren't happy, but we were alive....And that's why you hit me on the nose....Because you didn't like me being on your mind. You didn't like not to be free, did you?" (HM p.282)

Later in the conversation, Sara tells him "You make me laugh, and you make me cry" (HM p.283). Another time, Sara deceived him by giving him four wrapped rolls of toilet paper instead of a sketch he was after:

And I laughed. It was either that or wanting to cut the old woman's throat. And even to think of cutting Sara's throat always put me in a rage. Because, I suppose, I'd got her in my blood. I'd been fond of her. And it's very highly dangerous

to murder anyone you've been fond of, even in imagination. Throws all the functions out of gear. Blocks up your brain. Might easily blow the lid off. (HM p.184)

This passage is ironic in light of the fact that not only does Gulley finally "murder" Sara, but also because it causes him to suffer a crippling stroke, or "blows the lid off," as he puts it. Cary equates passion and imagination continually; laughing and crying are indicative of this combination (cf. A Fearful Joy).

Sara, seen by Hoffman as a "modern Eve,"¹¹⁶ is seen by Gulley as an eternal Eve, representative of woman, eternally surprised in her innocence and in her fall, at herself:

Eve should be a woman of forty with five children and grey hairs coming, trying on a new velvet. Looking at herself in the glass, as if she'd never seen herself before. And the children fighting around the dustbin in the yard. And Adam smoking his pipe in the local. And telling lies about his spring onions. Works of passion and imagination.

There was a street market on the kerb. Swarms of old women in black cloaks jostling along like bugs in a crack....Works of passion and imagination. Somebody's dream girls. Somebody's old girl chasing up a titbit for the old china. The world of imagination is the world of eternity. Old Sara looking at a door knob. Looking at my old ruins. The spiritual life. (HM p.32)

Coker thinks of Sara as "a woman....That's what your Mrs. Monday is" (HM p.31), and Gulley thinks of how appropriate Sara is, at forty, for his Eve: "That falls every night to rise in the morning. And wonder at herself. Knowing everything and still surprised. Living in innocence" (HM p.32).

There is less of a discrepancy between Gulley's view of himself and that of the world than there is between Sara's

¹¹⁶ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 74.

self-concept and the way the world sees her. Sara, like Charley, has an incomplete and extremely subjective world-view, "a capacity for self-delusion."¹¹⁷ She doesn't see criminal or immoral acts as such because they are extensions of herself, and when rationalized, are justifiable because of the good intentions behind them. Although Sara is a basically religious and highly moral woman, "her deepest religious feelings are creative rather than conventional."¹¹⁸ Her desire to alter the world she lives in, to provide justice where there is none (giving Gulley money, for example, because the world does not recognize the artist), extends to extreme self-delusion; she excuses herself continually and continues to give of herself in not always socially accepted ways.

The reader forgives and understands because of the underlying innocence of Sara, her total lack of viciousness. It is not until the conclusion that either Sara or Charley realizes the gloss put on their actions by others; both are "surprised" --surprised in the act by Cary's skill with character and appropriate action and surprised in the sense that they both finally see themselves as others see them. When on trial, Sara sees herself through the eyes of the court: "At first I could not believe that I was anything like the woman they made me out to be" (HS p.1); "Now I see that I am a criminal just like the others" (HS p.2). Only once before, in Paris on her honeymoon, has she ever had such a self-revelation. She sees herself in a full-length mirror and realizes that "till that hour I had

¹¹⁷ Friedson, p. 198.

¹¹⁸ Hoffman, p. 73.

not seen myself with the world's eye" (HS p.2), but rather than admit, even then, that her hat is "a bit bright for her complexion," she makes an excuse, keeps the hat, and thinks "If I am a body then it can't be helped, for I can't help myself" (HS p.3). As a young girl in service, she has been "won" by Matt Monday, her employer at the time: "He kept on asking me every day; and one day, when he asked me if I could not like him enough, though I meant to say no, yet the words came out of my mouth that I would try" (HS p.10). In the same way she acquiesces to Gulley's importunities: "So that my mind was laughing at little Jimson when he held my hand and told me he could make me so rich and give me furs and jewels; yet my flesh delighted in his kindly thoughts. So it grew sleepy and I forgot myself and he had his way, yet not in luxury, but kindness, and God forgive me, it was only when I came to myself, cooling in the shadow, that I asked what I had done" (HS p.110). Often, she feels that she is "play-acting" (HS p.10), especially when she accepts Matt Monday, reluctantly but irrevocably, in spite of herself: "all that evening I was surprised at myself" (HS p.10). She thinks of herself as a "sobersides": "If I had been flighty, I would not have been so surprised at myself..." (HS p.10).

This opposition between the two sides of Sara continues throughout the novel: "It seemed I was two women; and one of them a loving wife and the other mad and wicked" (HS p.16). At one point she tells us that she does not know whether she has done "a religious thing or a bad one" (HS p.67); when she is paying Gulley a weekly sum, she comments that she does not

know whether she does it to please her conscience or her flesh (HS p.208). Although she deliberates on this, as on her "sins," it is usually done after the act; a truly moral (and social being) would do it earlier. And at the novel's conclusion, when the police have come to take her away, she observes "I was not even afraid or unhappy. I was only surprised at myself and my devastations" (HS p.218). One would think that she would at least be accustomed to being surprised at herself.

Cary, in "The Way a Novel Gets Written," calls her a female artist:

As for the moral and aesthetic revolutions which had been tearing other people's worlds to pieces during her whole life, she was scarcely aware of them. Her morals were the elementary morals of a primitive woman, of nature herself, which do not change; and she was supremely indifferent to politics, religion, economics. She was a female artist who was always composing the same work on the same style, but it is a style which does not go out of fashion. 119

Larsen reinforces Cary's opinion of Sara's creative potential: "Sara does embody attributes, perhaps narrow in scope but nevertheless profound in depth, that are pregnant with creative possibilities: devotion to service, genuine sympathy, respect for life."¹²⁰ And sympathy, like faith, represents a certain facet of the imagination, as The Horse's Mouth and To Be A Pilgrim respectively illustrate throughout.

Her imagination is limited to living; that is, she does not "create" in the same sense as we speak of Gulley creating a work of art. Sara's creative effect on her environment has to do with her men and her home, her kitchen. Wherever she

119 Adam International Review, XVIII (Nov.-Dec. 1950), 9.

120 Larsen, p. 124.

goes she builds "nests" and alters the house she finds herself in to her satisfaction, as she does with her men. She brings Monday out of his bachelor shell, showing him how to entertain guests and how to make love; with Gulley she acts first as inspiration and then as the "woman old," the debilitating force which stifles inspiration and infuriates Gulley; and for Tom Wilcher, an aging bachelor prone to frowned-upon escapades in the park she provides a buffer for his eccentricities and an ego bolster. For all three she cooks and cleans, and creates stability; this is fine for Wilcher and Monday, but disastrous for the dynamic Gulley: "She nails him down upon a rock / And catches his shrieks in cups of gold."¹²¹ This doesn't make her less an artist, for even Gulley would admit that the artist himself can be his own worst enemy.

Sara calls Gulley "stuck" when he can't paint and is prone to beating her: "I always believed his sticking and his tempers came from his liver" (HS p.141); it is easy to perceive how maddening it would be for an artist to have his inspiration compared to his liver, and his lack of inspiration equated with constipation. "'Inspiration is all nonsense'" Sara tells Gulley's wife Nina one day (HS p.58). When Gulley credits Sara's "influence," she grants him that, because she believes¹²² in manipulation. Although Sara may be an artist in her own right, she is not particularly conducive to inspiring creativity--or if, remembering Gulley's delight with her body as subject for his works, that statement seems a bit strong,

¹²¹ "The Mental Traveller," Keynes' Blake, 2:223.

¹²² Cf. Ella Venn in Cary's The Moonlight.

we might add that her inspirational qualities are negated by other, more debilitating ones. Her desire to create a nest, to keep Gulley comfortable and warm, her respectability and respect for others' opinions, all aggravate Gulley and infuriate him. When Sara's modesty prevails and she won't pose for him, he shouts at her that she is "a vulgar middle-class woman full of silly prejudices" (HS p.117). Gulley says to Sara at one point: "My dear Sal, you've never had any other idea but to turn me into a money maker with a balance at the bank and two motor cars. Well, I give you warning. Stop it and stop it now. That's all I ask. Not to be nagged" (HS p.133).

Sara's nagging Gulley, however, is due to her desire to alter her environment to conform to her own "vision" of it, very similar to Gulley's in many ways, and manifested in characteristic ways. The ability to see two things in one, to make metaphors and similes, is the sign of imagination and creativity; even though Sara's comparisons and connections are all made in terms of domestic imagery and are confined to that domain, still it must be granted that she is an artist in that realm. Barley is "as white as a new-washed hairbrush" (HS p.27), the air "as warm as new milk and still as water in a goldfish bowl," the water "as soft and bright as sweet oil" (HS p.28). Friedson observes that at times these images seem "cleverly imposed, and to savor of the tour de force," but that "the imposition is an organic one in keeping with the character."¹²³ The following passage, though decorous, illustrates Friedson's point:

¹²³ Friedson, p. 215.

The sun was as bright as a new gas mantle--you couldn't look at it even through your eyelashes, and the sand as bright gold as deep-fried potatoes. The sky was like washed-out Jap silk and there were just a few little clouds coming out like down feathers out of an old cushion; the rocks were as warm as new gingerbread cakes and the sea had a melty thick look, like oven glass.
(HS p.109)

Just as Gulley will catch a glimpse of Coker's arm and want to "try" it on Eve, so Sara will want to "try" Gulley with a new dish: "'I must try Jimson with salmon in pastry'" (HS p.136). Gulley was more appreciative of Sara's art than she was of his: "He would...sit in the kitchen till a souffle was ready, to eat it before it began to lower its head and sink from the height of its glory....His senses were as quick as a girl's and he loved the art of it. He would admire my touch with the pastry..." (HS p.136).

Bloom comments that "the old Eve is distinctly visible in Sara";¹²⁴ "the Eve of all religions,"¹²⁵ "the eternal Eve... the triumphant mother,"¹²⁶ "unchanging Eve,"¹²⁷ are a few of the epithets given Sara by various critics. Gulley would not disagree; certainly for him she is the eternal woman, the feminine principle which creates and destroys, toward which one is attracted and by which one is repelled. Her eternal innocence is complicated by a perpetual fall; that is, her state of

¹²⁴ Bloom, The Indeterminate World, p. 86.

¹²⁵ Sidney Monas, "What to Do with a Drunken Sailor," Hudson Review, III (Autumn 1950), 467.

¹²⁶ Wright, Preface, p. 76.

¹²⁷ Charles G. Hoffman, "Joyce Cary: The Comic Mask," Western Humanities Review, XIII, 2 (Spring 1959), p. 140.

grace (and she is in one) must be seen as a continual falling from grace. It is no doubt the fact that Sara embodies these contraries and paradoxes that causes Bloom to refer to Sara's self-concept as "curiously indeterminate";¹²⁸ Friedson sees her as embodying all the characteristics of womanhood;¹²⁹ and Larsen uses the phrase "unaccountably perverse"¹³⁰ to explain her multiple personality. Add to the oppositions in Sara's own self the complications of Nina and Rozzie (variously seen as foils to Sara or alter egos) and it is no surprise that Gulley could not deal with this protean woman and finally had to kill her to free himself.

Gulley is not, however, the only person who needs to be freed from his bondage; according to Hoffman, "each of the three narrators in the trilogy is a prisoner. Gulley Jimson (just out of prison) is a prisoner of his art. Tom Wilcher (who is threatened with 'imprisonment' in an asylum) is a prisoner of the past. Sara Monday (who is being sentenced to a prison term) is a prisoner of grace."¹³¹ Wright elaborates and extends this notion:

...the narrators of the first trilogy have in common the fact of imprisonment. Sara...is writing her memoirs in jail...; the penny-press is enabling her to make a virtue of the necessity of her imprisonment....Wilcher...is...virtually committed to Tolbrock, the house which has always been the prison of his life anyway; his bondage is not more real, it is only more obvious than ever. And Gulley...

¹²⁸ Bloom, p. 86.

¹²⁹ Friedson, p. 223.

¹³⁰ Larsen, p. 109.

¹³¹ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 71.

emerges from prison at the beginning of his book; at the end, he is mortally ill in a police ambulance. As politics is the basic metaphor of the second trilogy, so imprisonment is the root situation of the first. Sara, a comic character in a tragic world, is trapped between the claims of her feminine moral sense and society's moral code. Wilcher, a tragic figure because he can perceive the anatomy of his entrapment, is caught between the claims of the past and present. Gulley, also tragic, is imprisoned between the claims of self and the claims of the institution--any institution, all institutions. But Sara, Wilcher and Gulley are also imprisoned in their own subjectivities. They are...irremediably imprisoned: freedom's lonely bondage is...the tragic fact of a tragic world.¹³²

These subjective and objective prisons are operant in varying degrees at variant points in the novels; Sara and Gulley are ultimately more free than is Wilcher because they live in their present and are "agents of Freedom" as opposed to "agents of authority" such as Wilcher.¹³³ Freedom, in Cary's sense, signifies "that imaginative spirit which aspires to escape from the rule of the present authority,"¹³⁴ and though Wilcher is attempting to escape from the authoritarian domination of his relatives, perhaps even that of the present, he is still known primarily as a defender of the status quo, and Sara and Gulley are ultimately destroyers of it (Gulley of course to a greater degree than Sara). But although Sara destroys, she also creates; and this is finally her most important characteristic. She is ultimately "sacrificed" that the artistic cycle may continue, so that as with the phoenix, creation and destruction are combined in one consummatory act.

¹³² Wright, pp. 110-111.

¹³³ Friedson, p. 225.

¹³⁴ Loc. cit.

11. To Be A Pilgrim

The second novel of the first trilogy, To Be A Pilgrim, is the journal of Tom Wilcher, quondam employer of Sara Monday, retired lawyer, and liberal conservative.¹³⁵ Wilcher's memoirs begin at about the time Sara's story ends (c.1939), with her incarceration; yet the novel is about England and its history, about Wilcher's past. The present action of the novel is confined to Wilcher's return to the family estate (Tolbrook), his niece Ann's supervision of him, her marriage to her cousin Robert, and Wilcher's final illness. The past action concerns his childhood and maturation, the lives and deaths of his sister and brothers. On a third level, we are given a detailed picture of the social, religious, and political aspects of the world in which Sara, Gulley and Wilcher grew up. Barbara Hardy observes that "The real action is the oblique criticism of the present by the past...what the present lacks, vitality, passion, grace, the past is shown to possess."¹³⁶ Exactly how much of this message Cary intended is dubious; Wilcher's past had "vitality, passion, grace" because of Lucy, and his present lacks these qualities because of the near-inanimate Ann.

Past and present action are fused and integrated "with contrapuntal skill";¹³⁷ "the transitions...from past to present are handled with such directness as to amount to a technical

¹³⁵ Joyce Cary, "Three New Prefaces," Adam International Review, XVIII (Nov.-Dec. 1950), 12: Wilcher "has grown up, like many Englishmen, Liberal by conviction but Conservative in heart."

¹³⁶ Essays in Criticism, IV, 193.

¹³⁷ Friedson, Novels of Joyce Cary, p. 229.

innovation of some consequence."¹³⁸ Unlike Sara and Gulley, for whom the present is everything, whose moral senses are thereby adumbrated, Wilcher recognizes the necessity for integrating present with past: "To be a pilgrim is to live a meaningful purposeful life, to know where one is going, which presumes a starting point--the heritage of the past--as well as a goal."¹³⁹ The consequence of Wilcher's concern with his past as it relates to his present--indeed, it often becomes his present--is a complexity that is certainly not rivalled by Sara's simplistic chronologically ordered "confession," nor by Gulley's chaotic and impressionistic story, brilliant and insightful though it may be.

Too often, Wilcher is labelled the complete opposite of Sara and Gulley, and is made out to be a dull and pompous, though intelligent, "man of faith." Wilcher is aware of this: "Ann, whose education is like a set of boxes,...has put me in a box labeled 'Exhibitionist.'¹⁴⁰ In Herself Surprised, Sara describes and labels him:

His nose was very short, just like a baby's, and he had a long blue upper lip, like a priest, which made me say: "You're one of the arguers." He had long thin red lips and the under one stuck out and curled over, which made him look obstinate and sulky. His chin was blue as if it had been shot full of gunpowder....His neck was blue too.... (HS p.173)

Gulley too conceives of him as one of the "blue-noses" and is even more astringent in his appraisal of Wilcher, whom he calls

¹³⁸ Wright, Preface, p. 120.

¹³⁹ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 78.

¹⁴⁰ Joyce Cary, To Be A Pilgrim (New York, 1949), p. 7. Subsequent references will be to this edition--hereafter cited as TBP.

"a rich lawyer with a face like a bad orange," and then places him: "Genus, Boorjwar; species, Blackcoatius Begoggledus Feroo-issimouse" (HM p.175). Ironically, having labelled him thus, Gulley continues to classify him further as one of the labellers:

But to tell the truth, men like Wilcher, the real old blackcoat breed, out of Hellfire by the Times, get on my nerves. They frighten me. They're not normal. You never know what they'll do next. They're always fit for rape and murder, and why not? Because they don't look upon you as human. You're a Lost Soul, or a Bad Husband, or a Modern Artist, or a Good Citizen, or a Suspicious Character, or an Income Tax Payer. They don't live in the world we know, composed of individual creatures, fields and moons and trees and stars and cats and flowers and women and saucepans and bicycles and men; they're phantoms, spectres. And they wander screaming and gnashing their teeth, that is, murmuring to themselves and uttering faint sighs, in a spectrous world of abstractions, gibbering and melting into each other like a lot of political systems and religious creeds.

But all within is opened into the deeps
of Entuthon Benython
A dark and unknown night, indefinite,
unmeasurable, without end,
Abstract philosophy warring in enmity
against imagination.

(HM p.177)

It is all too easy to describe Wilcher as "Abstract philosophy warring...against Imagination," but not completely accurate. Larsen concurs, noting that "there is a...pervasive tendency among commentators to read the novel as a rather naive expression of faith in the 'free Protestant spirit' and of nationalistic fervor."¹⁴¹ We tend to forget his "mad" side, the human aspect of him, the delightful eccentric qualities. The following passage illustrates these qualities, as well as a Gulley-like perceptiveness and perversity. The "terrier" is "one

¹⁴¹ Larsen, Dark Descent, p. 125.

of Blanche's specialists, a villain hired to sign away my freedom," actually a psychiatrist investigating Wilcher's tendency to "run after young girls" in the park:

Of course, I told him that I had been the victim of coincidence and that the girl had made advances. That is common form in these cases. Neither of us believed it. But it served to break the ice. Every situation has its polite routine,...and the form for a patient of my type is to say, "I have been the victim of a miscarriage of justice."

"Yes, essackly. Of course." The poor little creature sighed. "Quite so....It's very natural... to feel a certain attraction--at any age. A pretty girl, yes," he sighed again and his eyes wandered over the ceiling. Then he murmured, "I used to like breaking things myself. Yes, a good smash--I saw an old lady yesterday who had broken all her china and torn all her clothes off and walked down a crowded street, in the rain."

"And I suppose you're going to look her up," I said, getting angry. I knew it was dangerous to support the old lady. But I was tempted by the danger, by the pale eyes of the little terrier, which now turned upon me their cold pale surface. "What nonsense," I said. "I know exactly how she felt. She thought, 'Here am I, a nice respectable old lady in a black silk dress, and two petticoats, and stays and drawers, with lace edges, and chemises and all the rest.'" The terrier...kept on gazing at me and his eyes seemed to grow more and more like the gelatin which my clerk used to make a copy of circular letters.

...."And off came the silk dress, the stays and the petticoats and the buttons and the strings, and there she is walking down the street as naked as Eve. I wish I had been there to see." And I burst out laughing with excitement. I thought, "Shall I pull his nose? That would do it." (TBP pp.308-309)

The following passage is Gulley's description of a conversation with Wilcher. The tones of the two passages are remarkably similar.

"Sara was quite ready to go to church. Always has been. The impediment was on the other side of the family. If I may say so."

At this Mr. W. sprang clean through the ceiling, turned several somersaults in mid-air, sang a short psalm of praise and thanksgiving out of the Song of Solomon, accompanied on the shawm, and returned

through the letter-box draped in celestial light. That is to say, he raised his right toe slightly from the carpet, said "indeed" in mi-fa, and relaxed his ceremonial smile into an expression of tolerance. "Indeed," he repeated, this time in me-do, "an impediment." (HM p.176)

"Fundamentally the two men are opposites," Wright states; but "they are not parallel lines which never intersect." They are alike in one thing, and one thing only: both know "that imagination must find a form."¹⁴² Gulley refers to the "solid forms the imagination," "works of passion and imagination"; Wilcher to "a living faith," "works of passion and faith."

Robert Bloom contends that "Wilcher...is never funny,"¹⁴³ there is humour in To Be A Pilgrim; Wilcher is humorous without intending to be, especially when he is exercising the prerogative of the old man and being cranky, bossy, or suspicious (to the point of paranoia). At breakfast he tells Ann that her face "looks like a chamber pot crudely daubed with raspberry jam" and at lunch thinks that "she was powdered a little whiter and had made her lips a shade darker. But I may have been deceiving myself, because her spectacles also looked larger and blacker, and I can't believe that she went to the expense of new spectacles only to spite me..." (TBP p.11).

He remarks, "I can't tell how dangerous she is..." (TBP p.2), thinking that she is part of his family's "plan of campaign" to drive him mad (TBP p.2). In actuality, we feel that he is eminently sane except in the matter of his paranoia, for he is always lucid and rational. Like Gulley, he recognizes

¹⁴² Wright, p. 124.

¹⁴³ Bloom, The Indeterminate World, p. 98.

that "that way madness lies": "It is extremely dangerous for anyone to get the feeling that 'somebody is plotting against him, even when the plot is quite obvious and the plotters conspire in the next room. It is a feeling that drives men mad. It leads to hallucinations" (TBP p.30). He accuses Ann of thinking her Aunt Lucy, Uncle Bill, and himself mad, but she denies it, saying he is far too cunning: "I was astonished. 'So you think me cunning. Lunatics are famous for their cunning'" (TBP p.98). Whether Wilcher is justly imputing thoughts of this sort to his relatives, or whether they originate in him is difficult to say. Later, he justifies himself: "...I can't waste time upon this hypocrisy of trying to appear rational. I leave that to younger people" (TBP p.108). But always he exhibits a remarkable self-awareness; this in itself would tend to support the existence of an equal awareness of the image he portrays and of the way others see him.

Friedson observes that Wilcher "seems mad," adding that "the repression of his emotional life has burst out in tendencies to exhibitionism, paranoia, arson and compulsive silliness."¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, he notes that Wilcher's mind "is too quick and too well-organized for a madman."¹⁴⁵ Certain reviewers have either not seen or have ignored "the self-criticism and wit with which Wilcher writes," notably Diana Trilling, who regrets that "Cary entrusts his opinions on religion and politics to a senile old bottom pincher."¹⁴⁶ Whatever degree of madness we determine

¹⁴⁴ Friedson, pp. 260-261.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 261-262.

that Wilcher attained, this dismissal of him as "a senile old bottom pincher" is certainly unjustified, as no amount of bottom pinching could negate the acute observations which Wilcher makes throughout his story. Yet critics who share Mrs. Trilling's opinion "can only presume Wilcher's observations to be the interminable meanderings of a mad old man....They finally assess the novel as an incredible family saga unrelieved by the lame present action and related by a dirty old man with one foot in the grave."¹⁴⁷ Even if this were the case, it would be to Wilcher's credit, for pomposity and rationality have not much to recommend themselves.

But it is not difficult to refute these critics; one need only quote passages from the novel which illustrate Wilcher's mental abilities, his "vision" of himself, Sara and Lucy, England. In a letter to Sara he writes:

"With you I can make a new life, and unless life be made, it is no life. For we are the children of creation, and we cannot escape our fate, which is to live in creating and re-creating. We must renew ourselves or die; we must work even at our joys or they will become burdens; we must make new worlds about us for the old does not last," etc. "Those who cling to this world must be dragged backwards into the womb which is also a grave.

"We are the pilgrims who must sleep every night beneath a new sky, for either we go forward to the new camp or the whirling earth carries us backwards to one behind."
(TBP p.29)

Although the above hints of the romantic, poet and rhetorician, nowhere does the madman enter into the picture. Its visionary quality illustrates that Wilcher, in his own way, is a man of imagination as much as Gulley. Faith is simply one form the imagination can take; Wilcher's acts of faith correspond to

¹⁴⁷ Friedson, p. 262.

Gulley's acts of imagination, his creations. The difference is that Gulley's actions are more immediately pursuant of his visions, whereas Wilcher contemplates his awhile. However, to him, a thought or a vision is an experience. He hears Lucy's voice saying "To be a pilgrim," startling him into discovery:

A real discovery is not a thought; it is an experience.... "Yes," I thought, "that was the clue to Lucy, to my father, to Sara Jimson; it is the clue to all that English genius which bore them and cherished them, clever and simple. Did not my father say of Tolbrook which he loved so much, 'Not a bad billet,' or 'Not a bad camp?' And Sara. Was not her view of life as 'places,' as 'situations' the very thought of the wanderer and the very strength of her soul? She put down no roots into the ground; she belonged with the spirit; her goods and possessions were all in her own heart and mind, her skill and courage."

And is not that the clue to my own failure in life? Possessions have been my curse. I ought to have been a wanderer, too, a free soul. Yes, I was quite right to break off from this place. Although I have loved it, I can never have peace till I leave it.

(TBP p.8)

Tolbrook, like Forster's Howards End, is representative of England, and whoever inherits it, inherits England. Cary believes that it belongs to the pilgrims, because like them, it is "on a pilgrimage....It is like a gypsy van, carrying its people with it" (TBP p.131). It belongs to the Lucys, Saras and Wilchers, pilgrim spirits, English spirits. Lucy says "How I love being alive--I can't imagine myself dead and the world going on without me. I should like to be the wandering Jew, and go on forever" (TBP p.294). Of Sara, Wilcher observes "Only to hear Sara's step in the passage was a reminder of the truth, which was like the taproot of her own faith, that we were travelers in the world, enjoined to live 'like men upon a journey'" (TBP p.320). The children are also pilgrims:

"The young are born pilgrims. Babies, as soon as they can walk, begin to explore the world....They are born free and look upon the whole world as their possession. To be free is to be young" (TBP p.300). And finally, relating the different pilgrimages, Wilcher reminds himself that "the glory of my land is also the secret of youth, to see at every sunrise a new horizon":

Why do I forget that every day is a new landfall in a foreign land, among strangers? For even this Ann, this Robert, are so changed in a single night that I must learn them again in the morning. And England wakes every day to forty million strangers, to thousands of millions who beat past her, as deaf and blind as the waves. She is the true Flying Dutchman. (TBP p.103)

Although Wilcher can make the connections and note the similarities between children, Sara, Lucy, Tolbrook and England, he can not partake of the pilgrimage. It is the tragedy of his life, to be a "lover" rather than a "doer," to have been cast by Nature "for the droll and not for the poet" (TBP p.133). He makes a dichotomy "between those who carefully preserve the past with its treasured objects and traditions, and those who, to create a fresh world, ruthlessly, and usually unconsciously, trample over the traditions which the lovers are trying to preserve and over the lovers themselves if necessary."¹⁴⁸ Although he admires the doers and would like to be one, he realizes himself to be a lover:

For the truth is, I have always been a lover rather than a doer; I have lived in dreams rather than acts; and like all lovers, I have lived in terror of change to what I love. Time itself has haunted my marriage bed like a ghost of despair. (TBP p.333)

As his thoughts are rarely translated into actions (albeit they

are "experiences"), so his love, especially for Julie, is never consummated. His plans to establish housekeeping with Sara when she is released from jail never materialize. I dare not wait upon I would.

Because he fears change, and Robert and Ann signal change, especially at Tolbrook, he dislikes them; yet he realizes that an unchanging Tolbrook is a prison: "...have you heard that Tolbrook is being sold, to be pulled down? I am escaping at last from my prison" (TBP p.8). He refers to it as "the old house, so hated and loved" (TBP p.4); it is "so doused in memory that only to breathe makes me dream like an opium eater" (TBP p.130). Indeed, at one point he dreams that the house becomes his coffin (TBP p.299). Tolbrook is his bondage to the past; Robert, renovating, reminds Wilcher of the desirability of moving ahead: "The secret of happiness, of life, is to forget the past, to look forward, to move on. The sooner I can leave Tolbrook the better, even for an asylum" (TBP p.27). Wilcher is in fact so confused about his antithetical feelings for Tolbrook that he includes in a personal inventory the following felt opposition:

2. My love of an orderly and settled life, my too great reverence for tradition, etc., and the family possessions that represent tradition in material form.

My resolve to leave it and to leave Tolbrook.

(TBP p.84)

This dualism in his nature is equivalent to that in Sara's; it truly divides him. He wants to escape and he wants to remain; he wants change and yet he fears revolutions, for they are irreversible (TBP p.207)--even the beauty of a sunset causes him

anguish because "it must die. It is dying so fast that I can hardly bear to look at it" (TBP p.195). As Bloom observes, "We get the impression...that Wilcher's narrative aspires, unsuccessfully, to the picaresque."¹⁴⁹

His apprehension of the world around him is coloured by his feelings, his upbringing, even more than is Gulley's; he sees nature in terms of heaven and hell in the following two passages:

The place was familiar to me. But now to my startled eyes it appeared unnatural, a magic copy or original form of that reality. I seemed to have been transported into another world, of celestial beauty, but cold and unfriendly. Robert's little trees, in flower, were like standard roses of a new and extraordinary kind; the grass seemed to wear unnatural green; the sky, a blue so pale yet piercing that it alarmed me like a new sky, which is far more unexpected and terrifying than a new earth. Even the birds...seemed to be of a new species....The very beauties of the place...increased my panic. For I felt that I did not belong among them.

But suddenly a gust blew down a few raindrops, and at once the ground grew solid under my feet. The sky faded to the usual pale blue of a cold spring morning....And I saw beyond the hedge the great trembling mountain of the lime, with its leaves like green flowers. For the imagination, apparently, it does not rain in heaven.

(TBP p.207)

...the streaming rain,...the clouds smoking through a sky like the last day; the hoofs rattling and splashing on roads which were unseen in the black shade between their high banks. Until some green and ghastly ray, darting down between two clouds, suddenly flashed upon them, and showed them like rivers of Tophet, liquid sulphur winding through hellish rocks of darkness. And when at last I would come in sight of the Longwater, it, too, would have a diabolic aspect, unexpectedly bright, as if from an infernal and pallid fire; seeming composed not of water but of

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Bloom, p. 93.

some heavier liquid....And these heavy waves, flowing all in one direction with a deliberate movement, formed...a kind of reproof, as of satanic order, to the turmoil in the sky and the agitation of the bare trees, dashing and rattling their branches overhead and flinging down their subsidiary showers like a crowd of hysterical ghosts from some churchyard of the drowned.

(TBP p.247)

His descriptive ability, although attuned to his own particular preoccupations, leaves no doubts in the reader's mind that Wilcher is more than prosaic. He describes himself, his life, in metaphor:

My life, which these children think so flat, might be described as three great waves of passion and agitation. The first rose in my youth, out of that inland sea, and gradually grew higher, darker, heavier, more dangerous, until, in the great war, it fell with one tremendous crash. And after that war, out of the confused choppy ocean of my middle age, arose another wave, not so high as the last, but faster, wilder, and blacker, which finally dashed itself to pieces in a swamp and became a stagnant lake among rotting trees and tropical serpents. From which Sara, like a mild English breeze, came to rescue me, by blowing away the vapors and sweeping me off from that cozy gulf into a third wave, a bright Atlantic roller, smooth and fresh, which was just about to come into port when it struck upon a sand bar and burst into foam, bubbles, spray, air, etc. But like the waves you see from all these western cliffs, never finding rest.

(TBP p.220)

During the first part of his life he draws sustenance and inspiration from Lucy, as he does in his later years from Sara. They represent the rebellious elements, or in keeping with the predominant imagery, mutinous elements that rock the boat. Wilcher speaks of living "in the law, in the ark of freedom" as a child: "A ship well founded, well braced to carry us over the most frightful rocks, and quicksands. And on those nursery decks we knew where we were; we were as careless and lively as all sailors under discipline" (TBP p.39). Whereas Wilcher takes

after his father, an authoritarian man, Lucy rebels; her "courage and passion" are seen by Mr. Wilcher as "brutality and coarseness," a "sin against Nature" in a woman (TBP pp.42-43). The conflict of wills between Lucy and her father is seen by Larsen as a dramatization of "the predicament of the early Victorian who conducted his life according to values intellectually understood but not imaginatively integrated into his own personality."¹⁵⁰ The authoritarian nature of Victorian society, its ostensible monopoly on the "truths" of life as embodied in custom and convention, moral and legal codes, precluded the individual "truth" that imagination inevitably entailed. Tom Wilcher is torn between the rigor of his father and the freedom of his sister; he sees himself as "a dead frog, which shows animation only at the electric spark from such as Lucy. The touch of genius; of the world's genius" (TBP p.77).

Just as when he is old the thought of Lucy can animate him into passion and action, so when he was a child Lucy's "devil" would possess him: "Indeed, I often tried to kill her. But the reason was that she made me murderous with her devil" (TBP p.20). Lucy lived in a "mysterious universe of passion and faith" that could carry Wilcher out of his "narrow domestic comfort and security" (TBP p.79); Sara had "a living faith" (TBP p.3), imparting to Wilcher "that joy which is the life of faith" (TBP p.29). In the same way that Lucy's passion and faith redeems Wilcher as a child, Sara's living faith and joy redeems, saves him as an adult. When Sara came to keep house for him, he was a self-avowed "lost soul": "I loathed myself and all

¹⁵⁰ Larsen, p. 131.

my actions; life itself. My faith was as dead as my heart; what is faith but the belief that in life there is something worth doing, and the feeling of it?" (TBP p.28). He finds, much later, the following quotation in his commonplace book:

"The soul which is deprived of its essential activity, in works of faith and imagination, quickly corrupts. Like all spiritual things, enclosed within the prison walls of fear and doubt, it grows quickly monstrous and evil. It is like a plant shut away in darkness, which, still living and striving, throws out, instead of green leaves and bright flowers, pallid tentacles, and fruit so strange, so horrible that is like a phantasm seen in a dream; something at once comic and terrifying. The dumb stupid creature appears suddenly to be possessed of a devil's imagination." (TBP p.307)

The phrase "faith and imagination" is interchangeable with "faith and passion." Sara's "living faith" is "an act and a feeling" (TBP p.328), "the ready invention of a free lance" (TBP p.315). Of Amy (Wilcher's sister-in-law, Sara's "respectable" counterpart) and Sara he remarks: "They didn't submit themselves to any belief. They used it. They made it. They had the courage of the simple, which is not to be surprised. They had the penetration of innocence, which can see the force of a platitude" (TBP p.339). Lucy, Amy, and Sara have all been removed from Wilcher, and with them, their support. Hoffman writes that Wilcher had been a "parasite on the creative lives of others...."¹⁵¹ But this is not entirely true, for Wilcher's soul, "the dumb stupid creature," seems to him "to be possessed of a devil's imagination"; as Adams notes in his introduction to Cary's Power in Men, "man either creates his own world within his imaginative being or allows the world to trap him within a

¹⁵¹ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 84.

prison of dead matter. If he succumbs to the latter, he dies into nightmare. The conservative in Tom Wilcher has fallen into such a sleep, from which the demon...of his creative intelligence struggles to awaken him."¹⁵² He resorts to eccentricity, "lunatic" thoughts, deviant behaviour in the park. His one constructive activity is to direct Ann from her sterile modern outlook into one consistent with Tolbrook, incorporating the past, renewing her faith.

Wilcher has always had a faith of sorts, sometimes "dead," sometimes "living," in need of renewal by such vital spirits as Lucy and Sara. His is finally a synthesis amounting to a new thesis, definitely his own, so that he can ultimately reach Ann's trained, scientific mind and imbue it with a sense of the traditions of Tolbrook and its inhabitants. In this way he frees himself of his bondage because in imparting his faith to another it takes on a living form, comparable to the evangelism of Lucy and Brown, but on a smaller scale. His faith becomes active rather than passive, dynamic instead of static, and creative: as Cary says, his faith is "'always the same faith but with a different expression. Like an art it can never repeat itself'; it is a creative act of the soul 'to be a pilgrim of God.'"¹⁵³

For Cary, it is the very young and the very old who truly experience their thoughts and feelings; the innocence of youth

¹⁵² Adams, "Introduction," Power in Men, p. xxiii.

¹⁵³ Joyce Cary, Osborn Collection, unlabelled red, small-sized notebook; quoted by Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 80.

and the wisdom¹⁵⁴ of old age, the return to the primitive sources allow the imagination free rein: passion, faith, or imagination, whatever we choose to call it, is found in children, savages, artists, and the faithful, the eternal innocents. These qualities are found in combination in Wilcher's description of Lucy and her preacher husband Brown:

They were both people of power; life ran in them with a primitive force and innocence. They were close to its springs as children are close, so that its experience, its loves, its wonders, its furies, its mysterious altruism, came to them as to children, like mysteries, and gave them neither peace nor time to fall into sloth and decadence.

(TBP p.93)

The final conversation of the novel, between Ann and Wilcher, is similar to Gulley's words with the nun, who was "seriously well":

...it was understood between us that whether I die today or tomorrow does not matter to anybody. But for her that is a defeat; for me it is a triumph.

"You look as if you'd swallowed a safety pin," I said to her...."You take life too seriously."

"Don't you think it is rather serious?"

"My dear child, you're not thirty yet. You have forty, forty-five years in front of you."

"Yes."

(TBP p.342)

Friedson sees this final "yes" as an affirmation, "an ambiguous 'yes' which comes from his niece, but an affirmation for all that."¹⁵⁵ With all due respect to Friedson this particular "yes" does not seem to be especially "affirmative"; rather, it is the nurse's placation of the impatient and rambling patient,

¹⁵⁴ "Freedom, as creation 'must be' guarded by wisdom." Joyce Cary, Osborn Collection, Box Number 43, Holograph Sheet in manuscript bundle labelled "Horse's Mouth MS and odd pieces"; quoted by Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 85.

¹⁵⁵ Friedson, p. 263.

the intellectual's analytic but unemotional and unimaginative comprehension of an idea. The force which drives Wilcher to enjoin Ann to enjoy is quite lacking in her; the "yes" is a sterile and bodiless acquiescence rather than a positive statement boding well for the future of England. Wilcher's faith will carry him further than Ann's "yes" because his faith, like sympathy, is an act of the imagination, an affirmation of and connection with something (as opposed to somebody) not physically present, but nonetheless vastly important.

iii. The Horse's Mouth

The Horse's Mouth is the third work of Cary's first trilogy, and his best novel in my opinion. Each novel has its mentor, a literary figure with whom the narrator identifies: Sara continually refers to the novels of Charlotte Yonge and quotes her homely wisdom prodigiously; Tom Wilcher sees himself as the Pilgrim in Bunyan's hymn (TBP pp.13,46), "as English as Bunyan himself" (TBP p.13); and Gulley is obviously a follower and admirer of William Blake, whose artistic career and ideas closely parallel his own.

In an unpublished note Cary states, "Point of Blake is his depth and adequacy--close to the ground. His acceptance of evil as real. Through creation, generation to regeneration. The stoic English view but he enters into freedom and individuality through experience."¹⁵⁶ Gulley, like Blake, is also "close to the ground," getting his news "straight from the horse's mouth." The artist has, by virtue of a higher awareness and more

¹⁵⁶ Joyce Cary, Osborn Collection, Box Number 43, Holograph Sheet in manuscript bundle labelled "Horse's Mouth MS and odd pieces"; quoted by Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 86.

sensitized perception, a more direct channel to the "truth." Abstract concepts such as good and evil are dealt with concretely and can be known through inspiration, the short-cut to "horse's meat." He creates as he lives, seeing not with what Blake calls the Corporeal or Vegetative eye, but with the inner eye. He illuminates what he perceives with the halo of an artist's truths, usually in metaphors, connecting what is there with what is not. The first several paragraphs in The Horse's Mouth illustrate this and set the tone, pace, and style, and delineate the subject matter with which the rest of the novel continues:

"I was walking by the Thames. Half-past morning on an autumn day. Sun in a mist. Like an orange in a fried fish shop. All bright below. Low tide, dusty water and a crooked bar of straw, chicken-boxes, dirt and oil from mud to mud. Like a viper swimming in skim milk. The old serpent, symbol of nature and love.

Five windows light the cavernd man;
 through one he breathes the air;
 Through one hears music of the spheres;
 through one can look
 And see small portions of the eternal
 world.

Such as Thames mud turned into a bank of nine carat gold rough from the fire. They say a chap just out of prison runs into the nearest cover; into some dark little room, like a rabbit put up by a stoat. The sky feels too big for him. But I liked it. I swam in it. I couldn't take my eyes off the clouds, the water, the mud. And I must have been hopping up and down Greenbank Hard for half an hour grinning like a gargoyle, until the wind began to get up my trousers and down my back, and to bring me to myself, as they say. Meaning my liver and lights.

And I perceived that I hadn't time to waste on pleasure. A man of my age has to get on with the job.

I had two and six left from my prison money. I reckoned that five pounds would set me up with bed, board and working capital. That left four pounds seventeen and six to be won. From friends. But when I went over my friends, I seemed to owe them more than that; more than they could afford.

(HM p.1)

Pamela Hansford Johnson feels that these first twenty lines give us everything essential that Cary had to say about Gulley.¹⁵⁷

But much would depend on what we define as the essential Gulley Jimson. From these lines we learn certain facts: the locale is London, by the river Thames, and it is a misty morning in August; the speaker is just out of prison and, if not poor, short of money, but he has close friends to whom he can turn. We learn that he has a sense of humour ("I seemed to owe them...more than they could afford"), that he is getting old and is concerned about his health. He has the ability to see himself from the outside ("hopping up and down Greenbank Hard...grinning like a Gargoyle") and doesn't spare himself if he happens to look ridiculous. But even more important than this ability is the way he perceives the world around him and the images he creates ("like a viper swimming in skim milk," describing the snake-like line of debris in the Thames). He is a symbol maker and literate, quoting Blake from memory and appropriately, not to mention with familiarity (thereby infusing a characteristic note of incongruity). Here is a man just out of jail, who looks like a frog and a gargoyle, who is surrounded by dirt, oil, mud and mist, and who is quoting poetry about "five windows" and "music of the spheres." The irony is obvious, especially since the sensory perceptions he is receiving through his windows are so obviously anything but exalted: he sees dirt, smells rubbish and Thames, feels cold, hears raucous street noises, and is probably hungry.

¹⁵⁷ "Three Novelists and the Drawing of Character: C.P. Snow, Joyce Cary, and Ivy Compton-Burnett," Essays and Studies Collected by the English Association, N.S. III (1950), 91.

So these first lines do indeed tell us a good deal about Gulley, but that they tell us everything "essential" is far from the actual case. We have yet to see him putting his visions on canvas (one of the differentiating factors between Gulley and the average imaginative picaro); we have yet to meet his friends, to see Sara Monday and Tom Wilcher as Gulley sees them; we have not followed him through any of his adventures, physical or mental. And with a character like Gulley, it is the accumulation of action and thought that gives us what is essential. And (for the purposes of this study) the later references to Blake and to imagination, in addition to Gulley's creative works (again, be they mad telephone calls to Hickson or green flame in a corner of "The Fall") are what is "essential."

Golden Larsen feels that to explain The Horse's Mouth through Blake's poetry "is to explain *obscurum per obscurius*."¹⁵⁸ Whether this is true or not, it is not the present writer's intention to interpret Blake's symbolism, or Gulley's for that matter; rather it will be to utilize both artists' actions and ideas toward a better comprehension of Cary's portrayal of the creative imagination. In an excellent study entitled "Blake and Gulley Jimson: English Symbolists," Hazard Adams runs through the parallels having to do with their careers, their arts, and their aesthetic theories.¹⁵⁹

Blake, in 1803, was brought to trial for uttering "seditious remarks" about the king. He was acquitted, but ironically, he had "quite unequivocally damned the king" years before, by

¹⁵⁸ Larsen, Dark Descent, p. 162.

¹⁵⁹ Adams, Critique, III, 3-14.

calling him an "angel," or "a representation of arch-reaction, the devil of Blake's cosmos."¹⁶⁰ Later in The Horse's Mouth, Gulley makes continual reference to "angels," and it might be misleading were one unaware of Blake's meaning of the word. Adams sees Blake's and Gulley's suffering at the hands of society as indicative of "alienation from society and its mores."¹⁶¹ This does not mean that Gulley is a "rebel," for even though he continually offends society's higher sensibilities by stealing, making threatening telephone calls, "perverting" youth, destroying private property, selling postcards as pornography, etc., he does so not through any desire to go against the dictates of society, but through an irrepressible and unconquerable tendency to do whatever he feels like doing if the occasion seems to warrant it. His imagination suggests alternatives to action that would never be entertained, let alone formulated by the average "Boorjoy." Thus, although society may hold Gulley and Blake at arm's length, thereby alienating or exiling them, it is not as though they are kicking back. Gulley, in fact, seems to feel that he deserves what happens to him, and that society is understandably perturbed with him.

Of public reaction to their paintings, Adams reports that "at least one critic who attended Blake's exhibition thought him demented,"¹⁶² and Gulley fared no better, one critic writing that "Mr. G. Jimson's work shows a progressive disintegration and is now thoroughly incomprehensible" (HM p.103). The only persons who respect and admire Gulley's paintings are his

¹⁶⁰ Adams, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁶² Loc. cit.

friends, and of them, Coker is interested in the monetary aspect, Plant doesn't understand them although he tries to, Sara simply likes the one of herself in the bath, Nosy likes them because he is convinced Gulley is a genius (Gulley has told him so), and Mr. Hickson is only impressed with the nudes from the "lyric" period, which Gulley had left behind years before (just as Blake turned from the "lyrical" to the prophetic). Gulley has turned to the "epic" stage, and this is found by all, without exception, to be worse than the doodlings of a thoroughly nasty and degenerate child. Just as Blake failed to achieve success with his prophetic books¹⁶³ so Gulley's major works, notably his walls, tend to rouse moral mothers and prim clergy.

Both artists superimpose archetypal subject matter onto an English scene.¹⁶⁴ Blake wrote of building Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land," and Gulley speaks of Sara as a model for his "English Eve" (HM p.83). Gulley utilizes Blake's "Mental Traveller" to dramatize his own career, the influences and hindrances, catalysts and obstacles which aided and thwarted him. Many of Gulley's actual images are inspired by Blake's poetry, which Adams calls his "tendency to see through Blake's eye."¹⁶⁵ And both men, struck by the inadequacy of any single artistic medium, attempted to combine them, Blake by accompanying his poems with engravings, and Gulley by painting little balloons (similar to those seen in cartoons), "pink letters on a blue puff," coming out of his characters' mouths.

¹⁶³ Adams, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

And finally, concerning their aesthetic theories, both were concerned with the form-meaning problem. Both decide that form is meaning, and carries also "its own vision and its own morality."¹⁶⁶ The imagination "creates what it experiences" and art is thus "an intuition of reality"; the artist "becomes a prophet for having created the world in its true form."¹⁶⁷ Because only one person, the artist, has a first-hand experience of the vision, and because people often cannot understand even that with which they are familiar, there is a great probability that the artist will be misunderstood, and accused of obscurity, of speaking a "private language." For Gulley and Blake, "the world of vision is a world within,"¹⁶⁸ as opposed to contemplation, which is "on the outside." Only inspiration is "on the spot" (HM p.94). Gulley is one of the few of whom it seems truer than usual to say that when he stops perceiving, the world ceases to exist; he makes or creates his world as he perceives it, but gives it back to itself on canvas, in "the communal language of symbolism," just as Joyce Cary has, in Blakean terms, given us his vision of the eternal world of the creative imagination in The Horse's Mouth.

The story line of The Horse's Mouth begins with Gulley recently released from jail. The novel is divided by similar institutionalizations into three parts. In the first, Gulley continues work on "The Fall," the painting he had left behind, returning to it as one would return to a family. He is

¹⁶⁶ Adams, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁸ Loc. cit.

separated from it by another stay in jail, and returns to find it more mutilated than before (Coker's mother having used it to patch the leaky roof). In the second part of the novel, he works on a painting called "The Raising of Lazarus," which he executes on the Beeders' living-room wall without their consent. He abandons this work upon their return and flees with Nosy, his devoted follower. Again he is institutionalized, this time in the hospital, after being beaten by a young man who felt Gulley was infringing on his pornographic post-card racket. The third and final section of the novel is characterized by Gulley's work on "The Creation," involving yet another and even larger wall. The novel concludes with Gulley in the ambulance, presumably having suffered a stroke, "the finisher."

The work is given immediacy, authenticity and weight by purporting to be a first person raconte. Gulley is ostensibly dictating his memoirs from the hospital "to my honorary secretary, who has got the afternoon off from the cheese counter" (HM p.51). The reader, by means of this first person device, sees through the eyes of the artist, and obtains insights into the workings of the creative imagination with its multiple manners of expression. And so well has Cary managed to obliterate his own presence, that the reader neither for one minute is aware of a manipulating hand, nor doubts for a second two facts: that Gulley is indeed an artist and that he is a genius (even though he often assures us of this himself). Just as Gulley receives his ideas "straight from the horse's mouth," so does the reader, Gulley being our source of truth and inspiration, the embodiment of freedom and imagination. We are "on the spot,"

as Gulley says of Blake and inspiration, and there to experience the "Now," the sense of immediacy conveyed when in the presence of so much aliveness and creativity. Gulley claims that every day is his birthday, sometimes several times a day in fact, and the reader can celebrate it with him.

The genre in which Cary writes might well be termed picaresque. The pace is swift, and chapters are short, one or two pages in length, contributing to the episodic and dynamic nature of the action. Robert Alter analyzes the picaro as artist and then Gulley as picaro:

The picaroon, in his aspect of master-of-his-fate, actually handles experience much the way an artist handles the materials of his art. To the ordinary man things happen; for him most of the components of experience are, to use the Aristotelian distinction, already actual, just as lines, shapes, textures, and colors are simply actual to someone who will never be a painter. But experience for the opportunist picaroon--like the elements of the visual world for the painter--is always predominantly potential....The ingenious rogue, like the artist, selects elements from experience as it presents itself to him and reconstitutes them in a new order that suits his own purposes....If the rogue borrows from the artist something of his professional method, the artist assumes much the same peculiar social standing as the rogue. The artist...is, like the picaresque hero, an individual of unusual worth who can never seriously hope to be properly acknowledged by society.¹⁶⁹

...Gulley's relationship to art is...analogous to the relationship of the picaroon to experience in general. His art tries him sorely, sometimes threatens to confound him, but it is his great source of joy, and he can never be done with it. To Gulley in his art as to the picaroon in his adventures, past achievement is of no interest--it is the present challenge that attracts him. The world is good because there are always new experiences to be lived.¹⁷⁰

He is outside the moral realm inhabited by the average citizen

¹⁶⁹ Robert Alter, Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 128-129.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

and although he does have a "code" of behaviour, it is certainly not that subscribed to by the bulk of the public. "As a man dedicated to working on his own version of the truth, the artist is not likely to be awed by the kind of 'truth' embodied in law or custom."¹⁷¹

Every picaresque hero or anti-hero, from Don Quixote to Tom Jones, Felix Krull to Augie March, is characterized by a hyper-active imagination, but none so much as Gulley, as is evidenced by almost every word uttered and action engaged in. An excellent example is Gulley's conversation with Hickson. Although he has just returned from a month in jail for "uttering menaces," he cannot resist the temptation to give Mr. Hickson a "welcome home" ring (another characteristic of the picaresque is his very inactive super-ego and low resistance to temptation). With a pencil between his teeth, Gulley announces:

"I am the President of the [Royal] Academy. I understand Mr. Jimson is now destitute. And I was informed on the best legal advice that you have no right to his pictures...."

"Is that you, Jimson?"

"Certainly not," I said, "I wouldn't touch the bastard with a dung fork."

"No doubt, Mr. Hickson, you've got tip-top lawyers who could do down Magna Carta and George Washington....I'm speaking as a friend. If Jimson doesn't get his rightful due in the next week, he fully intends to burn your house down, and cut your tripes out afterwards. He means it too."

(HM p.7)

The comic aspects of this situation are familiar to the reader of the picaresque. If Jimson took himself seriously, as does the paranoid Daniel Skipton (The Unspeakable Skipton, by Pamela Hansford Johnson), he would be pathetic. But he is fully aware of the incongruities in his speech and the ensuing ironic

¹⁷¹ Alter, p. 129.

distance thus established puts us on his side; he gains our sympathy rather than our pity or scorn.

Later in the afternoon, in connection with this same incident, he is confronted by an officer of the law:

"Did you at six-thirty this afternoon send a telephone message of a threatening character to Mr. Hickson, 98, Portland Place?" "I only said I'd burn his house down and cut his liver out."
 "You know what will happen to you if you go on at that game." "Yes, but what will happen if I don't? What will I do in the long evenings?" "Mr. Hickson doesn't want to prosecute. But if you go on making a nuisance of yourself, he'll have to take steps."
 "Would he rather I cut his liver out without telephoning?" "Put yourself in his place, Mr. Jimson."
 "I wish I could, it's a very nice place." "Well, you heard what I said. Do it again and you're for it." "That's a good idea. I'll call him up at once."
 (HM p.63)

Gulley exemplifies all the impudence and perversity of a precocious child, and to his credit he does not cower before the spectre of law and order.

Like Bonser and Mister Johnson, also picaresque figures, Gulley suffers from perpetual poverty, and deals with this condition in modes completely characteristic, that is, imaginative. He importunes an old sea captain in the pub; claiming to be the Secretary of the William Blake Memorial Association, Gulley asks if perhaps the gentleman would like to contribute:

"Blake," said the captain, "is that Admiral Blake?"
 "No, William Blake, the great Blake."
 "Never heard of him."
 "Greatest Englishman who ever lived."
 "Was he? What did he do?"
 "Poet and painter, but never had a chance. Didn't know how to boost himself."
 "Don't like all this boost."
 "Quite right. Blake didn't either....We're selling five thousand founders' shares at half a crown down with three instalments at six months. It will pay a hundred per cent certain. And every receipt has the secretary's signature. In ink."

"I don't mind all that, but I'll give you half a crown for your club if it's against boost."

"Make it five bob and I'd elect you vice-president."

"no, half a crown's enough," and he puts his hand in his pocket. (HM p.13)

Coker prevents this transaction from taking place, but Gulley, who needs money for paint and brushes--meat and bread to him--persists and finally, by pocketing and pawning a silver frame of Sara's, manages to supply himself with the necessary tools for his painting. All things lead back to his work; although he is ill-clothed and fed, he undergoes no discomfort or suffering so long as his painting continues well. His existence is as far from hedonistic as possible. Gulley commits no "sins of the flesh." When he has his brushes, he says, "Life delights in life."

Life is for Gulley an unending source of joy and delight and nothing except the occasional predictable despair and insecurity of the publicly reviled artist ever shakes him; his equanimity is masterful. Part of the reason for this is Gulley's ability to transmogrify the mundanities into the eternal, the contingencies into absolutes; that is to say, by the time he has processed some quotidiinity through his imagination, it has become a work of art. At Coker's pub one night the conversation runs to injustice, bad luck, and ugliness. Coker laments her own "lack of symmetry" and an old man tells of his daughter who is hard of hearing; Gulley immediately envisions

...all the deaf, blind, ugly, cross-eyed, limp-legged, bulge-headed, bald and crooked girls in the world, sitting on little white mountains and weeping tears like sleet. There was a great clock ticking and every time it ticked the tears all fell together with a noise like broken glass tinkling in

a plate. And the ground trembled like a sleeping dog in front of the parlour fire when the bell tolls for a funeral. (HM pp.11-12)

This vision leads him, as always, to a painting: "I could do the girls--their legs would look like the fringe on the mantel-piece, but how would you join up the mountains." It begins to take shape:

Yes, and a lot of nuns pushing perambulators, with a holy babe in each. Yes, and every nun with a golden crown. Yes, and the nuns would be like great black tear drops. They could be the tear drops. And they wouldn't have feet. They would go on little wheels.

"I'd rather be blind than deaf," Coker said.

"Not me," said the old man, "I likes to see the world. You can do without the talk."

Yes, I thought. You've got the girls at the top red and blue and green, like a lot of little flowers burning and then the mountains blue-white and blue-green, and then the everlastings--they ought to be bigger than the girls, and then the little black nuns under them, black or green.

"Well, you can smell," said Coker, "and there's eau de Cologne and rum. And you wouldn't see yourself in the glass." (HM p.12)

The conversation harks back to the opening of the novel, and Gulley's quotation of the phrase "five windows light the caverned man." They illumine, supposedly, the inner recesses of the caverns. But occasionally one or more of these windows is permanently shuttered; one is blind, or deaf. This, however, is not the greater tragedy; often these windows do not admit enough light to see, in a visionary sense. The imagination is the light of the intellect, providing colours where blacks and whites and greys would predominate. While Coker and the old man talk about blindness, deafness and eau de cologne, Gulley is seeing with the inner, the Blakeian eye. Beethoven, though deaf, composed symphonies, and Milton, though blind, wrote Samson Agonistes. Neither were blind or deaf except in the

most crass interpretation of the word.

This painting, so detailed and complete, never meets canvas, yet Gulley's description exceeds those others in literature of completed paintings. Take, for example, Huxley's description of a painting by Mark Rampion, in Point Counter Point:

Seated on the crest of a grassy bank, where she formed the apex of the pyramidal composition, a naked woman was suckling a child. Below and in front of her to the left crouched a man, his bare back turned to the spectator and in the corresponding position on the right stood a little boy. The crouching man was playing with a couple of tiny leopard cubs that occupied the centre of the picture, a little below the seated mother's feet; the little boy looked on. Close behind the woman and filling almost the whole of the upper part of the picture, stood a cow, its head slightly averted, ruminating. The woman's head and shoulders stood out pale against its dun flank.

"It's a picture I like particularly....The flesh is good. Don't you think? Has a bloom to it, a living quality....I feel I've managed to get the living relationship of the figures to each other and the rest of the world. The cow, for example. It's turned away, it's unaware of the human scene. But somehow you feel it's happily in touch with the humans in some milky, cud-chewing, bovine way. And the humans are in touch with it. And also in touch with the leopards, but in a quite different way--a way corresponding to the quick leopardy way the cubs are in touch with them. Yes, I like it."¹⁷²

The subject matter might have been Gulley's, but the description of it has no life, less life than has Gulley's purely imaginary painting. Of course, the latter was given immediacy and vitality because we saw it in the process of being created (copulation is more exciting than gestation); its is a dynamic as opposed to a static state.

A more thoroughly convincing portrayal of the creative

¹⁷² (New York, 1928), pp, 359-60.

artist has yet to be written.¹⁷³ Not only are Gulley's thought processes captured and communicated with undoubtable veracity, but the objects of contemplation and creation are given us in black and white, in the medium of literature as well (if not better) as if they were in oils and on canvas. Nothing could be more difficult either except perhaps conveying a sense of the works of a musician-composer. By comparison, James Joyce's portrait of the artist is dead and lifeless; only part of the novel is first person narrative, and that part merely deals with the artist in conscious rebellion, in the process of throwing off fetters of church, state and family. Daedalus is too occupied with his "non serviam" to create.

When Gulley returns to "The Fall," he sees that there are now names written all over it and a big chunk cut out of Adam's middle by the local mothers; this is accepted with perfect equanimity, as the painting can be patched and Gulley had neglected to give Adam "a bathing dress." The local children who scurry like rats as Gulley approaches are seen as "more patrons"; when it is discovered that these patrons d'art have stolen the paints and brushes, Gulley thinks "well....It's natural....They all love art. Born to it" (HM p.6). When he has ingeniously replenished his stock of paints and brushes, he gets to work, brushes out Adam's "damned old knob of a shoulder" and gives him "a new shape down the back," feeling that this is "straight from the horse" (HM p.19).

¹⁷³ Cf. Somerset Maugham's The Moon and Sixpence; Thomas Mann's Dr. Faustus; James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses; Pamela Hansford Johnson's The Unspeakable Skipton; John Bratby's Breakdown; to name a few.

His inspiration is squelched by the arrival of his friend, Plant, and a pair of preachers. The Reverend Mr. Dogsboddy, "or some name like that" asks Gulley if the "'ah--the human form--anatomically speaking, could--ah--assume the position of the male figure. Of course, I know--ah--a certain distortion is--ah--permissible.'" Gulley thinks,

"Come...you're not one of those asses who takes himself seriously. You're not like poor Billy, crying out:

I've travelled through a land of men,
A land of men and women too,
And heard and saw such dreadful things
As cold earth wanderers never knew.

Which probably means only that when Billy had a good idea, a real tip, a babe, some blue-nose came in and asked him why he drew his females in nightgowns."

(HM p.38).

Blake is not the only one who takes himself seriously, as Gulley well knows. That the opinions of a preacher can bother him bothers him. The stanza quoted is the first from Blake's "The Mental Traveller," probably the most important of Blake's poems as far as The Horse's Mouth is concerned. The poem deals with "the cycle of time in the natural world as it is conceived under the domination of a female will."¹⁷⁴ To Gulley it represents the trials of the artist and his attempt to escape from the cyclical dialectic the "fallen world" imposes on him. There is "no spiritual progression"¹⁷⁵ in this world, and the artist must break free, forge ahead and with his prophetic vision lead the way for those who cannot "see" and who do not appreciate the artist's efforts to open their eyes.

Although Plant does not ask him why he draws his females

¹⁷⁴ Adams, Critique, III, 6.

¹⁷⁵ Loc. cit.

in nightgowns, he does worse by pretending to understand and attempting to "interpret" the painting for the preachers, who have never known less about the Fall. "'Eve on the right is kneeling down. The serpent on the left is speaking in Adam's ear. The flowers at the side are daisies and marigolds. Really, Mr. Jimson, I've got to congratulate you on those flowers'" (HM p.37).

But the harder he tries, the worse Gulley feels:

As if I had been a happy worm, creeping all soft and oily through the grass, imagining the blades to be great forest trees, and every little pebble a mountain overcome; and taking the glow of self-satisfaction from his own tail for the glory of the Lord shining on his path; when all at once a herd of bullocks comes trampling along, snorting tropical epochs and shitting continents; succeeded by a million hairy gorillas, as big as skyscrapers, beating on their chests with elephant drumsticks and screaming, "Give us meat; give us mates," followed modestly by ten thousand walruses a thousand feet high, wearing battleships for boots, and the Dome of St. Paul's for a cod-piece; armed in the one hand with shield-shaped Bibles fortified with brass spikes, and in the other with cross-headed clubs of blood rusty iron, hung with the bleeding heads of infants, artists, etc., with which they beat up what is left of the grass, crying, "Come to mother, little worm, and let her pat your dear head and comb your sweet hair for you." (HM pp. 37-38)

The comments of the men embarrass him; while one "stands to be instructed" about what seems to him to be "a modern cult of ugliness"¹⁷⁶ Gulley touches up Adam's big toe and Blake cries:

And if the babe is born a boy, that is to
say, a real vision,
He's given to a woman old,
Who nails him down upon a rock,
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.
Which means that some old woman of a blue nose
nails your work of imagination to the rock of
law, and why and what; and submits him to a
logical analysis. (HM pp.38-39)

¹⁷⁶ E.S. Furlong notes that the word "imagination" "filled the gap created by the discrediting of the term 'beautiful.'" Imagination (London and New York, 1961), p. 19.

The "babe" is Gulley's painting, "a real vision," and the "woman old" is represented by the preachers who can not understand intuitively, who want things to appear rationally self-evident-- but neither is it possible to understand Gulley's painting by means of "logical analysis." Crucified on the rock of law Gulley's silent screams are caught in cups of quid, qua, quasere, and qualis. These questions are anathema to the artist, to the free functioning of the imagination, and when his visitors leave, Gulley debates whether he should take his palette knife and "scrape out the picture or murder Blue-nose or only cut my throat" (HM p.39). He begins to scrape out the fish (before the visitors arrived he had been admiring them and thinking "the fish are good; I am good; life is good; whiskey, though bad, is good" HM p.35), when Nosy protests vociferously:

"But Mr. J-Jimson, you're not going to take them all out?" "All of 'em." "Why?" "They're dead. They don't swim--they don't speak, they don't click, they don't work, they don't do anything at all." "But why don't they?" "God knows. But he won't go into details. The truth is, THE OLD HORSE DOESN'T SPEAK ONLY HORSE. And I can't speak only Greenbank." "Horse," said Nosy, with his eye revolving in different directions. "Here," I said, what are you talking about?....Go away." And I made a dart at him. But he didn't move. He was as obstinate as a three-legged donkey that means to get thistles if it costs him his life. "But I like the f-fish, Mr. Jimson. Are you s-sure they're wrong?" "No, I'm not shushure of anything except that if you don't go away and shut up I'll have the stroke." "What stroke, Mr. J-Jimson?" "THE STROKE! Nosy, the finisher, the out-off. What you'll get some day with a hatchet." (HM p.40)

Gulley normally makes an overt and conscious attempt to preserve his temper and equanimity because he knows anger at injustice or bad luck or ignorance will only shorten his life and ruin what remains of it to him. But now he is thoroughly

depressed and sees everything in terms of "The Mental Traveller." (4)

Outside, he watches a young couple walking by:

Girl going past clinging to a young man's arm.
 Putting up her face like a duck to the moon. Drink-
 ing joy. Green in her eyes. Spinal curvature. No
 chin, mouth like a frog. Young man like a pug.
 Gazing down at his sweetie with the face of a saint
 reading the works of God. Hold on, maiden, you've
 got him. He's your boy. Look out, Puggy, that
 isn't a maiden you see before you, it's a work of
 imagination. Nail him, girlie. Nail him to the
 contract. Fly laddie, fly off with your darling
 vision before she turns into a frow, who spends all
 her life thinking of what the neighbours think.

And if the babe is born a boy
 He's given to a woman old,
 Who nails him down upon a rock
 Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

(HM p.41)

From the preachers and their feminine aspect, Gulley's mind moves to the actual woman in the street who will nail down her man, net him into marriage while he still perceives her as a beautiful maiden, that is, a product of his imagination, a vision. From the generic to the specific, Gulley turns to Sara and his own trials and tribulations at her hands. At first she led him around "like her puggy on a ribbon"; "How I washed and dressed for her," he laments.

And when I was mad to paint, she was for putting
 me to bed and getting in after me. Stirring all
 that fire only to cook her own pot. Growing wings
 on my fancy only to stuff a feather bed.

She binds iron thorns around his head,
 She pierces both his hands and feet,
 She cuts his heart out at his side
 To make it feel both cold and heat.
 Her fingers number every nerve
 Just as a miser counts his gold;
 She lives upon his shrieks and cries,
 And she grows young as he grows old.

(HM p.42)

At this time Sara was the dominant party and used his creative energy to fuel her own furnace. Cyril Connolly might have had

See over

Sara and Gulley in mind when he said "Marriage can succeed for an artist only where there is...a wife who is intelligent and unselfish enough to understand and respect the working of the unfriendly cycle of the creative imagination."¹⁷⁷ Although Gulley never actually marries Sara, the problems were the same as if he had. She would infuriate him by her fussing; when he was waiting for inspiration, she would ask if he were "stuck," equating the workings of the creative imagination with those of the bowels.

But the pendulum had to swing back, and finally Gulley asserted himself and hit her, "a flap on the tap." And he begins to use her for his art rather than permit her to sap his energy for her own purposes. He discovers "how to get Sara on the canvas," "got hold of the idea," a state of autophagy exists and their positions are reversed; the apogee of the creative cycle nears:

The flesh was made word; every day. Till he, that is, Gulley Jimson, became a bleeding youth. And she, that is, Sara, becomes a virgin bright.

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

As Billy would say, through generation into regeneration. Materiality, that is, Sara, the old female nature, having attempted to button up the prophetic spirit, that is to say, Gulley Jimson, in her placket-hole, got a bonk on the conk, and was reduced to her proper status, as spiritual fodder. But what fodder....I was too busy to enjoy myself--even when I was having the old girl, I was getting after some ideal composition in my head. Taking advantage of the general speed-up in the clockwork. It's not really surprising that she was a bit jealous of the paint. (HM pp.42-42)

¹⁷⁷ Enemies of Promise (New York, 1960), p. 123.

These stanzas may also be applied to the attempted suppression of art by society or to the artist's difficulty in conquering his subject. Gulley starts to describe the way in which his career as an artist began. At one point he even meant not to be an artist, because his father had been one, and

...I couldn't forget my father, a little grey-bearded old man, crying one day in the garden. I don't know why he was crying. He had a letter in his hand; perhaps it was to tell him that the Academy had thrown out three more Jimson girls in three more Jimson gardens. I hated art when I was young, and I was very glad to get the chance of going into an office. (HM p.51)

This incident is spoken of in the preface to The Horse's

Mouth as one "taken from life":

...I, as a boy playing with paint in school holidays, remember very well the feelings of pity and surprise with which I looked at a gilt-framed canvas which he [not quite clear who] had brought out to show me, and propped against an apple tree.... I have an idea that it had just come back to him, rejected by the Academy which ten years before had been glad to hang his works. I remember my discomfort, as I realized that this man of fifty or so was appealing for sympathy from me, a boy of sixteen; that there were tears in his eyes as he begged me to look at his beautiful work ("the best thing I ever did") and asked me what had happened to the world which had ceased to admire such real "true" art, and allowed itself to be cheated by "daubers" who could neither draw nor glaze; who dared not attempt "finish."

I was myself in 1905 a devoted Impressionist, one of the "daubers." I thought that Impressionism was the only great and true art. I thought that the poor ruined brokenhearted man...was a pitiable failure, whose tragedy was very easily understood--he had no eye for colour, no respect for pigment, no talent, no right whatever to the name of artist. (HM p.321)

Cary realized years later, as did Gulley, that what was "failure" then would several generations and fads later be once more in vogue. Gulley went into a London office as Cary went into colonial service. Just as Cary turned back to art ultimately,

to try his hand with the pen, so Gulley finally turned in his bowler hat and bank account for the camels-hair.

The infection hit one day as he was sitting in his office: "I dropped a blot on an envelope; and having nothing to do just then, I pushed it about with my pen to try and make it look more like a face. And the next thing was I was drawing figures in red and black, on the same envelope. And from that moment I was done for. Everyone was very sympathetic." His boss thought that he had debts, inquired after his petty cash, told him to take a few days off. Gulley spent his holidays studying art, and when he returned to the firm, did not last two days: "I was a bad case. I had a bad infection, galloping art" (HM pp.51-52). This description of Gulley's "infection" reminds one of Charley Brown's similar experience in Charley Is My Darling, published four years earlier than The Horse's Mouth and containing the germ of Gulley in both Charley himself and a local artist, Lommax. While Charley is supposed to be studying, he has begun to doodle on the desk top (as he had done earlier in the W.C.):

His tongue is hanging out as far as it will go, he is lost in concentration while he draws some new improvements to the scene on the table top, which has now, after a fortnight's work, covered two square feet of wood with every variety of naked savage, Wandle, dancing girl, man-tree, wild bull, rape and murder, the whole forming what seems at a first glance, like a complicated forest of flowers, a tropical garden.

Charley, who has just discovered a bottle of red ink in the study desk, is astonished by the new effects which can be obtained by dipping his pencil in the ink and drawing thick red lines round parts of the design. His experiments excite him so much that he holds his breath. He is just drawing a shower of red rain falling from a black tree, with leaves shaped like hands, upon two little black, figures, possessing only one leg apiece.... (CD p.156)

Had Charley been older and in less trouble for other escapades (also results of a hyper-active imagination), he might have become an artist,¹⁷⁸ for the excitement as well as the technique is identical to Gulley's. Gulley would say that Charley would be better off in Borstal than as an artist. As he tells Nosy, who wants to be an artist, "put a stick of dynamite in the kitchen fire, or shoot a policeman....You'd get twice the fun at about one-tenth of the risk" (HM p.14).

Gulley runs the entire gamut of modern styles: "The artist must destroy old forms to create new ones; to be free to create he must destroy the old vision, for repetition is not creative. Art must die to be reborn."¹⁷⁹ Gulley had begun as a Classic: "About 1800 was my period" (HM p.51). The laws of anatomy and perspective give him trouble, and he quotes the same Blake passage that he quoted concerning Sara's debilitating influence on art ("Her fingers numbered every nerve"), changing the meaning to any obstacles or impediments preventing his vision free rein. Gradually, by dint of hard work, "industry," this "aged Shadow" begins to rejuvenate. The Water Colour Society accepted one of his pictures that year; it was "very classical. Early Turner." He learned all the rules and could turn out a very proper painting in an afternoon, but it was not "what you call a work of imagination." Rather, it was "a nice sausage. Lovely forms." Then he saw a Manet and it shocked him; "It skinned my eyes for me, and when I came out I was a different man" (HM p.52).

¹⁷⁸ Since Charley Is My Darling terminates with Charley being taken away in a police van, one can only surmise what ultimately happens to him.

¹⁷⁹ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 92.

For awhile he is happy, eyes skinned and all ("from the fire on the hearth, / A little female babe did spring") but the mixing of genres, the attempt to imitate, blurs his vision, the virgin bright. His mother dies and his wife leaves him: "Of course, I was a bit upset about it....But even at the funeral I couldn't tell whether I was in agony about my poor mother's death, or about my awful pictures" (HM p.53). His old paintings made him ill; his work "looked like a rotten corpse that somebody had forgotten to bury" (HM p.53). And it was about four years before he could capture the "new world," "that lovely vibrating light, that floating tissue of colour," "that maiden vision." And it was popular and sold well, and then Gulley got sick of it as well; it was only so much "sugar" and he says, "I grew up," "quit icing eclairs." But he could not paint the beef and ale either, because he could not see it.

He stopped painting and took to arguing, to reading and drinking and pub-crawling; he "wanders weeping far away."

And I got in such a low state that I was frightened of the dark. Yes, as every night approached, I fairly trembled. I knew what it would be like. A vacuum sucking one's skull into a black glass bottle; all in silence. I used to go out and get drunk, to keep some kind of illumination going in my dome. (HM p.53)

Like Daedalus in the darkened labryinth, he is slowly making his way to freedom, to the light. When he finds Blake's Job drawings, he "peeped into them and shut them up again. Like a chap who's fallen down the cellar steps and knocked his skull in and opens a window too quick, on something too big" (HM p.54).

In the British Museum he broods over "the torso of some

battered old Venus" with "a kind of smallpox all over...her" and wonders why her "lumps seemed so much more important than any bar-lady with a gold fringe; or water-lily pool" (HM p.54).

He enters on a "new Classic" phase: "Good-bye impressions, anarchism, nihilism, Darwinism, and the giddy goat, now staggering with rheumatism" (HM p.54). This was at the turn of the century, when Marx was in vogue and science "took a mathematical twist"; Gulley "studied Blake and Persian carpets and Raphael's cartoons and took to painting walls" (HM p.54). He is getting closer to the maiden vision, but periods of doubt assail him: "I didn't know if I was after a real girl or a succubus..." (HM p.55). He sees his vision as a sort of "Belle dame sans merci," refers to "the honey" of her lips and "wild game" of her eyes; "like the wild stag she flees away" and "he [that is, Gulley] pursues her night and day, / By various arts of love beguiled" (HM p.55). Each artist has his own maiden; the cubists had caught theirs, but "knocked them down with hammers and tied up the fragments with wire." He even thought he had her "under padlock at last" with cubism, which he now mocks and derides: "Cubiston. On the gravel. All services. Modern democracy. Organized comforts. The Socialist state. Bureaucratic liberalism. Scientific management. A new security. But I didn't live there long myself. I got indigestion. I got a nice girl in my eye, or perhaps she got after me."

After 1930, even Hickson quit buying his paintings, he muses. But he is still pursuing the same maiden, and usually believes in her as the correct, the chosen one for him. This rather lengthy reminiscence of Gully's was sparked by his visitors,

who reminded him of his problems with Sara, his earlier problems with his art. All three combine to make him unsure of himself; he wanders weeping far away, and finds himself in the pub where the fourth ring of the cyclical impedimenta, the final type of incubus who possesses his "sleeping woman" is discussed.

In the pub a conversation is begun about art, which Gulley insists on deriding. Plant says of Jimson, "'He's an artist and an artist knows the value of life.'" To which Gulley replies: "What offers for the celebrated Gulley Jimson? Sound in wind and limb except for arthritis, conjunctivitis, rheumattitis sinovitis, bug bitis, colitis, bronchitis, dermatitis, phlebitis, and intermittent retention of the pee" (HM pp.60-61). This sort of flippant bandying about of what Plant considers an honourable occupation puts Plant on the defensive: "'I respect artists,... they give their lives to it.' 'And other people's lives...like Hitler'" adds Gulley. Thus, while he equates "artist Hitler" to an artist who has ideas and "wants to see them on the wall" (HM p.62), we are aware that Hitler represents also the epitome of arch-reaction and is thus the very essence of the forces which operate to frustrate the creative artist. Gulley quotes Blake, and the lines apply both to Hitler as the Babe and as the woman old:

But when they find the frowning Babe,
Terror strikes through the region wide:
They cry 'The Babe! the Babe is born!'
And flee away on every side.
And none can touch that frowning form
Except it be a woman old;
She nails him down upon the rock,
And all is done as I have told. (HM p.62)

People are afraid of anything new ("the Babe"), Gulley's style of painting, Hitler or Chester Nimmo's politics. Even

Gulley would not insist that the new is always good; he sympathizes with people who have to look at his paintings and defends the mother who cut the piece out of Adam's middle because "Adam hadn't got a bathing dress." The "woman old" represents the conventions, morals, laws, that prevent the new from rising to ascendancy; although what is new has youth, power and vigor, the old has on its side the tenacity and staying power of a barnacle. Thus Jesus was crucified, Hitler was put down by the Allies, and Gulley is scorned and derided by the Academy.

To capitulate: there are four forces operating to thwart the artist; all belong under Blake's "female will" classification. They are, in the reverse order of their proximity to the artist: institutions and their leaders, representative of the taste of an era and a nation, the largest, most abstract and most potent force; the generic public, blue-noses who will not or cannot understand and would destroy the specific female force (Sara) who has other plans for her man; and last the art itself (the maiden vision) which may elude the artist as it did Gulley. Each of these represents an obstacle to be surmounted; each Gulley has triumphed over. This is not to say that his work is in popular demand or even that anybody can tolerate it, but rather that Gulley is reconciled (not resigned) to these hostile elements and understands the positions of those in opposition to modern art. If a person is firmly convinced that he is a genius, "a Son of Los" (HM p.90), and that his work is "the real stuff" (HM p.81) as is Gulley, then he can afford to ignore the opinions of critics, mothers, and governments. But he does understand these attitudes; he sympathizes with the "blue-noses" and

blames modern art for just about everything. When asked why Hitler began the war, he replies:

"Because of modern art....Hitler never could put up with modern art. It's against his convictions. His game was water-colour in the old coloured water style. Topographical....Kruger was all against modern art. He stood by the Bible, which is the oldest kind of art. And what he'd been brought up to....The Armada was all against modern art and the new prayer book....Every time a new lot of kids get born, they start some new art. Just to have something of their own. If it isn't a new dance band it's a new religion. And the old lot can't stand it. You couldn't expect it at their age. So they try to stop it, and then there's another bloody war." (HM p.275)

Gulley recognizes the dangers of modern art, exaggerating somewhat. He can derogate it in the same way that a person is permitted liberty to find fault with his loved one. Gulley warns Nosy away from it: "'All art is bad, but modern art is the worst. Just like the influenza. The newer it is, the more dangerous. And modern art is not only a public danger--it's insidious'" (HM p.16).

The collection of modern art he sees at the Beeders' fully justifies his scorn. Sounding like Bloom reciting "Sinbad the Sailor, Binbad the Boiler, Finbad the Failer," he proceeds:

Wilson Steer, water in water-colour, Matthew Smith, victim of the crime in slaughtercolour; Utrillo whitewashed wall in mortar colour; Matisse, odalisque in scortacolor; Picasso, spatchcock horse in tortacolor; Gilbert Spencer, cocks and pigs in toughtacolor; Stanley Spencer, cottage garden in hortacolor; Braque, half a bottle of half and half in portercolour; William Roberts, pipe dream in snortercolour; Wadsworth, rockses, blockses, and fishy boxes all done by self in nautacolor; Duncan Grant, landscape in strawtacolor; Frances Hodgkin, cows and wows and frows and sows in chortacolor; Roualt, perishing Saint in fortacolor; Epstein, Leah waiting for Jacob in squawtacolor. (HM pp.137-8)

Even though Professor Alabaster wishes to immortalize the "life and works of Gulley Jimson," Gulley does not hesitate. He calls Alabaster a "biograbber" and goes on to outline the game of art cricketism.

"Yes," I said, "the professor is an art-cricket. He knows the game backwards, from Zuloaga to Alfred the Great." "You don't believe in art criticism?" said Alabaster. "Yes," I said, "it exists. I even knew a critic once....His language was so bad that his wife and family deserted him. They were also starving." "What did he do then?" "He decided to live for his mission as a critic, so to support himself he took up cricketism. Balls and bats. His special branch was the googly. The slowness of the hand deceives the sly....Slow balls right off the wicket with a break from the blind side. You start, let us say, on the modern spirit with a touch of surrealism, come in sharp on the superb Sargents in the collection of Sir Burrows Wouldiwarp."

(HM p.130)

This is not just "biting the hand that feeds him"; when he received the Professor's letter saying that he would like to write "The Life and Works of Gulley Jimson," he is whitewashing the walls of the latrine in the jail where he is temporarily residing. Keeping the whitewash "on the blue side to bring out the brilliance," he muses on Fame:

Fame isn't a thing. It's a feeling. Like what you get after a pill. What's happening now, you think. Or is it too soon? Nothing's happened at all. Yes, there's something now--a sort of crick in the upper guts. No, that's the old dent, which the pretty barmaid made, at the Bricklayer's Arms, when you overheard her ask who was the dirty little old runt in somebody's else's overcoat. Yes, you say, I suppose you're right. You were getting talked about then too, and that's how you mistook the sensation. But ha, what about this--a sort of emptiness round the liver and confused noises in the cerebellum. Not a bit of it, old boy, that happened to you when you saw your name in the newspaper and underneath were the words "Mr. G. Jimson's work shows a progressive deterioration and is now quite incomprehensible."....Wait a minute, what

about that creeping twitch in the diaphragm. That might be fame, or it might be a touch of suppressed heartburn. (HM p.103)

However, Gulley's fame is dependent upon a discriminating public, and this does not exist and no doubt will not until after his death and/or his return to traditionalism. Gulley considers "the people...as big a danger as the government," but only "if you let it get on your mind. Because there's more of it." Once there are more than four men, a meeting,

"...you get to the mummy-house at the British Museum, and the Sovereign People and Common Humanity and the Average and the Public and the Majority and the Life Force and Statistics and the Economic Man brainless, eyeless, wicked spawn of the universal toad sitting in the black bloody ditch of eternal night and croaking for its mate which is the spectre of Hell."

(HM p.210)

This is strong language, but it illustrates Gulley's image-making talent. After thoroughly lambasting all that is mindless and without imagination of even the most elemental sort, Gulley pardons the people and the government:

"I forgive 'em, Nosy. And tomorrow I shall forget 'em. To forgive is wisdom, to forget is genius. And easier. Because it's true. It's a new world every heart beat. The sun rises seventy-five times a minute. After all, what is a people? It doesn't exist. Only individuals exist." (HM p.211)

If a people does not exist, how can those abstractions bred of institutions, such as laws, morals and mores exist? How can one hold a grudge against another person, let alone another group of persons or an institution, if the sun has just gone down on them and come up on a new scene? When one lives in the present, there is no need to worry about why one was born or will die. Universal and total acceptance is the result of the realization that each heartbeat heralds a new world, a new

creation.

Whenever something happens to one of Gulley's paintings, as it inevitably does (ironically, only the products of his "lyric" period survive ultimately), he can accept it because his world is continually turning, presenting a new scene which he, a sun, lights with the heat and brilliance of his imagination.

Yes, I said to myself, I've got something. Contemplation, in fact, is ON THE OUTSIDE. It's not on the spot. And the truth is that Spinoza was always on the outside. He didn't understand freedom, and so he didn't understand anything....Freedom...is nothing but THE INSIDE OF THE OUTSIDE. And even a philosopher like old Ben can't judge the XXX by eating pint pots....

Whereas Old Bill, that damned Englishman, didn't understand anything but freedom, and so all his nonsense is full of truth; even though he may be a bit of an outsider, HIS OUTSIDE IS ON THE INSIDE; and if you want to catch the old mole where he digs, you have to start at the bottom. (HM p.94)

The above is a key passage in The Horse's Mouth; delineating the dichotomy between Spinoza, the rationalist philosopher and William Blake, the non-rational intuiter and advocator of inspiration, it also defines freedom, thereby explaining Gulley's ability to ignore environmental forces and pressures. Freedom is on the inside, a mental state, and if it is comprehended then nothing else matters, and "nonsense"--perhaps a reference to and justification for some rather obscure symbolism of Blake and himself--is full of truth.

What appears on the outside, contemplation, logic, rational processes of any sort, deceives people into believing it because it looks solid. We are all familiar with the logical "proofs" which conclude with statements such as "Therefore nothing exists"

or something equally outrageous, and a machine can multiply two fifty digit figures accurately in under a minute. Yet it would take more than an infinite number of typewriters and monkeys to produce Hamlet.

But what you get on the inside...is the works --it's SOMETHING THAT GOES ON GOING ON. Hold on to that, old boy, I said, for it's the facts of life. It's the ginger in the ginger bread. It's the apple in the dumpling. It's the jump in the OLD MOSQUITO. It's the kick in the old horse. It's the creation. And that's where it's leading me. Right up to that blasted picture of mine.
(HM p.94)

He realizes his dissatisfaction with the present Fall, which seems to him "something contemplated from the outside," "a tea-party." Thinking of a real fall, he muses on

...what happens to a thousand Eves and Adams every night of the week somewhere under the willows or the palm tree shade--it's a long way from a tea-party. It's not pleasure, or peace, or contemplation, or comfort, or happiness--it's a Fall. Into the pit. The ground gives way, and down you go, head over heels. Unless...you know how to fly. To rise again on your wings. (HM p.95)

In other words he wants something like that typified by Sara--the woman perpetually surprised at herself. Doodling, he draws Eve and then Oothoon, "the everlasting maiden," one of Blake's creations representing "the eternal innocence that thinks no evil." Gulley becomes excited, feeling that Blake is handing him the truth in Oothoon-Eve, "all womankind," innocence before the fall, before giving herself to passion and knowledge. "Now the idea is this," he says, "that the soul of innocence, maidenhood, could never be destroyed so long as it lived in the free spirit. For it would always be new created in real virginity. The virginity of the soul which never allows experience to grow stale. Which never allows custom to hide the wonders of love"

(HM pp.95-96). While he is doodling and thinking, Coker is attempting to persuade Mr. Hickson that Gulley deserves more money for his paintings. Gulley is oblivious to this, although before they leave he pockets some valuable snuffboxes, which brings him another six months in jail, offering a nice contrast to his innocence-experience inspirations.

The section on "The Fall" occupies almost two-thirds of the novel; even though the painting has been destroyed, Gulley continues to work on it in his head, in and out of jail. As he thinks about it, it begins to change, so that even before he learns that Coker's mother has used it to patch the roof it has begun to turn into "The Creation."

Trouble with the Fall--it's not big enough. All at once I had the feel of the Fall. A real fall. Fire and brimstone. Blues and reds. And I saw green fire in the top left next the red tower. And the red tower opened to show a lot of squares full of blue and green flames. Symbols of something. Generation would do. Or a lot of little flames like men and women rushing together, burning each other up like coals. And then to carry the pattern upwards you could have white flowers, no, very pale green, moving among the stars, imagination born of love. Through generation to regeneration. Old antic propriety falling down on his nose and seeing constellations. Yes, the destruction of old fly button, the law by the force of nature and the unexpected entry of the devil as a lyrical poet singing new worlds for old. The old Adam rising to chase the blue-faced angels of Jehovah. And beget a lot of young devils on them.

A mighty spirit leaped from the land of
Albion,

Named Newton....

.
The fall into manhood, into responsibility, into sin.
Into freedom. Into wisdom. Into the light and the
fire. Every man his own candle. He sees by his own
flame, burning up his own guts. (HM pp.109-110)

Gulley first sees the forms, the colours and shapes, and then determines the meaning: "Symbols of something. Generation

would do." But it is unlikely that anyone viewing pale green flowers among stars would see "imagination born of love," "generation to regeneration." This necessary obscurity leads to the exasperation of the public and, as Hazard Adams pointed out, the accusation that the painter is speaking a "private language." What usually happens at this point is that the painter (or poet) declares rather obstinately that form is meaning; "Oh to hell, I said, with the meaning. What I want is those green flames on a pink sky." Golden Larsen sees Cary's purpose in the "manipulation" of Blake "to reveal the evolution of Gulley's career toward a proper synthesis of intuition and form."¹⁸⁰ "Intuition" as a sight of the truth, a channel to the "inside," is "meaning," and it can only be glimpsed "like the bright tail feathers of the bird courage." If nobody but Nobodaddy and Gulley know what he "means," then form must be allowed to suffice as meaning.

In the above passage Gulley advocates a Blakean anarchy,¹⁸¹ seeing the devil's "unexpected entry" as "a lyrical poet singing new worlds for old"; Blake's Satan was also the hero of his cosmos, "the man of imagination."¹⁸² "The old Adam," representing the male principle and regeneration through love, chases "the blue-faced angels of Jehovah." To both Gulley and Blake, angels represent the ^{followers} minions of society and are without imagination. And "blue," as Larsen points out, represents the suppression of passion and energy. He refers to the blue of Hitler's

¹⁸⁰ Larsen, p. 165.

¹⁸¹ According to Larsen, p. 177, there are four types of anarchy exemplified by Gulley, aesthetic, social, political and commercial.

¹⁸² Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 94.

eyes, the middle-class blue-suiters¹⁸³ and, we might add, the "True-Blue" porter at the Beeders and all the "blue noses." Newton, as an "arch-priest of the crucifixion," with his gravity and rationality ("God said, 'Let Newton be,' and there was Light"), representative of science, destroyed the old order, the aristocratic hierarchy. The fall into "responsibility, sin and freedom" let man create as God had done, enabled him to see by the light of his own wisdom or flame, instead of being dependent on God. This is all inherent in the green flames and pink skies, though only Gulley can tell us about it. One of the advantages of using the pen to describe the brush is that we can know what forms Gulley's intuitions take, so that even though the actual Fall is destroyed, it is still retained for us in both its actual and ideal forms.

When Gulley discovers that Coker's mother has used his painting to keep the rain from entering the houseboat roof, he is very distressed: "'I felt as if the top of my skull was floating off, I was quite feeble. To lose the Fall like this, suddenly; it was like being told your home and family had fallen down a hole in the ground....I really thought I should cry. I didn't know how I could live without the Fall'" (HM pp.158-159). But when Nosy gets excited about the sacrilege, his indignation amuses Gulley, who laughs. This terrifies Nosy; he believes Gulley is going "mad with grief."

"You are too g-good, Mr. Jimson, too n-noble. You oughtn't to f-forgive a crime like that--a crime against s-s-civilization. I'd like to cut that old woman's throat, I'd like to cut the

¹⁸³ Larsen, p. 170.

whole B-British throat. The d-dirty fffphilistines."

"Not exactly noble, Nosy," I said. For it's dangerous to be thought noble, when you're only being sensible. It causes fatty degeneration of the judgment. The fact is, I was sick of that god-damned picture."
(HM pp.160-161)

The resiliency of Gulley's spirit again asserts itself and his imagination proves more versatile than Nosy's "faith." (Later Gulley describes Nosy as having "no imagination. He was born to be an angel of grace" [HM p.221]). Suddenly finding himself unburdened, Gulley is free to begin anew. He denies that there are any merits to altering a painting:

"No, you want to start clear, with a clean canvas, and a bright new shining idea or vision or whatever you call the thing. A sort of coloured music in the mind."

And the very words made me grin all down my back. Certainly an artist has no right to complain of his fate. For he has great pleasures. To start new pictures. Even the worst artist that ever was, even a one-eyed mental deficient with the shakes in both hands who sets out to paint the chicken-house, can enjoy the first stroke. Can think, By God, look what I've done. A miracle. I have transformed a chunk of wood, canvas, etc., into a spiritual fact, an eternal beauty. I am God. Yes, the beginning, the first stroke on a picture, or a back fence, must be one of the keenest pleasures open to mankind. It's certainly the greatest that an artist can have. It's also the only one. And it doesn't last long-- usually about five minutes. Before the first problem shows its devil face. And then he's in hell for the next month or six months.... (HM p.161)

The artist can do everything for the first time, have a birthday twice a day, raise the dead and create the world with every blink of the eye, so that every stroke is the first stroke, and the last one, "the finisher," can't matter.

Ugly boys and girls who fall in love are like turnips with candles put in them, "miracles of beauty." Imagination, the "light of life," enables them to understand, to see behind

the turnip. It enables Gulley to laugh at the use of his painting to keep out the rain; it enabled him to respect his first woman, a one-eyed unwashed pig-faced turnip twenty years older than he was. He called her names, but realized that she had dignity and gave her a bouquet of flowers. She called him an angel then, "for the Fall had given her imagination too" (HM p.165) and she taught him that love is "something you have to make," that "it's all work. The curse of Adam." Making, creating and working all ensue from the fall, his and Adam's ("the f-f-fall into f-f-f-," as Nosy says). As Gulley talks to Nosy, both grow more excited.

I threw the water out of my hat and once more it fell down the opening of my waistcoat....But I was so pleased with the enjoyments of genius which to angels look like torment and insanity, that I said to myself, gurgle, oh navel; freeze, you belly; trickle and shiver, old spout, I haven't time to worry about your troubles. Down slaves, and weep. For I am the king of the castle. "Yes," I said, "the Fall into Freedom, into the real world among the everlasting forms, the solid. Solid as the visions of the ancient man."

.....
 "By God, I feel it now. For the first time in about two years since that bloody picture first got hold of me. Yes, I feel it--the solid forms of the imagination."

"Solid," cried Nosy. "Imagination." (HM p.166)

As an expression of solid joy, "Gurgle, oh navel" is supreme; although it is raining and the old Fall is keeping Coker and mother dry, Gulley is seeing with clarity the solid forms of the imagination, the everlasting in the real world. He enjoys what the square Boorjoy angels would see as torment and insanity.

This tsunami of creative energy carries him to the Beeders' port, where he wreaks characteristic destruction while they are

vacationing. He begins "The Raising of Lazarus," a painting to consist entirely of feet, on the living room wall:

Down on the left, in foreground, about a yard long and two feet high...a yellow pair, long and stringy, with crooked nails; then a black pair, huge and strong with muscles like lianas; a child's pair, pink and round, with nails like polished coral; an odd pair, one thick and calloused, with knotty toes curled into the dust, one shrunk and twisted, its heel six inches from the ground, standing on its toes, a cripple's feet, full of resolution and pain; then a coffee-coloured pair with a bandage, an old woman's feet, flat, long, obstinate, hopeless, clinging to the ground with their bellies like a couple of discouraged reptiles, and gazing at the sky with blind broken nails; then a pair of Lord's feet, pink in gold sandals with trimmed nails and green veins, and one big toe raised impatiently. (HM p.188)

These, thinks Gulley, are "good, good, good," but it is difficult to overlook the basic absurdity of a painting of feet. Gulley begins to work in earnest, bringing in models for their feet (he asks one sad old consumptive Negro where he got such "cheeky" feet). This results in word getting around that he has a rather spacious studio, and soon Abel and Lollie (sculptor and model-wife) arrive with a four-ton block of Hopton stone. He "pops" or pawns the Sèvres teapot, the silver, and even the chain from the W.C. so that he can eat while he works. Although he intends to redeem them all when he sells the Beeders the "Raising of Lazarus," he figures that perhaps it would be better if he "explained from a distance." He and Nosy, therefore, take a bus to the country, which serves as inspiration:

...knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon
the earth
To gratify sense unknown? trees, beasts and birds
unknown;
Unknown, not unperceived, spread in the infinite
microscope,
In places yet unvisited by the voyager?

That is, until the voyager arrives. With the eye of imagination. And sees the strange thing. And throws a loop of creation around it.

(HM p.213)

It is not with the Corporeal or Vegetative Eye that these new and wondrous things are seen, but only with the Gulley-eye, the eye that lassoes a tree, sees it "bulging out into the moon as solid as whales" and thinks "By God...no one has seen a tree till this moment," or the eye that can see in a departing bus "a comet like the flaming world." And the "forest" he and Nosy sleep in turns out to be "a dozen trees round a petrol pump" (HM pp.213-214).

How do you know but every bird that cuts the
airy way,

Is an immense world of delight, closed by your
senses five?

Yes, I thought, fixing my eye on a superior pub.
The angels must always be surprised when some man
dives headfirst into dirt, and then just by a
twist of his imagination comes out again as clean
as a comet with two wings bigger than the biggest
in all heaven.

(HM p.218)

This relates back to the Fall upward, or the Fall into Freedom, to Blake's idea that the road of excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom. We are reminded of Satan, Blake's hero, who falls from Heaven into Hell, knowledge and freedom, and who also perverts man as does the artist, giving him insights into other ways of thinking.

At present, while musing on larks and airy ways, Gulley is planning a small fiddle to pick up some change for Nosy and himself: he has bought some postcards of the Brighton sights and churches, placed them in plain white envelopes, and is engaged in selling them to respectable looking people as "beauties of Brighton. Nice new views. For artists only,"

at half a crown apiece. This activity counterpoints well with the "immense world of delight closed by your senses five." The buyers of Gulley's wares appreciate these postcards more while they are in the envelope and the imagination. Mosy is interested in why Gulley got four shillings for postcards worth only two-pence, and Gulley attributes it to "luxury trade":

"Due to the imagination. Ships, motors, wars, bankers, factories, swindles, taxes and ramps are all due to the imagination. For or against. A man who cuts a throat because of imagination is hanged by a judge who is appointed to keep imagination in order. If it wasn't for imagination," I said, "we shouldn't need any police or government. The world would be as nice and peaceful and uninteresting as a dead dog full of dead fleas."

(HM pp.217-218)

As it is, persons like Gulley are very live fleas and government is a very live dog; it is unfortunate in one way that there are so few fleas of Gulley's sort, the really unobtrusive and gentle kind who just live off the host and do not really hurt it. The other sort, the real criminals and hypocrites and law-breakers cause the itch that causes the shakedowns that cause people like Gulley to be thrown in jail for imagination (a serious infraction of the local laws). Golden Larsen calls this last venture of Gulley's an example of "commercial anarchy"¹⁸⁴ and so it is viewed by the local pornographic post-card dealer who beats Gulley so thoroughly that he is hospitalized. The anarchic exploits of Gulley are a threat to the established organizations and institutions, including ^{that} of the outraged local dealer.

Just before Gulley is beaten (another of the striking juxtapositions Cary utilizes for contrast and irony) he muses about the eternal things: "...the world of imagination...is

¹⁸⁴ Larsen, p. 187.

the world of eternity. There exists in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of Nature," says Gulley, quoting Blake. "And, I thought, in the works of Gulley Jimson. Such as red Eves and green Adams, blue whales and spotted giraffes, twenty-three feet high. Lions and tigers, and all the dreams of prophets whose imagination sustains the creation, and recalls it from the grave of memory" (HM p.219). Or, if it were not for prophets with imagination, storytellers to whom the truth was something other than empirical fact, the creation would not be half so exciting, nor would it have happened. What lasts is not what happened, for the memory is faulty and dull; what is permanent is what has grabbed the imagination and what is permanently exciting is what has been coloured by the imagination.

The short-lived "Raising of Lazarus" is to be supplanted by "The Creation," the representative work of The Horse's Mouth. It is the culmination of Gulley's movement toward the epic form:

...I knew that I had the biggest idea of my life. It had begun from those trees on our first night in the country. Something bigger than the new Fall. A Creation. And I saw it about fifteen feet by twenty, the biggest thing I had ever seen. It would need a special studio, a special canvas, or wall; a full equipment of ladders, scaffolds, etc.; and buckets full of colour.

This thing grew on me all the time I was in hospital, till I dreamed blue whales, like gasometers; and red women growing out of the ground...; and trees putting out their apples to the wind, like little breasts. (HM p.221)

When he is released from hospital he returns to his boat-house which Coker still occupies, and she orders him to bed and takes away his trousers. But with "cold hands of creation" down his back, he can't stay still.

Even one day in bed was putting a cramp on my ideas, tucking them up in a tight parcel. My imagination was working inwards instead of outwards; it was fitting things into a pattern, instead of letting them grow together. If I stayed in the boatshed for a week under Cokey, I said, I could say good-bye to my Creation--it would turn into a little square picture with four corners and a middle. However big I made it on the wall, it would be a piece of art work. A put-up job. A jigsaw of the back room. Whereas a real picture is a flower, a geyser, a fountain, it hasn't got a pattern but a Form. It hasn't got corners and middle but an Essential Being. And this picture of mine, the Creation, had to be a creation. A large event. And no one can feel largely except in the open air. (HM pp.231-232)

On one of his prowls, in an overcoat and pulled-up socks (looking like "a squire in fours"), he ventures down an alley "on principle" and there discovers an old building with a wall that puts him "all in a sweat"; his knees are trembling and he thinks, "Jesus Christ...suppose it was true. Suppose it's meant for me" (HM p.233). He finds out from an old man that it is condemned but that it can be rented. Gulley whittles him down to four-and-threepence, then runs back to Coker's, snatches a chair, a frying pan and his colour box and is back at the chapel in five minutes, puts the chair in the middle of the floor, the colour box and fry pan in the pulpit. When the old man tries to kick him out, Gulley claims that he has "taken possession"; "Essential furniture. Cooking utensils and tools of trade" (HM p.234). The wall is twenty-five by forty:

"And I felt giddy. A bit too much for the old pipes. I sat down and laughed. And then I began to cry. Well, I said, you old ballacher, you've rolled into port at last. You've got your break. First the idea and then the wall. God has been good to you. That is to say, you've had a bit of luck. Two bits....Oh Lord, I said, only let me fix that black shape and those fat reds before some damn fool talks to me about people or money or weather." (HM p.234).

He hires some "assistants" from the Polytechnic art class, lets Nosy prop up the roof and wire for electricity, gets some money from Mr. Beeder by drawing an "early Jimson," a sketch for the Bath, "bearing on its face all those indubitable marks which as the crickets say, testify to that early freshness of vision and bravura of execution which can never be imitated by a hand which in acquiring a mature decision of purpose, has lost, nevertheless, that je ne sais quoi, without which perhaps no work of art is entitled to the name of genius" (HM p.255). He has tried to elicit an actual early Jimson from Sara, but she refused to part with it. It is a testament to Gulley's innocence and naïveté that the simple expedient of imitating "Early Jimson" never occurred to him until so late. It is also unfortunate, as his visit with Sara is abbreviated by his pushing her down the stairs, another "fall," and Sara's final one as it turns out.

Treating his assistants to a beer in the pub, Gulley has just announced that it is his birthday, "Due to art," when he hears over the radio that Mrs. Monday, "victim of a murderous attack," has died. Gulley leaves the pub and returns to work on "The Creation," using his grief as inspiration. The movement is from his birthday to Sara's death to a new creation.

His mind wanders as he paints the whale's eyes,

...so something, I don't know what...gazing at me like all the grief and glory in the world... and they brought tears to my eyes...and I didn't know whether I was more upset about Sara or the whale....Who would have thought that at my age and experience she could take me by the throat like this, and choke me? Boohoo. The whale looked at me with such something or other that

I couldn't contain myself. The tears ran down my nose, and I said, It's a masterpiece. (HM pp.280-281)

It is difficult to ascertain whether Gulley is talking about the whale or Sara in his delirium, whether he weeps for sorrow or joy or both. Hoffman sees Sara as reappearing "symbolically as the she-whale nursing her calf. The fish, the primitive and Christian symbol of regeneration, is linked with the resurrection theme in the form of a she-whale, represented in the painting with a woman's head."¹⁸⁵ Like Eve, Sara by her fall creates the possibility of new life. "Though Gulley frees himself by his imagination and his art, he is not free of [Sara] as a human being; it is Sara, instead, who frees him that he might continue to create."¹⁸⁶

Sara and Gulley converse as he paints; she tells him to go to bed because he is sick and he tells her to get back to her "nice warm grave": both are characteristic injunctions, and in keeping with the life-death theme, Sara frees him, though, by giving the police ("death") a misleading description of her assassin as "A man about six foot high, with red hair and moustache, dressed like a seaman. Spoke with a foreign accent. An anchor tattooed on his right hand. Large blue scar as if from gunpowder on left cheek," and Gulley observes how like Sara this is "to diddle a man with her last breath" (HM p.284). This description is also a triumph for Sara, perhaps her most striking display of imagination.

All the while he paints on, through policemen, firemen on

¹⁸⁵ Hoffman, Comedy of Freedom, p. 95.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

ladders, councillors and indignant assistants. One of his last coherent thoughts has to do with curly kale:

What it wants in the top left corner is a lively passage in a strong green. Say a field of cabbage. Yes, curly kale. After all, curly kale, as a work of the imagination, beats Shakespeare. The green, the tender, the humorous imagination. When the old undreamt curly kale, he smiled in his beard.

(HM p.286)

This is distinctly reminiscent of Zorba saying "Didn't it strike you...that there are such things as mules in this world?"¹⁸⁷

Curly kale is beautiful, felicitous and grabs Gulley's imagination. He is glad there is such a thing in this world as curly kale.

The wall on which he paints was condemned long ago; his platform waggles,

And just then the whale smiled. Her eyes grew bigger and brighter and she bent slowly forward as if she wanted to kiss me...."My dear girl," I said, "my petsie--do be careful--remember your delicate constitution."

And all at once the smile broke in half, the eyes crumpled, and the whole wall fell slowly away from my brush; there was a noise like a thousand sacks of coal falling down the Monument, and then nothing but dust....When the dust began to clear I saw through the cloud about ten thousand angels in caps, helmets, bowlers and even one top hat, sitting on walls, dustbins, gutters, roofs, window sills and other people's cabbages, laughing. That's funny, I thought, they've all seen the same joke. God bless them. It must be a work of eternity, a chestnut, a horse-laugh.

(HM p.287)

Like Satan, Gulley falls (he perceives the heavenly host, the "angels," laughing at him). The fall is from art into life, the world of sordid realities. The destructive nature of creation is again iterated. He has painted his last stroke having

¹⁸⁷ Nikos Kazantzakis, Zorba the Greek (New York, 1952), p. 172.

suffered "the" stroke. Typically, he thinks he has only cricked his neck and wonders why Nosy's face is out of shape and why Jorky's mouth is under his ear and whistling sideways. When he is told that he has broken a blood vessel, he says "The stroke at last. It only shows that you've got to be careful. Or that it doesn't make much difference, anyway" (HM p.288). Nosy is again indignant (he is the Eternal Indignant, the Outraged Citizen) and Gulley tells him again to get rid of his sense of justice, adding that he too once had a sense of justice:

"I resented seeing my mother scrub the floor while her worsers went to take the air in Heaven-sent bonnets and shining two-horse chariots that were a glory to the Lord. Works of passion and imagination. Even when I was a young man older than you, I didn't like being kicked up the gutter by cod-eyed money-changers warm from the banquets of reason, the wine of the masters, and the arms of beauty, that hoor of paradise. (HM p.288)

Walls are Gulley's salvation: his recompense for not being rich; his last wall is his "last love," his "crowning joy." Walls have "been good" to him:

"The angel, in fact, that presided at my birth--her name was old Mother Groper or something like that--village midwife....Said little creature born of joy and mirth. Though I must admit that poor Papa was so distracted with debt and general misery that I daresay he didn't know what he was doing.

And poor Mamma, yes, she was glad to give him what she could, if it didn't cost anything and didn't wear out the family clothes. And I daresay she was crying all the time for pity of the poor munny, and herself too. Go love without the help of anything on earth; and that's real horse meat." (HM p.289)

Even in his mental wanderings Gulley maintains his attitude. His sister, who had also been "born of joy and mirth," killed herself, but only those with a sense of justice are appalled.

Earlier, when an inspiration flowered, Gulley had gone into the following monologue:

Yes, I thought, I'm enjoying myself. The famous Gulley Jimson, whom nobody knows, is perceived laughing like an old goat and skipping like a young ram. Who cares, I said. The advantage of being old and ugly is that you needn't care a damn for anybody. Or even somebody. You can grin when you feel like grinning. And skip when you feel skippy....Second childhood. People make allowances, including yourself. Which is you in particular. Anonymous you.

'I have no name:
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee!

(HM pp.110-111)

Senex bis puer (an old man is twice a child): in the ambulance Gulley goes back to his childhood; when he is creating and joyful, he returns to the state of infancy, "but two days old," where the world is new and delightful. He has nothing to complain of. In death's carriage, the nun tells him not to talk and he asks her,

"How don't you enjoy life, Mother. I should laugh all round my neck if my shirt weren't a bit on the tight side."

"It would be better for you to pray."

"Same thing mother." (HM p.289)

While he is seriously ill ("not so seriously as you're well") he can perceive that others are not enjoying as they should. Although like Lear, his button needs undoing, Gulley's demise is far from tragic. His urge to laugh does not brand him as a clown, but as irrepressible, as one who sees the comedy of the circumstances. Prayer and laughter are equated here, as are faith and imagination in To Be A Pilgrim, as fear and joy in A Fearful Joy. Cary's characters are always wanting to laugh

and cry simultaneously, and perhaps this is the result of having lived an emotional and dedicated life, a work of passion and imagination in itself.

Chapter V

CARY'S OWN IMAGINATION

Much has been said thus far on the subject of the various forms of imagination illustrated by Cary's characters; little has been said about Cary's creations, about his own very volatile imagination. The wide diversity of characters that he has created is the most obvious testament to his ability. The fact that he utilizes a first-person narrative method is even more illustrative of his skill, not only to conceive of these characters, but to become them, to get inside their skin and speak for them. Durrell's Alexandria Quartet is the only contemporary achievement which begins to parallel Cary's work; although other authors have attempted multi-volume projects, few do so utilizing the first-person point of view, and fewer yet from several widely divergent first-person narrations. Cary not only speaks from the Sara Monday, Thomas Wilcher and Gulley Jimson esophagus and intellect in the first trilogy, but manages, in a second trilogy, to speak from within three other entirely different characters. Some excerpts from Herself Surprised, To Be A Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth, seen in juxtaposition, will more readily illustrate the extent of his accomplishment than would several pages of praise. Compare Sara's description of Wilcher with his description of her:

He was not at all what I expected. He was a little man with a bald head and round black spectacles. His nose was very short, just like a baby's, and he had a long blue upper lip, like a priest, which made me say: "You're one of the arguers." He had long thin red lips and the under one stuck out and curled over, which made him look obstinate and sulky. His chin was blue as if it had been shot full of gunpowder and it had a very nice split in the middle. His neck was blue too, and there were scars on the back and I could see, too, that the poor man...had suffered terribly from boils. His face was pale yellow all but a little mauve, rhubarb color, over the bones of the cheek. I thought with these colors and lips and something in his eye, he had hot blood still, and sure enough within the month the poor man had a boil on his behind which gave him no peace. But he wouldn't lie up and he would just sit on a rubber cushion and bear it. I don't know why men should be afflicted in this way; perhaps it's because of the hotness of their blood which my mother used to say was an affliction God gave them to balance that stupid thing which is such trouble to women and which nearly frightened me out of my soul when I was a child, not knowing to expect it and thinking it was God's punishment for some sin. And indeed I suppose it was for the sin of Eve and if so, she was fairly caught, as I was, for I too was one of those who can put their conscience to sleep when they like, just to please themselves.

(HS pp.173-174)

...Sara was a living woman, with a certain character; she saved my soul alive. What I had heard of her, when Jaffery hired her, was this, "A widow who has been living with a painter and when he deserted her tried to pass off bad checks. A very doubtful character, but clean, good-tempered, and a good cook. She'll take a small wage and you can always lock up your checkbook."

And I admit that when I first saw Sara at Tolbrook I felt some curiosity and a certain attraction. Every fallen woman attracts me. And Sara, at forty-six, was still a handsome woman, fresh, buxom, with fine eyes and beautiful teeth. Her broad nose, that mark of the sensual temperament, did not displease me. I was not then fifty, and my blood still had its fevers. I thought of Sara, "A nice armful, and no doubt ready for anything." Then when I saw her excellent old-fashioned manners, I thought, "And she would know how to keep her place. I could have her without upsetting the household," etc.

I will admit that in that time of my darkness Sara, at first sight, made my fingers, etc., tingle to pinch her, and so on. But I did not do so, in case, after all, Sara should misunderstand me and give notice, and leave me once more without a housekeeper, when I was almost driven mad with domestic responsibilities.

(TBP p.28)

Finally, Gulley's descriptions of Sara and Wilcher:

...when we came to Sara's door it was new painted, and the door knob shining like rolled gold. Sara all over, I thought, you can see she's adopted that door knob--loves it like herself. Rub the little darling up and give it a chance to look its best. Sara for cleaning and washing. Loved slapping things about. Like a cat. Almost hear her purr. I didn't know whether to draw her or to bite her. And I did give her one with the back brush which made her jump. Oh Gulley, what was that for? Just to let you know there's somebody else in the world. Good sketch I did of her--with the same back brush. Right arm in the air. Elbow cutting up against the window. Hair over left shoulder catching the light. Lime green outside. Head bent over to the left--line of the cheek against the hair. Lips pushed out. Eyes dropped. Looking at her breasts. Serious expression. Worship. (HM p.23)

Wilcher was a rich lawyer, with a face like a bad orange. Yellow and blue. A little grasshopper of a man. Five feet of shiny broadcloth and three inches of collar. Always on the jump. Inside or out. In his fifties. The hopping fifties. And fierce as a mad mouse. Genus, Boorjwar; species, Blackcoatus Begoggledus Ferocissimouse. All eaten up with lawfulness and rage; ready to bite himself for being so respectable. (HM p.175)

The content of these passages is roughly similar, yet the styles differ radically. Sara speaks in long, breathless, distracted and almost non-sensical sentences, Wilcher's boils reminding her of something her mother once said, in turn reminding her of a childhood belief, which engenders a brief bit of homely philosophy. Wilcher speaks in a highly formalized, rational, business-like style, with many etceteras, qualifying phrases, and abstractions, all very precisely and decorously penned. Gulley speaks as he thinks and paints, in short, colourful, fragmented strokes, with any subject fit matter for contemplation and awareness; they are "noticers." Cary must have had in himself a vast fund of observations in order that he might portray those of so many different characters.

Cary's controlling hand is evident only in passages composed of similar subject matter. However, it is difficult to find such passages, for in actuality, contacts with one another are nearly all that Sara, Wilcher and Gulley have in common. Inevitably, Sara is either discussing herself, men, or the household, while Wilcher's interests have to do with himself, his relatives, the past, religion, Tolbrook. Gulley is interested in everything and everything leads back to his art. By and large both content and style in the separate works are distinct and indiginous to the narrator rather than to Cary.

In the African novels, Cary's achievement consists of being able to portray an African native's motivations, desires, aspirations and thought processes with credibility and ease. Mister Johnson, Akande Tom, Louis Aladai have kinships with Cary's more British savages, but they are all still distinctly African. Their portrayal is aided by the fact that each has been somewhat Westernized, and each is characterized by a vital and active imagination. The skill is involved in selecting the nuances which differentiate the black man's modes of thought and methods of imagery from the white man's. Cary's rendering of Mister Johnson's stenographic abilities, for example, illustrates Johnson's ability to be delighted by simple things (the letter S), his artistic tendency toward creativity (an original letter S), and his native ability to transform a mundane, plodding task into something wonderful (a beautiful letter S):

Johnson glances at the report and reads "fanaticism. Schemes for the amalgamation have therefore--" At the sight of the capital S (S is his favourite capital), he smiles, takes up his pen and, having completed the word fanaticism, wipes the nib, dips it carefully in the ink, tries the point on a piece of clean foolscap, squares his elbows, puts out his

tongue, and begins the fine upstroke. His ambition is always to make a perfect S in one sweeping movement. He frequently practises S's alone for half an hour on end. He looks at the result now and smiles with delight. It is beautiful. The thickening of the stroke as it turns over the small loop makes a sensation. He feels it like a jump of joy inside him. But the grand sweep, the smooth, powerful broadening of the lower stroke is almost too rich to be borne. He gives a hop in his chair, coming down hard on his bottom, laughs, puts his head on one side, and licks his lips as if he is tasting a good thing.

(MJ pp.24-25)

Difficult to isolate, there is a quality in the above description which gives it an air of being inimitably Mister Johnson, his own experience, peculiar to him and different from similar experiences of Gulley or Charley.

In the novels of childhood, Cary enters still another country of the mind. Although he has lived there himself, as he had lived in Africa, the accomplishment of rendering the experience with credibility and excellence is still an achievement of some worth. His ability to capture the joy and wonder of the child's world is well illustrated by the autobiographical novel, A House of Children. The adult mind yet remembers the world seen through the child's eye and renders it with the ability of the trained vision, so that Cary can say "we sailed and flew":

The other day, in an inland town, I saw through an open window, a branch of fuschia waving stiffly up and down in the breeze; and at once I smelt the breeze salty, and had a picture of a bright curtain flapping inwards and, beyond the curtain, dazzling sunlight on miles of crinkling water. I felt, too, expectancy so keen that it was like a physical tightening of the nerves; the very sense of childhood. I was waiting for a sail, probably my first sail into the Atlantic. Somebody or something must have fixed that moment upon my dreaming senses, so that I still possess it. Small children are thought happy, but for most of the time they do not even live consciously, they exist; they drift through sensations as a pantomime fairy passes through coloured veils and changing lights. That moment was grasped

out of the flux; a piece of life, unique and eternal, and the sail also, is still my living delight.

It was Freeman, a little man whom we called Pinto, who said to us, on that sail or another: "I suppose the fish take us for a bird," and at once one saw oneself with a fish's sideways glance, darting through the pale iridescent firmament like a transparent pearl, which is a fish's sky, just as a swallow, with short wings, appeared to us in a sunset twilight, as it dived after a maybug. The boat was a bird and a boat at the same time; we sailed and flew; we were Hawkins, Drake, Hudson and a sleepy whale.... (HC pp.9-10)

Cary's dual vision, his ability to remember scenes as he saw them when a child, illustrates the most sophisticated and yet genuine form of imagination, sympathetic and understanding, naive and fresh as a child's.

Robert Bloom finds Cary's ability to efface himself as an author a "dubious dramatic ideal," feeling that the novelist must "speak in his own voice" in order that "he may evaluate life as well as 'render' it."¹⁸⁸ In permitting his characters to speak for themselves and to act as they would rather than ought, Cary seems to Bloom to be "disclaiming responsibility," "fending off commitment,"¹⁸⁹ passing the moral buck. One can only reply that Cary is a creative artist, and not a philosopher or preacher. By giving us creation without comment, he allows the reader to engage in moral evaluations until he is "blue" if he so chooses. But better than this (as far as Cary is concerned) is the creative reader who sympathizes, identifies, intuits:

Just as an author's imagined character...can give him a new intuition about a real world, so characters in a book can by sympathy reveal a new truth to a reader. Without this power of sympathy, there is no revelation. Sympathy is essential to the reader and the writer.

(AR p.150)

¹⁸⁸ Bloom, The Indeterminate World, pp. x-xi.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. x, 8.

By creating a new reality, different from the world we live in but similar to it, Cary allows us to compare and contrast, evaluate and judge not only moral and ethical codes, but other systems of belief as well. As Walter Allen sees it, "his novels, taken together, are the expression of a view of life interesting and important in its own right, a view of life so considered and coherent as to be a whole system of belief."¹⁹⁰ Like J.R.R. Tolkien's fantastic imaginary kingdom, Cary's is so vast and realistic that it cannot be discounted as a mere product of imagination. It relates to the real world, indeed, is a real world. And because it is perceived in all its dynamic quality by the creative reader, it does not stagnate as might a mere disquisition on manners and morals, a Ten Commandments of literature.

Cary functions in the realm of the creative imagination, as do his characters. In Blakean terms, he operates within the fallen world of temporality; only imagination, which caused the fall, can return us to eternity. The intuition must find its form, but must not fall prey to the abstractions which can kill it. Joyce Cary, by creating new lives, new worlds, gives us a concrete reality free from deadening abstraction because it is the immediate present of a living individual.

¹⁹⁰ Allen, Joyce Cary, p. 6.

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APPENDIX 1

The Mental Traveller¹⁹¹

I travel'd thro' a Land of Men,
A Land of Men & Women too,
And heard & saw such dreadful things
As cold Earth wanderers never knew

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They are his meat, they are his drink;
He feeds the Beggar & the Poor
And the wayfaring Traveller:
For ever open is his door.

The Mental Traveller (cont'd.)

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

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

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

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

And to allay his freezing Age
The Poor Man takes her in his arms
The cottage fades before his sight,
The Garden & its lovely Charms.

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

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

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

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

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

The Mental Traveller (cont'd.)

By various arts of Love & Hate,
Till the wide desart planted o'er
With Labyrinths of wayward Love,
Where roam the Lion, Wolf, & Boar,

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

The trees bring forth sweet Extacy
To all who in the desart roam;
Till many a City there is Built,
And many a pleasant Shepherd's home.

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

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

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