

CREATIVE IMAGINATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
DISTORTION IN JOYCE CARY'S CHARACTERS

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CREATIVE IMAGINATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTORTION
IN JOYCE, CARY'S CHARACTERS

BY



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to consider the concept of creativity in Joyce Cary's approach to character. Cary's major definitive characters are possessed of creative imagination, a quality which enables them to shape reality in a unique and characteristic way. Although some major characters may be perceived as archetypes - the artist, the woman, the conservative, the politician - each is very much an individual. Cary does not create inexplicable characters approaching in complexity the dimensions of real life people; instead, his major characters may best be categorized as psychologically grotesque. This results from their being driven by personal fantasy or creative imagination to structure a private world. An associated theme is the multiplicity of reality; that is, reality differs for each character because of his creative imagination. This consideration dictates Cary's ultimate choice of the trilogy format which challenges the reader to evaluate each character's vision of reality and judge each character by the quality of his vision. For some characters - Aissa, Mr. Johnson, Sara and Gulley - creative imagination is a source of joy and strength; for Chester Nimmo, it is a source of evil. Cary's artistic development is largely determined by his gradual absorption with characters possessing creative imagination. His early works are marred by the separation of character from idea, from an excessive amount of exposition. But when character and idea become one, then Cary's novels are important works of art.

INTRODUCTION

Joyce Cary's novels express ideas about a variety of subjects including religion, politics, cultures in conflict, art and society. Such thematic diversity invites numerous critical approaches. One thematic concern, however, does tend to dominate, and influences his method of characterization and ultimate choice of structural form. This central preoccupation is with imagination; his most typical and memorable characters are possessed of such creative vitality that they share the artist's gift of shaping a private world. The theme is not immediately apparent in his two earliest novels, Aissa Saved and An American Visitor, but a pattern may be seen to emerge as the novelist experiments with idea and form, faint and shadowy, but illuminating when examined in the context of his definitive works. The direction of Cary's development becomes clear in Mister Johnson, the novel which first crystallizes his characteristic style and form. In this novel, Cary celebrates the power of creative imagination. He is very much aware that an external reality exists and it does infringe - painfully at times - upon the lives of even his most imaginative creations; but his most typical characters can transform reality and impose upon it a special and characteristic significance. Cary explores different aspects of

this same theme in his novels, most notably in his art trilogy and his political trilogy.

Walter Allen's perceptive comments upon Cary support this thesis:

The creative imagination: Cary is its novelist and celebrant. His characters are impelled by fantasies personal in the deepest sense, unique to each one of them, which must be translated into action. Life about them is, as it were, so much raw material that must be shaped according to their fantasies, which are never seen as fantasies because they are so fundamental to the characters who are moved by them. And the shaping fantasy, creative imagination, is something belonging to man by virtue of his being man.¹

In exploring this major theme and the technical framework chosen to support it, I would like to refer to three of the African novels: Aissa Saved, An American Visitor, and Mister Johnson; the art trilogy: Herself Surprised, To Be A Pilgrim, and The Horse's Mouth; and the political trilogy: Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord, and Not Honour More. Cary's other novels are The African Witch, Castle Corner, Charley is My Darling, A House of Children, The Moonlight, A Fearful Joy, and The Captive and the Free. I have chosen to confine analysis to specific novels because they range from his early to his later, definitive works and therefore provide insight into his development. The novels selected deal with various aspects of the theme of creative imagination. Analysis of all Cary's novels would be relevant, for creative imagination is one of his recurrent themes. But to sharpen the focus upon this theme and keep the subject matter as succinct as possible, I have made this

selection. Because the list of selected novels is not inordinately long, they may be discussed in relative depth. In summary, the nine novels selected for concentrated analysis reveal Cary's scope as a novelist for these encompass both his rudimentary efforts and his greatest works.

One task of literary criticism is to reveal the special quality or vision of the individual novelist. Cary's remarkable gift is his ability to create a gallery of fascinating characters; therefore, this aspect of his work invites critical attention. Although any mention of Joyce Cary's works automatically brings to mind Cary's most colorful protagonists -- his delightful rogue figures such as Mister Johnson, Gulley Jimson and Sara Monday -- his works do contain numerous one-dimensional figures who nevertheless serve a necessary function. The chief focus of this thesis will be upon Cary's major characters, whom I shall attempt to establish as psychologically grotesque, but it is perhaps convenient at this point to classify the basic types of characters to serve as a convenient future reference. Indeed, many critics have attempted to classify the various kinds of characters who appear in fiction. In his well-known book, Aspects of the Novel, E. M. Forster groups characters into 'flat' and 'round'. Flat characters may be described in a sentence or two while 'round' characters assume the proportions of real life people. Forster's preference for 'round' characters has aroused the ire of many critics. Edwin Muir, in The Structure of the Novel,

points out that if flat characters were omitted from literature, . . . "we take away at least three-quarters of the figures in English fiction, as well as whole leagues of the England of the imagination".² 'Flat' characters are indispensable in any novel; they are easily recognizable, frequently comic and creatures of habit. People in real life who act automatically or reduce themselves to role playing certainly seem 'flat'. Therefore, if a novel reflects life, it is not surprising that it does contain 'flat' characters. Cary's novels are no exception. For example, in his African works, the sheer number of characters introduced boggles the mind. But Cary is attempting to suggest a bustling populous world of two conflicting cultures; it would be ridiculous to expect his novels to describe all of them in depth.

Categories of fictional characters are not confined simply to 'flat' and 'round'. Other useful terms range from the lay figure who may simply be a name, or even a body without a name; the stock figure such as the villain or buffoon; the grotesque figure such as Hugo's hunchback or many of Dickens's figures, including psychological grotesques; the caricature figure whose eccentricity is highlighted; the simple type, and the complex type; or 'real' characters who may be sub-divided into those who are explicable within the novel and those who transcend the confines of the fictional world so that they can never be fully known. Many of these kinds of characters do inhabit Cary's imaginary universe. Of the above categories, Cary makes especially intriguing use of the psychologically

grotesque character. In fact, he elevates him into prominence by choosing him as a major figure in many of his novels, notably in his trilogies. The meaning of 'grotesque' as applied to Cary's characters will not emerge fully until the novels are discussed separately. But the fundamental meaning is that characters are improbable in the sense that one has difficulty in equating them with people one meets in daily life. Mister Johnson, Sara Monday, Gulley Jimson, Thomas Wilcher, Chester Nimmo and James Letter may all be more satisfactorily understood once this is realized. Traditionally, most novelists relegated comic or grotesque figures to minor roles, a tendency which may stem partially from Shakespearean Drama where low life figures provide "comic relief". But Cary chooses to modify the traditional pattern and uses serious and sensible characters as foils for his peculiar protagonists. In the distorted worlds of Cary's trilogies, sensible people appear grotesque and oddly out of tune with the reality depicted by the narrators. Because most of the major figures are psychologically grotesque and act as narrators, the worlds of these novels are affected by their unusual viewpoints.

There is a distinct relationship between Cary's interest in creative imagination and his creation of psychologically grotesque characters. I do not believe that Cary deliberately devised these grotesque characters as a technique to emphasize his concept of creative imagination, although his use of them could be regarded as a technique. Instead it seems that, for Cary, the force of imagination which impelled his characters to create unique philosophies of reality

simultaneously distorted the characters, making them grotesque. The quality of distortion is relative to the character involved ranging from Mister Johnson's desire to become an Englishman, Sara's manipulations of men, Gulley's artistic endeavours, Wilcher's obsession with the past, Nimmo's political machinations, to James Latter's insane code of honour. Wilcher is a problematic example of a character possessing creative imagination, as I intend to expound more fully in dealing with To Be A Pilgrim. For Wilcher, in his own story, denies that he is creative or imaginative and is obsessed by his lack of these positive qualities. I propose to show that Wilcher's own view of himself is inadequate and that he is, paradoxically, a creative conservative. James Latter is another character whose existence complicates Cary's usual approach to creative imagination. Generally, it is a positive attribute giving the character strength and buoyancy. In the case of James Latter, however, one is forced to speak of his corrupt imagination in order to distinguish it from the typical form of imagination possessed by Cary's characters. In fact, Cary sometimes adapts his concepts of creative imagination to the tone of the novel he is writing - whether it is tragi-comic, comic or predominantly tragic.

It may be necessary to distinguish between imagination as a force giving rise to personal fantasies which may be (i) creative or positive and life-giving and (ii) corrupt or negative and leading to stagnation or evil. Mister Johnson, Sara Monday and Gulley Jimson clearly belong to the first, the positive category, and James Latter

belongs to the negative category. Chester Nimmo and Thomas Wilcher lie somewhere between these two extremes. These complexities are not surprising in the works of an experimental, developing novelist. Cary's ability to explore the diverse facets of creative imagination contributes to his stature as a writer.

My emphasis upon the originality and psychological distortion of Cary's characters may make my next observation about some of the creative characters both surprising and perplexing. For a number of Cary's protagonists are also archetypes. This is true of Sara Monday, Gulley Jimson, Thomas Wilcher and Chester Nimmo. Sara is an archetypal female; Gulley, an archetypal artist; Wilcher, an archetypal conservative; and Nimmo, an archetypal politician. To resolve this apparent contradiction, I would suggest that characters may be viewed from a number of perspectives; they may be accepted on the basis of the suspension of disbelief as people one could meet in the real world, and also accepted as symbols for ideas larger than any single individual. The quality of each character's creative imagination makes possible specific kinds of abstraction. While each is a psychologically distorted and original character on one level, each may also be viewed, through abstraction, as a symbol of a larger idea, as an archetype.

This may be illustrated by a comparison of Sara Monday and Gulley Jimson. Sara is a symbol of primeval woman - always seeking a home and a mate; Gulley symbolizes the spirit of artistic creation which perseveres in spite of all obstacles. Both characters

are exaggerated and larger than life. Their imaginative powers are ultimately responsible for their fascinating distortion, their psychological grotesqueness. In the case of Sara and Gulley, Cary wishes to celebrate their quality of creative imagination. Both possess a capacity for shaping the raw material of their environment to their own characteristic ends. Both are confronted by problems of change and instability: Sara's homes break up; Gulley's walls crumble. Physically, Sara grows old and Gulley, full of rheumatism and pains, is sixty-seven years old when he begins his story. Yet in vitality and spirit, they do not age. Cary suggests that they both possess a special gift - a gift of imagination. The facts of existence - cruelty, violence, pain - are constants, but individual reactions may differ. He admires the way Sara and Gulley respond. Each embodies a separate archetype and yet both characters manifest creative imagination. Creative imagination has such strikingly different results because it is a power which each individual uses to create a private world; both Gulley and Sara are creative but their views of reality have nothing in common; what they share is the power of creating a unique world.

Cary's choice of undeveloping, unchanging characters, like Gulley and Sara, has implications for his choice of structure. There is no crucial dramatic scene to indicate any qualitative change in his characters, no experience which alters personality. Had Cary depicted developing characters, his structural form most probably would have been the dramatic novel in which conflict issues from

character and is frequently resolved because a character recognizes his errors, gains personal insight, and achieves a greater degree of maturity. A tightly-knit structure is common. Time plays a crucial role: it is slowed or accelerated to diminish or increase tension. Towards the end of a dramatic novel, time is generally accelerated to generate a maximum amount of tension which is then released through some pivotal incident. But Cary is not concerned with developing characters; therefore, his novels are not tightly contrived or dramatic. Rather, they tend to be loose and episodic. His fascination with characters outside established society - the picaron or rogue figure - occasionally determines his choice of picaresque form as in Mister Johnson, Herself Surprised and The Horse's Mouth. By definition, the picaresque novel describes the adventures of a picaron and incidentally provides insights into different classes of society. Cary's novels do not offer the pleasure and excitement of wondering what will happen next but they do offer the pleasure and excitement of what is happening now. There may be periods of tension when time speeds up: for example, in The Horse's Mouth, when Gulley moves into the Beeder's flat and proceeds to demolish it, one's anticipation of their return and their reaction creates tension and speeds up time but tension is intermittent and not related to the total structure. Therefore, Cary's interest in a specific kind of character - the psychologically grotesque - affects his choice of structure and the manipulation of time and tension within the structure.

In the Cary novels under discussion, no major character

assumes the proportions of the 'real' inexplicable character. This follows from Cary's absorption with psychologically distorted major characters. These must be fully explained within the novel or they would be incomprehensible. In depicting these characters, Cary is challenged to make them seem convincing and normal at least for the duration of each novel as their personalities determine the dimensions of the novels. These idiosyncratic characters continue to live, as if they are fully human, in readers' imaginations, a proof of Cary's genius. They transport the reader to worlds where 'ordinary' life is extraordinary, and yet insights gleaned there may illuminate reality. For Joyce Cary does possess to a marked degree the quality which John Keats described as 'negative capability'.³ Critics use this phrase to distinguish between the writer capable of creating a whole gallery of diverse characters and the writer who creates characters who resemble each other and their author. All characters are necessarily extensions of an author's mind, but they do not have to resemble an author in personality. Cary has his characters expound his views because each of his novels is a 'metaphorical statement, a statement expressed through images of human beings in action, of his underlying beliefs about the nature of man and the universe, of his philosophy,'⁴ but important and interesting as his philosophy is, his characters are not mere extensions and symbols of ideas. They are convincing and credible beings within the novels. Cary's success in creating convincing, if unusual, imaginary characters and worlds is related to his faculty of 'becoming' a character. Charles Larsen's

reference to Mister Johnson supports this contention:

Cary crawled inside an African skin and created a personality whose brilliance and sparkle has threatened to make all subsequent Africans in novels with an African background seem shallow and undeveloped.⁵

Also supporting this idea is Walter Allen's description of Cary as 'the one Proteus' among modern English novelists.⁶ His description serves as a beacon. But Cary's negative capability is paradoxically his greatest gift and his most serious flaw. This latter contention can be illustrated in Not Honour More, the final work to be discussed. For James Lutter's story told in appropriately turgid prose by an appropriately rigid character is often dull and tedious. Cary's choice of narrative mode therefore leads to a somewhat uneven development. In highly colourful and creative characters like Gulley Jimson or Sara Monday, his prose is a delight but his faithful depiction of inferior characters can lead to unhappy results.

My primary aim in this thesis, as already indicated, is to consider creative imagination in Cary's characters. But the technical changes he makes are relevant to his presentation of creative characters. Initially, in the African novels, Cary uses the third person omniscient method of narration. But even with this limitation, he modifies his technique; this modification relates to the distance between Cary and his characters. In developing his own style, one which he found most satisfying to depict large-scale characters who speak for themselves, Cary gradually increased the

distance between himself and his characters. This is relevant to his creation of characters possessed of creative imagination because as his characters grew in scope, Cary hesitated to participate in an obvious fashion as narrator in his novels. A cursory review of the novels helps clarify this topic of authorial distancing.

Initially, in Aissa Saved, Cary as third person omniscient narrator is quite obviously involved with his characters and comments extensively upon their behaviour. He employs satire and irony - especially irony of juxtaposition and irony of reflection. (These techniques in Aissa Saved will be examined more thoroughly in the chapter dealing with the novel.) Much as Cary enjoyed satirically commenting on his characters in Aissa Saved he is not essentially a satirist for he feels generous admiration for many of his characters and perhaps feels it is impolite and unworthy to deny their energetic and enthusiastic response to reality with obvious ironic and satiric attacks. Cary's dissatisfaction with satire and irony as methods of criticizing and judging his characters' actions and attitudes may derive from his view of mankind. Although he is aware of man's foibles and faults, he is not overwhelmed with disgust by either the human body or the human mind like a traditional satirist such as Swift. Rather, Cary is fascinated by humanity's energy, courage and creativity and its ability to shape private worlds. His greatest admiration is reserved for his most courageous, colourful and creative characters. Because of this attitude towards his characters, Cary gradually began to abandon - not irony - but

the overt ironic techniques of the satirist. Technically, he does employ irony even in the mature works as his characters present contrasting world views. He is not so naïve as to deny his characters' flaws - indeed, his emphasis is frequently upon rogues, but he seems to have found it distasteful to show characters in action and then undercut them with irony. He does not, however, eliminate satire entirely but it becomes less biting and less pervasive.

Cary's method of narration in An American Visitor is again that of third person omniscient author but with an interesting modification, namely the use of various characters as narrating centers. As Wolkenfeld points out, "An American Visitor limits its authoritative statements by locating the narrator in one of the characters of the story".⁷ The story is not presented through the eyes of just one character but through several. Gore, Marie Hasluck and Cottee are used to channel information while occasionally the "native angle of vision"⁸ is employed. One wonders why Cary chooses to introduce this innovation in narrative method. Speculation suggests that he wishes to distance himself from his narrative and keep authorial intrusion to a minimum. Cary is keenly aware that each individual has his own concept of reality. In allowing individual characters to express opinions of other characters, Cary is able to present a multiple interpretation of reality. The reader is then challenged to draw inferences from characters' behaviour, from the author-narrated sections of the novel and from the narrating centers within the novel. This use of narrating centers is an important

step in Cary's developing style because what he does intermittently on a small scale - that is, allow characters to express their separate views of reality - he later applies on a grand scale in the trilogies in which an individual's view of reality dominates an entire novel and is modified or balanced by another individual's view of reality in a separate novel belonging to the same trilogy. This balancing of views of reality is quite extensive in the art trilogy but becomes most complex in the political trilogy.

Cary's respect for his characters ultimately determined his choice of structure and point of view. In the African novels, the characters become larger in scope, more vivid and exciting, in each successive novel until, in Mister Johnson, Cary creates a marvellously funny and unforgettable character. Johnson is not different in kind from Cary's early major characters who had overtones of the psychologically grotesque and were fully drawn and definite with no mysterious depths; Johnson is, however, much larger in scope and dominates the entire novel. Although Cary continues to use third person narration, the emphasis upon Mister Johnson makes Cary's participation in the novel much less obvious. A more satisfying balance between narration and dialogue is achieved. Cary is still a novelist of idea but he no longer relies heavily upon impersonal narration to present his ideas. Mister Johnson is an idea made flesh: he symbolizes the bizarre union of two cultures - the British and the African. The results are grotesquely comic,

Cary's success in creating such a character as Johnson

illuminates an integral aspect of the novelist's art. A novelist communicates not through argued, logical exposition but through symbol and metaphor. As a novelist of ideas, a man with much to communicate, Cary had, in his earliest works, sometimes divorced character from idea. But as he mastered his craft, Cary learned to abandon ideas - no matter how much they intrigued him - unless these could be transformed into character or at least be made valid and credible expressions of his characters.

In the trilogies Cary effectively distances himself from his characters by allowing them to speak for themselves. His major characters are symbols and archetypes, personal correlatives of ideas. Within the world of each novel, they are wonderfully human - as human as novelists' projections can be. Cary has endowed them with creative imagination and because of his respect for his characters, he wishes to sever the bond attaching character and author. His technical development corresponds with his desire to imbue his characters with their own individuality making them distinct and separate from their maker. Cary's attempt, like that of every artist's, is to do the impossible, for ultimately his characters are extensions of himself, offsprings of his own mind and imagination. It is not surprising then that there are similarities among his characters, most notably among his major, most definitive characters. His most typical characters fall into the category of the psychologically grotesque and the kind of exaggeration is linked to the character's creative imagination - to his manner of perceiving and

shaping reality.

To summarize the relationship between Cary's concept of creativity in his approach to character and his technical development as it pertains to the degree of detachment or involvement between Cary and his characters: Cary moves from an extreme of manipulation and involvement in Alisa Saved to an extreme of detachment in the trilogies. This change occurs, I suggest, largely because of his creation of characters possessed of creative imagination so intense that it becomes both rude and unnecessary for the author to speak for them. Cary has no need to belabour his ideas in expository prose as he sometimes did in the first two African novels because idea in the trilogies is subsumed in character. His development is profoundly linked to his creation of characters who are both creatively imaginative and psychologically grotesque.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AFRICAN NOVELS

Cary's African novels, Aissa Saved, An American Visitor and Mister Johnson, are explicitly concerned with themes relating to the African experience. The British presence and the impact of British culture upon the native people is a subject common to these three novels. In Aissa Saved, Cary examines the impact of Christianity upon Africans. Violence erupts when well-intentioned missionaries attempt to impose their religious ideals. Misunderstandings give rise to scenes ranging from the grotesquely comic to the disturbingly tragic. The religion of love and unity ironically sparks division and conflict between converted native and pagan native.

Warren French describes Aissa Saved as one effort to

civilize the natives of squalid, wrangling Nigerian villages, an effort complicated by the failure of whites and blacks to have the dimmest comprehension of the others' philosophy.⁹

Violence erupts again in An American Visitor as Cary explores another facet of imperialism, the exploitation by white miners of Africa's natural wealth of silver. The delicate political situation is subjected to intense stress and an uncertain peace crumbles. Latent native suspicion of white intentions can no longer

be allayed by the resourceful and imaginative British representative, Eustace Bewsher, and restless factions foment violent protests against the miners, (whom they facetiously refer to as tin openers) against Bewsher, and against the missionaries. Further complications are introduced in the person of Marie Hasluck whose naive idealism indirectly destroys Bewsher, thereby assuring the triumph of the exploiters.

In Mister Johnson, Cary focuses upon a single individual to solve the problem of how most effectively to present the specific theme of two cultures in collision; in so doing, he found his characteristic mode of novel writing, melding a single major character and a theme. Mister Johnson is a largely comic portrayal of an African who fancies himself a white man. The concept of choosing to dramatize an idiosyncratic African is brilliant. This approach suggests a facet of Cary's development, for, in the earlier novels, his attempt to show the effects of colonialism on a vast scale had proven unsatisfactory: his novels had become swamped with characters. It was difficult to empathize with the masses but one easily identifies with the individual, and Mister Johnson is without question an individual.

Cary's fascination with the psychologically grotesque individual may be deduced from Mister Johnson and confirmed by his future works for these continue to revolve about colourful creative characters like Johnson. Cary's African subject, although intrinsically interesting, serves merely as his raw material. What is

important is how he works the material into a unique form.

(1)

Aissa Saved

In dealing with Aissa Saved, I would like, at first, to concentrate upon Cary's technique, particularly as it relates to irony. His extensive use of irony in his first novel indicates how much he is involved with his characters and how much he wishes to clarify their thoughts and actions. Cary has a choice of methods he can use to judge his characters: he can either criticize or state his sympathy with their thoughts and actions directly in expository prose - a method which doubtless would bore and offend a reader; he can use irony as a subtler, more effective alternative; or he can, as he indeed does later in the trilogies, present characters, contrast them with other characters, and ultimately suggest whose viewpoint he supports. In Aissa Saved, irony is his chosen technique. It is employed against Christian, pagan, and politician; no one is exempt. By its very nature, irony exorcises sentiment. Cary treats his characters fairly and sympathetically but he shuns eliciting highly emotional responses from his readers. In describing Ali's death, Cary first reveals Ali's plan to die with "dignity and courage befitting a gentleman and a pupil of the Berua school". (Aissa Saved, p. 193) This is followed by a clinical description of Shangoedi's

expertise in torture as she crouches over him "straddling his legs, grinning with joy, open-mouthed as if for a good meal . . ." (Aissa Saved, p. 193) Cary exposes the naivety of Ali's intention to die with dignity: "Soon he was screaming, begging to be killed. But to the end he did not regret his bold enterprise." (193) Before the reader has time to admire Ali, Cary adds: "He had no time for leisure or regrets." (193)

Irony is employed as a satiric tool in Cary's treatment of Hilda Carr. He has sympathy for the missionary's kindness and compassion but she is a target for incisive irony. Aissa voluntarily makes a bloody sacrifice of her son but Hilda Carr, too, indirectly, sacrifices her children. Cary had been

shocked on his arrival in Nigeria to find that the wives of missionaries remained in the country for their confinements at a time when malaria rendered a white child's chance of survival very small indeed. ¹⁰

Hilda Carr has already suffered a miscarriage because of her failure to care for her body. Nothing - not even her own life, not the lives of her unborn children - can mitigate her fanatical devotion. She concentrates all her energy towards one cause - saving the souls of these lost pagans. The first visual presentation of Mrs. Carr is consistent with all that will happen to her - the sacrifice of her own body and that of her unborn child. Life in a hot and hostile climate has set its mark upon her face which is thin, of a greenish tint and beaded in sweat. Cary does not state explicitly that a calling which reduces one to a physical wreck is itself

unhealthy - yet the conclusion is inescapable. Her emotional life, however, has become supercharged and this makes her one with the pagans who, like Hilda, respond to life with emotion rather than reason.

Hilda's husband, proud of his superior rational approach to problems, recognizes and condemns his wife's irrational behaviour. Hilda has "always had a feeling" that the mission group should invade the pagan home territory for conversion purposes, and when Aissa and the others are drawn back to their own people, Mrs. Carr seizes this opportunity to obey an inner voice. Mr. Carr reflects bitterly that his wife's irrational actions jeopardize his relationship with Bradgate when she encourages the Christian converts to participate in the Kolu rain festival. Her behaviour leads him to question the wisdom of a minister's marrying at all.

Why had he married? How right the Catholics were to save their priests from that folly. Your religious woman was worse even than the rest because she had an excuse for not thinking. They were all anti-rational in spirit, gamblers, sensualists, seeking every chance to escape from the trouble of planning and deciding, into some excitement or other. (Aissa Saved, p. 25)

The reader's belief in Carr's rationalism is short-lived, however, for the sound of a favorite hymn has so much emotional power over him that he decides to join his wife on the expedition:

It was the hymn, always a favourite at the mission, which converted him. It had always strongly affected him, but now its words of devotion, sounding with unusual beauty over the water in the clear bright air of the morning, thrilling with the girls' voices and the ecstasy of his wife's spirit beside him, came upon him with overwhelming force. He felt again that powerful wave of emotion which he had known years before . . . (Aissa Saved, p. 28)

In this scene, Cary relies upon irony of juxtaposition and reflection to reveal Carr's conflicting reactions. Cary therefore does not have to interject and tell the reader of Carr's contradictory emotions; he chooses to show the reader how Carr behaves and allows him to make the obvious deduction.

Another example of effective irony occurs when Cary describes Hilda Carr's attempts to persuade Aissa to live. Following her ordeal at the native village, Aissa has returned to the mission to die. Her physical deterioration makes her barely recognizable. After being informed of Aissa's return and her determination to die, Hilda exercises to the utmost her powers of comforting and consoling Aissa to renew her desire for life. But her touch, her words, her love have no effect. Aissa is unmoved. Ironically, old Sara, a mission convert, has only to softly croon a hymn to restore Aissa; her bad spirit is summarily evicted.

Cary's preference for irony and intolerance of sentimentality is exemplified in Aissa Saved when he dismisses Hilda's death from exhaustion and overwork in a single sentence. Cary respects Hilda's sincerity and compassion but recognizes that the effect of her presence in Africa was to stir hatred and division,

not love.

In Africa, the acts of the missionaries, Hilda and Mr. Carr, have devastating results. Indirectly, they set native against native and act as catalysts who precipitate Aissa's death. They are well liked by the natives who are attracted to the mission not only by the promise of food and clothing but also by the appeal of their religious message. Cary recognizes the Carrs' sincerity and courage but criticizes their impact upon native stability. In this novel of division in which group opposes group, individual opposes individual, Mr. and Mrs. Carr are not exempt from marital debates. Mrs. Carr is blind to immediate repercussions of her actions while her husband is fully conscious of his temporal responsibilities towards the natives. Where Mrs. Carr envisages triumph and, like a Christian soldier of the hymn, leads the converts, oblivious to the possibility of defeat, Mr. Carr senses evil as a powerful almost palpable force permeating all existence. He realizes the unsoundness of his wife's judgement and is especially critical of her lust for excitement. But Mr. Carr's rationalism is only superficial and when emotion and reason collide, he abandons reason. Both husband and wife are fundamentally alike and therefore butts of Cary's satire.

Irony and satire are important tools for Cary in the first two African novels for they help give colour and emphasis to his third person omniscient method of narration. His objectivity is modified by irony and internal satire. These techniques are quite effective and interesting as a means of critically evaluating his

characters. This method persists with slightly less intensity in An American Visitor but when he writes Mister Johnson Cary does not use the same techniques of irony although there is no question of Johnson's behaviour being exemplary or of Cary's endorsing it. Johnson's behaviour could have been given a similar satiric treatment. But the methods of irony employed in Aissa Saved no longer satisfy Cary. He prefers to distance himself from the later novels and therefore interjects fewer author-narrated satirical comments. Instead, he satirizes Johnson's attitudes and behaviour by using the comments of other characters - their shocked reaction to Johnson. Also, Johnson's obvious departure from normal behaviour invites laughter at his expense.

No major character emerges from Cary's first novel, but there is no shortage of stock characters. Names are often thrown in without accompanying detail, sometimes to achieve the effect of a teeming world, sometimes to add local colour. One colourful group of stock characters - the converts - appear at Carr's mission. The collective behaviour of these characters - old Sara, Ojo, Nagulo, Frederick, Shangoedi, Aditu and Salé, - serves as a satiric comment upon the futility of the Carrs's efforts. They are given distinguishing characteristics, (for example, Shangoedi is the most bloodthirsty and vicious, Sara, the kindest) but as a group they have characteristics in common. They are irreverent but sincere in wishing to be good; unfortunately, they have not the least idea of the appropriate behaviour. Jesus himself attracted the lost people - the wretched, blind and maimed - and certainly the suppliants at the Carr mission

are depicted by Cary as a miserable lot. Ojo, perhaps the most intelligent, exerts considerable energy in imitating both the Carrs. The effect is that of comic caricature. Even his face assumes the contours of Mr. Carr's for Ojo seems to feel that to be good, he must literally be like the Carrs. His past history indicates that he has an alacrity in sinning comparable to the intensity of his religious fervour. (He had stolen, swindled and acquired various diseases including syphilis. (Aissa Saved, p. 16) We know even less about the others: one of Frederick's accomplishments is being able to curse in three languages; Nagulo is adept at murder and robbery; whenever the Carrs are out of sight, chaos and obscenity are the order of the day. When they are present, silence, hymn singing or telling Bible stories are the converts' occupations. Unable to exercise critical judgement, they simply behave in a manner they deem appropriate; what is appropriate to the pagan culture, however, can be highly unsuitable to the Christian culture.

Cary provides succinct but revealing details of the mission converts. Detailed description is unnecessary, with the exception of Aissa whom he elevates into his most significant character, for Cary wishes to present a general picture of mission life. He establishes salient qualities of this group of stock figures; when they visit Kolu, their behaviour, minus the veneer of Christianity, remains consistent. His choice of converts with such extraordinary capacity for wickedness gives point to his irony.

As the introduction to this thesis suggests, Cary's

special achievement is in creating characters who possess creative imagination, a quality which enables them to perceive and structure reality in a unique and fascinating way. Tracing Cary's presentation of unusual characters, the psychologically grotesque, through the African novels and contrasting these with the conventional characters who abound in these early novels, illuminates the direction of Cary's development. Because the focus of this thesis is upon creative and psychologically distorted characters, it is important to trace the development of such characters in Aissa Saved. In this novel, Aissa herself most obviously possesses the quality of creative imagination. To appreciate her role, however, a brief outline of the plot is helpful. Aissa Saved is a violent, fast-paced novel. Tension is high from its earliest pages to its garish conclusion. There are two major sources of trouble: the missionaries and the lack of rain. The missionaries' presence has divided the natives into two antagonistic groups: the converted and the unconverted. Socially, the converts are tribal outcasts, the weak and the wicked. Their conversion is a subject of mockery for respectable natives. The religious activities of the Carrs, the missionaries in Aissa Saved, are much resented by the unconverted; these are regarded as insulting attempts to impose foreign dogma.

Tribal tension is wrought to fever pitch, however, because of the lack of rain. People are hungry and fear death by starvation. All long for rain. The Christians turn to prayer, the pagans to sacrifice. When the converted natives leave the mission

to attend festivities in a tribal village violence is inevitable. Aissa is a most conspicuous convert and her aspersions against the native religion cause her to become a target. For the natives, she assumes the stature of a witch and is ultimately sacrificed to propitiate a demanding rain god. Aissa is made a feast for ants and faces a death of slow torture but she possesses power to transcend this grim reality and transform it imaginatively so that she has control over her final experience. Aissa's imaginative power over reality is contrasted with the feeble attempt by Ali, the mission-educated son of the Waziri, to order reality with logic and reason. Ali's death is also slow and painful; he confronts it with reason. But reason is an ineffective antidote to pain and he is both destroyed and defeated.

Cary expresses his admiration of Ali in the introduction to Aissa Saved. He had at first intended to make Ali, not Aissa, the central character but abandoned this intention because, as he states in the preface,

"she was more central to a deeper interest, that of religion . . . The question is how sound is the faith: how will it stand the big knock; how deep does it send its roots into reality". (Aissa Saved, p. 8)

Aissa's creative imagination is expressed through her love of Jesus. Incidentally, each of Cary's creative characters is identified with some general topic - for example, art, politics, womanhood, tradition. Aissa is identified with religion. Her

application of religious ideas shows how she has interpreted - in a unique way - the religious message of the Carrs.

Aissa stands out from her fellow natives. Her laugh is shriller and more frequent; her howls peal louder; her love for Abba, her son, is fierce. She is exposed; nothing of thought or feeling is hidden; to her fellow natives, she is a figure of ridicule. Aissa is a foolish girl, they think, because she invites attention. In Africa, this is dangerous and she is obviously a likely candidate for a scapegoat. The theme of sacrifice which culminates in her death on the ant-hill is adequately foreshadowed. As early as chapter two, Frederick, a convert at the mission, warns Aissa: "you go Kolù den dey kill you dere, dey chop you". (Aissa Saved, p. 17) Aissa, like the other converted Africans, is torn between two worlds, but what attracts her to Christianity still attracts her to paganism: song, story, passion, celebration, and sacrifice. The concept of sacrifice inherent in paganism is carried whole into Christianity. Aissa mutilates herself out of love for Jesus just as the pagans mutilate themselves out of love for Oka. At first Aissa is reluctant to sacrifice to Jesus:

"She snatched a knife . . . and slashed herself across the chest crying, 'I love you proper, Jesus, I cut myself for you. You help me now, I die for you.' (201-202)

But Aissa used only the back of the knife for at this point in the novel, Aissa's self-interest - her bargaining with Jesus to enlist his support against her pursuers - interferes with her religious and

imaginative fulfillment. The spirit possessing Aissa "knew the wifely appetites of her body, the tingling love in her hands, the mother's desire of her full breasts" (Aissa Saved, p. 202) and accuses her of only pretending to love Jesus. At first, she will neither cut her breasts - full of milk for her son - nor will she spoil her face lest she lose her husband. But Aissa is possessed of a spirit that rejects compromise: she cries to Jesus: "I you woman, Jesus. I give you all. I give you ma nose, I give you ma mouf. I no good for no man no mo." She drove the knife into her nostrils and mouth, splitting nose and cheeks . . . (202) At first she only pretends to kill Abba, her son, but ultimately tribal pressure and her love for Jesus sway her to allow her child's sacrifice.

Religion expressed abstractly in words would have little power to move the sensuous pagan woman, Aissa. But her creative imagination gives her power to make images. She both sees Christ and talks to him. When Jesus comes to her, he appears as "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". (155-156) Aissa can only reach out to him and cry: "Oh Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus, you come for me". (156) Cary has sufficient empathy with Aissa to make her exaltation move the reader, yet can simultaneously undercut sentiment with a line: "She spoke English because she knew that it is God's language".

Aissa's love for Jesus soars far beyond her love for

Gajere, her 'husband', Abba and self. Cary's point is that the sacrifice which results from Aissa's interpretation of reality is deliberate and voluntary; man can offer only his life for love; even if it appears to be done irrationally in Aissa's case, it is the gift - not the rationale behind the gift - which so ennobles her that death and apotheosis become one.

For Cary, Aissa is a seminal character; essentially she is one with the greatest of Cary's imagined protagonists: Mahood in "Joyce Cary in Africa" speaks of Ali of Aissa Saved and Aladai of The African Witch but her comment applies with equal force to Aissa:

In the . . . woman who ran foul of the law (Cary) first began in Africa to recognize the maker, the free soul creating its own world with all the pain and delight of artistic effort. And he was to make this the main theme of all his novels.¹¹

Aissa's imaginative powers bring both pain - as when she feels compelled to mutilate herself and agree to her son's sacrifice - and ecstasy. As she lies on an anthill awaiting death, her imagination may be seen as a positive creative force:

Aissa soon grew weak; she could not remember where she was, the fire of the ants' tearing at her body did not scorch, it was like the warmth of flesh. 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. Abba was sitting on its back looking frightened and

almost ready to cry. One of the angels was holding him and putting his cap straight. The others were laughing at him and clapping their hands.

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. (Aissa Saved pp. 211-212)

Aissa's death illustrates her power of imagination.

Dying and spiritual epiphany are one. Cary does not uphold her moral behaviour and, intellectually, she is far inferior to Ali, whom he had originally intended as the novel's major character. But the quality which Cary never tires of exploring - the force of imagination - is embodied in Aissa. He does not deny her failure but he does recognize her triumph. Ali cannot with all his will power and courage withstand the torments of the flesh so expertly arranged for him by Shangoedi and the female converts. Aissa, too, shrieks in bodily pain but soon she is laughing as did Gulley when he lay dying in the arms of the nun. Like the most representative of Cary's characters, Aissa is destroyed but, unlike Ali who is used to illustrate the limitations of rational man's response to pain, she is not defeated.

Cary frequently explores the effects upon individual natives of a partial assimilation of British culture. Ali's problem is akin to Mister Johnson's: like Johnson, he has become isolated from his own culture but cannot hope to be accepted by the British.

Through Ali, Cary explores the dangers inherent in educating a native in alienating him from his own people. Ali is proud to have learned the white man's ways and does not hesitate to parade his superior knowledge before the most influential and powerful members of the tribe. The respectable and conservative members of the pagan community worry how their traditional way of life is being disrupted by the foreigners' intrusion. They regard Ali as "one other unpleasant product of the new regime; they looked at him with distaste and surprise". Yerima, despite his bad manners, voices the general consensus of opinion:

The clerks come, Yorubas, white men, these Christians now. All is being spoilt. You do nothing, you cowards. Soon the railway will come. Berua got it and look at Berua. The old judge said, make this railway, and all the Yoruba thieves and whores and soldier's women, all the corrupt boys and Christians in the land came there and spoilt it. See Berua now. The young men push you into the drain, the girls laugh in your beard, the people are like shameless animals. No railway, I say, no bridge - no roads, these are very bad things. Children must not go to school to learn to spit upon their mothers and fathers. We'll stop these Christians and their witchcraft. (Aissa Saved, pp. 95-96)

Although the natives reject Ali for identifying with the English, to Cary and to anyone who inherits the western rationalist mode of thought, Ali is delightful. But, to his own people, he is a traitor; he is ugly and his father, the Waziri, a government official, is regarded as the Emir's chief slave. (88) Yet Ali has the audacity in acting as Bradgate's protégé to drag the honoured Obasa off to trial

and lecture the tribe on justice and logic:

Witches had no power over rain which fell from clouds when they were made cold, and besides all knew very well that it was a wrong thing to condemn anybody without a proper trial before judges. (Aissa Saved, p. 88)

Ali's father, the Waziri, anticipates trouble for his son. Frustrated and angry, he laments:

I did not want him to go to the white man's school But Bradgy insisted and now the boy is done for. They've filled him with their white man's nonsense and he is simply a fool, a conceited bighead who thinks he knows better than the oldest and most experienced men in the whole country . . . (106)

Ali is important because he

represents the effect of education on the Nigerians and because he presents a contrast to both the pagans and the Christians. . . . In the end it is Ali's education that defeats him. The Christians, convinced he has betrayed them, kill him. . . . He is cruelly beaten by the mob and loses his self-control before he dies 'but to the end he did not regret his bold enterprise'. (193) He dies for his civilized belief that no one can make the rain. 12

After his death, his education is respected by the mob:

Many put pieces of flesh into their neck-bags for charms or philtres. For Ali had been a mallam. He could read and write and therefore he had magical powers. (193-194)

Both Aissa and Ali are subjected to British influence.

Aissa is profoundly affected by Christianity and Ali by a missionary

education. Thematically, however, they are contrasted. Aissa operates intuitively and knows nothing of logic. Ali, apart from his imaginative identification with the western mode of thought, lacks creativity. He is dedicated to logic, order and reason, an established traditional way of confronting reality. Cary admires Ali's ethical behaviour and his devotion to duty but recognizes his lack of creative energy. Ali is impressive but he does not evoke Cary's deepest interest. Cary's major characters are "round" and undeveloping and Ali, although not a truly major character, is no exception. But unlike the kind of characters who are most closely identified with Cary, he is neither distorted nor psychologically grotesque. Cary was to publish two more African novels before discovering how best to illustrate his feelings about the British impact upon the African by creating a marvellously distorted character, Mister Johnson, for whom all experience is matter for imaginative transmutation.

In Bradgate, the political representative of England, Cary first created a character who appears in various stages of development in the four African novels. Bradgate's position corresponds most closely to Cary's when he worked as a colonial administrator in Africa. Cary, too, was able to gain a sense of satisfaction in the midst of a chaotic world by building bridges and roads - the technical instruments by means of which isolation could be supplanted by communication and poverty by "progress". In his biography of Cary, Malcolm Foster quotes a letter on the subject:

All my bridges are standing, and are in so much use, that in some cases the traffic has deviated fifty miles to use them. I haven't done anything here I am so proud of as my bridges. They've even saved lives, as there used to be a drowning every year. I only wish I would get a few steel girders, a pair of iron wheels, some good tackle, and a carpenter able to saw planks.¹³

Cary is, therefore, sympathetic with Bradgate's efforts, although as a character Bradgate, a simple type, is but a faint shadow of his fellow political administrators, Bewsher and Rudbeck, who appear in An American Visitor and Mister Johnson.

It is a cliché to describe the British as pragmatic and rational. The kind of achievement suggested by the Industrial Revolution - once applauded and now questioned - was made possible by a rational attempt to subdue and control nature. Bradgate embodies this kind of pragmatism. Because the man is identified with the concept, any satiric or comic attacks on him are also attacks on the concept. He occasionally becomes smug and self-satisfied, assuming that his recognition of having done a job well is shared by others. To the Carrs he came "expecting some praise for his favorite rest camp". (Aissa Savé, p. 13) They are not impressed. Similarly, after making a speech to the natives, he is "pleased . . . by its good sense". Ironically, the natives feel that "Bradgate was talking nonsense". They felt his "objection to the selling of children, as also to slavery, was religious because there was no reasonable explanation for it". (117) It would seem that Cary too was guilty of similar short-comings when he was in charge of the Botigu Division of

Kontagora Province.¹⁴ A quote from a Cary letter in M. Mahood's article "Joyce Cary in Borgu" aptly illustrates this: "I cannot explain the pleasure of seeing a road which one has planned and surveyed in actual being, but it is a very unusually keen pleasure."¹⁵ As an "idealistic administrator", Bradgate, like Cary, could "feel he was helping Africa forwards by introducing new ways gradually in forms Africans could easily accept."¹⁶ The danger in performing tasks is not only that such satisfaction is misplaced or irrelevant to Africans, but that idealism can dissipate and be replaced by "purposeless routine".¹⁷

Bradgate's lack of imagination is highlighted by his exchange of letters with the Carrs in which he exercises his "diplomacy" and "tact". He had taken some time to compose one particular letter and (as usual) was proud of it. It seemed to him that no one could be offended by it. The Carrs, however, are highly insulted. Again, Bradgate has blundered. His lack of personal dignity makes him a "ridiculous object" to the natives as he wades through mud in an ineffectual effort to show the natives how to lay the foundation for his projected trestle bridge. Mahood describes this well:

A vivid but spiteful vignette of indirect rule is afforded by the scene in which Bradgate flounders enthusiastically in the mud of the river bed, while on its bank the Emir and his court are deploring the incursion of Yorubas which the bridge will bring, and the senior pagan member of the Council is quietly planning to burn it down at the first opportunity.¹⁸

Even had he known their thoughts, Bradgate is still a man who believes

in getting on with the job. Cary, too, believes in the importance of doing a task, in setting goals, even though nature and mankind conspire to prevent its completion. He laughs at Bradgate, but approves. Mahood postulates that Cary's satire is not directed at Bradgate personally but rather "at the social system within which (he) struggles to get on with the job".¹⁹ She concludes this from Cary's letters to his wife who was told how he endured frustrations similar to those of Bradgate. Cary is certainly sympathetic with Bradgate's problems but it is possible that Cary's own views on the system of indirect rule had changed and, therefore, in retrospect, he viewed his own task differently.

Bradgate contrasts with the Carrs. They are moved by faith and inspiration. Their responsibility for their followers is not confined to the limited temporal world. In seeking first the kingdom of heaven, they seem to have omitted considering how best to help the pagans on earth - even though they have not neglected to provide sewing lessons. Bradgate's limitation is that he does not ask himself the more difficult questions until provoked by Carrs' letter and even then, he shrugs aside the challenge of answering them:

What are you really doing in Yanrin? What are you driving at? That the religious questions might after all be of some importance, that they might have some connection with education, for instance, which he knew to be important. (sic) He suspected but he did not know because he did not want to know. He had no time to bother about such matters now.
Aissa Saved, p. 113)

Bradgate and the Carrs are both subjected to criticism. Reason ought

not to be divorced from faith; nor faith from reason.

Cary's first novel contrasts with his major novels in the trilogies with which he is most closely identified. In the major novels, he concentrates upon a dominant character, while in Aissa Saved, no one character - not even Aissa - eclipses the others in stature. The Carrs, Bradgate, and Aissa are developed to about the same degree. They are all simple types, the Carrs representing the missionary world, Bradgate the political world and Aissa, the world of the converted pagan. They are recurrent characters within the four African novels. Bradgate, Bewsher, and Rudbeck have much in common; the Dobsons of An American Visitor and the Carrs share similar roles and attitudes. Facets of diverse characters presented in the early novels sometimes merge into a more complex character. For example, the character Mister Johnson contains facets of both Aissa and Bradgate. He shares with Aissa an intense enthusiasm for living and an ability to transform obstinate facts of existence to suit himself. Superficially, Bradgate and Johnson appear to have little in common. Bradgate is oppressed with facts of reality, for example, his inability to manipulate the Carrs and the problems of bridge construction. Although he is generally unimaginative, his passion for bridges is akin to Johnson's creative absorption with road building. Only in the comic portrait of a black man does Cary fully capture his own excitement about road and bridge construction.

Cary's creations of Aissa, the Carrs, Bradgate and Ali indicate his talent for characterization which he will exploit more

fully in later works, particularly those told in the first person. As a thinker, Cary is perhaps too ambitious in Aissa Saved. There are too many themes for its length. They include sacrifice; the conflict of rationalism and religion, education and religion; Cary's view that each individual's view of reality is incomplete; the clash of cultures and the fundamental injustice of the world. Writing Aissa Saved made Cary aware of universal injustice, a recurrent theme in his novels.

Virginia Woolf speaks of the "artist's power of mastering and eliminating" in which the universal is encompassed and the mere dross left out.²⁰ Should one agree that an important function of art is the reduction of the multiplicity of nature and the kaleidoscopic flux of experience to a finished and comprehensible form, then Aissa Saved is artistically unsatisfactory. But it is at least an interesting work. Its booming, buzzing confusion is perhaps synonymous with much that was Cary's Africa.

Cary's first novel gives little indication of his definitive voice. In his energetic effort to create a meaningful work, he has fallen into the fault of excess. He has still to learn how to shape and control his vision and to discover which of his numerous ideas is most important. Because there are "too many themes, too many characters, too many subplots, and too little balance and direction, the book remains a near chaos".²¹ But it is a fruitful chaos. However, an excessive darkness of outlook, mitigated only by heavy-handed irony dissatisfies him. He must undergo a gruelling

apprenticeship before learning to subsume tragedy in comedy, to create characters of such stature that they can, while acknowledging the violence and misery of existence, imaginatively transcend it.

An American Visitor

An American Visitor is a distinct improvement over Aissa Saved. Themes are more clearly presented, while characters are fewer and more complex. Cary's interest in characters possessing creative imagination is more fully developed in the persons of Marie Hasluck and Eustace Bewsher. Technically, his use of a number of narrating centers increases the distance between Cary and his characters; the reader is challenged to balance each character's viewpoint before deciding which has more validity. Dialogue is used more extensively than in Aissa Saved but narration is still the dominant mode of presentation.

The subject of An American Visitor, providing both substance and background for Cary's themes, is Africa in transition. Two outside forces disrupt the status quo between the British and the pagans. These are tin-miners, greedy to exploit Africa's natural resources and Marie Hasluck, an itinerant American, who comes prepared to write idyllic articles about the natives. Eustace Bewsher, the British representative, has been able through force of character and charismatic power to deal successfully with the natives and has made some progress - at least, he thinks so - in uniting the various pagan tribes into an all-Birri nation. The miners' presence

causes him to lose the confidence of the natives for they suspect his failure to protect their land from the exploiters may stem from collaboration with the enemy. Marie Hasluck brings him love and a brief period of happiness but ultimately one of her many illusions makes his violent death inevitable.

In Aissa Saved, Cary appeared as a cool, critical and ironical narrator. He tended to appear superior to his characters; certainly his irony extended to all groups and individuals. Cary does not abandon his ironic voice in An American Visitor but he does modify his technique. He remains the ironical narrator whose insights are more profound than are those of his characters but he modifies his presentation by choosing a number of narrating centers to supplement the material provided by the omniscient narrator. The effect of this modification is to free Cary of intrusions into the novel when individual characters act as narrators and to permit narration to be coloured by their feelings, attitudes and personalities.

Marie Hasluck and Eustace Bewsher are the central characters of An American Visitor and the only two possessing creative imagination to any notable degree but Cary also depicts a number of contrasting characters to interact with his protagonists and act as narrating centers. The most important of these minor characters, who incidentally are simple types, are the Englishmen, Gore and Cottee, and the pagans, Uli, Henry and Obai.

Uli's presence in the novel serves to highlight by

contrast the individual quality of creative imagination. Because Uli functions only as part of a tribe, he can never create his own interpretation of reality. He merely accepts tribal custom and habit as his own. For a short time, he leaves his tribe and goes to stay at the white mission but he cannot know any fulfillment in living there and attempting to emulate the white man's ways. Unlike the detribalized Mister Johnson, who is clearly an individual, Uli knows only emptiness and misery except when acting as a mindless member of his own tribe.

Uli, a skilled dancer and athlete, delights in the freedom of physical movement and his own physical prowess. A man of the tribe, when at home he is good-natured and tolerant, at ease with himself and his world. There, he can shun the effort of thought and its associated responsibility. He neither thinks nor listens but prefers to dream while others make speeches. Newly married, he looks forward to enjoying his wife Euké whom his parents have bought at a quite reasonable price because of her imperfect looks. Although he prefers hunting and war, love is pleasant enough and he is particularly looking forward to instructing his wife in his newly acquired techniques borrowed from the whites. With all the vanity of an unseasoned traveller, he expects to be applauded for his recently acquired skills. But Euké has been well versed in what is appropriate wifely behaviour and takes an equally great pride in observing tribal proprieties. She shatters Uli's vanity by flouting his unorthodox embrace. An "overwhelming fear of 'totem and taboo'²² is awakened. "He had sinned.

He had broken the frame of things." (An American Visitor, p. 59)

Added to his fear of reprisals for breaking the tribal code of manners is a fear of Enuké's brothers and even worse, a fear of the women and their secret knowledge. After his return to Nok from his visit with the white people, he had felt long dormant zest for life renew; there, among his own people, he was moved by everything that happened to him. He had felt the pleasure of being in tune with village life. It was good to be alive. Now, because of his transgression - the imposition of the white man's way of making love - that unity is destroyed. The forest first offers sanctuary; then a fever of hatred against Bewsher infects him and Uli finds himself with a cause. Moved by the passion of the mob, he is soon crying "Death to the whites . . . death to the strangers". (81) Again, he knows joy as he joins with his fellow warriors in a dance to celebrate war.

The drums had commanded him and he had risen from the ground. Their music had compelled him with a voice that was part of his own brain as Nok was part of his body . . . Now he knew what to do, how to act, and what he was doing was easy and right. . . . (83)

They were all parts of one creature whose slow regular motions arose from a will not his own . . . He gave himself up to be used. That was what he wanted. Not to think, not to be responsible. (84)

For the whites, unity is political and is preceded by legalized verbal definitions; for them, unity in dance impelled by

the rhythm of drums and moved by the lust to kill is both alien and undesirable. As a symbol of Birri unity, however, the dance is appropriate and compelling. Unity in itself is neutral; if it is directed towards a useful or worthwhile end, however, it becomes a positive force; conversely, as in the kind of Birri unity which is directed against Bewsher, it becomes negative. A mob results.

Cary's purpose in describing Uli is to show how the influence of the white man has isolated and temporarily detribalized him. Because of his burden of guilt, he deteriorates as a human being. He is unable to function. Only when re-united with his wife and people after his exile at the mission does he again find a mindless peace and fulfillment.

Cary's ability to "become" a character and describe his attitudes, feelings and fears is unquestionably demonstrated. He perceives the great range in human behaviour and dramatizes it in the characters of Uli, as discussed, Henry and Obai. All three play important, if cameo roles. Henry, another simple type, could well be described as a "marplot and mischief-maker".²³ Thanks to his association with Marie, he is able to rise to the nouveaux riches. His rise is reminiscent of the "socially ambitious parvenus in the Victorian novels".²⁴ When the novel opens, he is just out of jail but, losing no time in regrets, he soon earns himself the position of servant for Marie. He recognizes his good fortune immediately; Marie is like a tribal chieftain who has no time to bother with such trivial business as looking after her personal property. Henry

like Wemmick, recognizes the value of "portable property" and attempts to make the contents of the "red box" his own. Foiled in his attempt, he is not disheartened but consoles himself by the thought that other opportunities will present themselves. His political acumen is put to good use as he parasitically strives to enjoy the fruits of the two worlds. Always, he reminds the pagan allies who plan to capture Bewsher and party that as Hasluck's servant, he ought to inherit all her property in the event of her early death. As a faithful servant, Henry wishes to take good care of his mistress's property. Taking advantage of British Colonialism, Henry accelerates his social mobility: yet, he is not fully accepted in either world. Fish feels he has "sold out" to the white man,²⁵ and says: "You're one of them, you thief, you spy, in your white man's hat". (An American Visitor, p. 64) Fortunately, Henry is not acutely sensitive to these remonstrances and, at the end of the novel, is prospering in a conspicuous fashion. Barba summarizes Henry's accomplishments: he is a "war profiteer", "bootlegger", "con-man" and "pimp".²⁶ During the war, he made

The usual large profits out of his rake-offs and the wages of the dead, sick, and wounded, has opened a store in the Paré mine field and is doing a splendid trade in condemned tinned meats, slightly blown, second-hand caps and trousers, aphrodisiacs and smuggled gin. Abortions sixpence. (233)

As a parasite, he is pre-eminently successful. Collins asks if Cary isn't "justifying the imperialist venture in Africa by showing

that the Africans 'can't run their own show', catering to our unregenerate feelings of racial superiority, by exaggerating African childishness, superstition, and fecklessness".²⁷ This may be countered by the example of Henry's story: he may not be admirable but he is neither childish nor superstitious. Rather, he is an opportunist who coolly appraises the white men taking advantage of them to promote his own material success.

If Henry's portrait has much in common with that of Yacobi in Aissa Saved, Obai is most like Ali. Obai gets most of his education indirectly from Bewsher and, like Ali, he is an avid student. Bewsher's dream of the all-Birri federation becomes his dream too and he serves as his friend's spokesman to the natives. He most closely resembles the noble savage or nature's gentleman of Marie Hasluck's imagination. Fiery and intelligent, he is a favorite with Bewsher. Much to Uli's chagrin, Obai even follows Bewsher's advice not to drink whiskey. Obai had been chosen leader of his class for his bravery, but when he voices Bewsher's opinions his own people laugh at his nonsense. Tribalism has blinded them to the possible truth of Obai's excited questions: "Don't you see that Nok and Kifi and Goshi and Paré are all one kind of people and Hausas and white and Yorubas are another kind?" (An American Visitor, p. 51) In response to his speech on the all-Birri nation, they can only titter and talk of the "all-goats", "all-pipes", "all-noses" and "all-navels". (56) Yet, his anger silences their hooting; despite his ideas, he is "a big man". (57) When the natives become incensed

with Bewsher because of the prospectors' encroachment upon their territory, it is Obai who defends him from the ferocious Fish. He later sends Obai on a wild-goose chase to prevent his impeding the war-party's attack. When Obai is seriously wounded, Doll Dans nurses him back to life; ironically, she saves the man who will later kill Bewsher. In dejection, Obai becomes convinced that Bewsher has betrayed him. Bewsher's own ideas are turned against himself when, for the sake of the all-Birri nation, Obai attacks his former friend. While "repeating clearly and proudly his national cry, (he) made a single leap forward and stabbed Bewsher in the chest". (An American Visitor, p. 229) The District Officer has united the Birri - but at the cost of his life.

Gore and Cottee contrast with both Marie and Bewsher. Gore simply wants to be left alone; he has no desire to be bothered. Causes are for others, not for him. He lacks Marie's and Bewsher's passionate intensity. Cottee, the materialist, is cynical of idealists. When compared to Gore and Cottee, both Bewsher and Marie appear deeper, more worthwhile human beings.

Both Bewsher and Gore are devoted and conscientious in fulfilling their duties but they interpret their African roles differently. Bewsher at times seems more pagan than the natives and fights for their rights sometimes against their own wishes and those of the British administrative hierarchy. Gore, however, is torn between his concern for the natives and his loyalty towards his superiors. When higher officials are about to make any unpleasant

demands of Bewsher, he simply flees into the most "inaccessible parts of his domain" (An American Visitor, p. 100) while Gore is left a helpless intermediary trying to reconcile both parties. Gore enjoys nothing more than privacy and comfort but comes from a long line of predecessors who traditionally served their country as "parsons, soldiers, doctors, civil servants, magistrates" with little recompense other than "a few old swords, bibles, medals and stories". (235) He does manage to enjoy an extended leave which he spends fishing and resting in armchairs with a book. (146) For following Bewsher into battle against the Birri, he receives a terrific blow on the head and the unexpected compensation of a holiday.

Gore does not attempt to defend himself from Jukes's casual remark: "I quite realize that you've got to amuse yourself with something, and this Birri game is better than golf or spillikins". (48) He recognizes an element of truth in it. Marie thinks "You had only to look at Mr. Gore to know what was meant by the aristocratic tradition" and feels that "being a tyrant over the conquered" is unfitting for a man who looks "like a St. Francis". (22) Gore is an appealing character for, despite his gentlemanly demeanour, his politeness and reserve, he sometimes resembles the bumbling Englishman of literary tradition. The natives, in their haste to board the paddle-wheel at Gwanki, inadvertently tumble Gore into the water - but after all he is, they feel, only their servant. Gore finds little opportunity to indulge his love for comfort. Just after he joyfully inserts "his long goose-rump into four inches of muddy

Niger" (An American Visitor, p. 26) he is interrupted by Jukes's invitation for a nightcap. Gore accepts but only "from a sense of duty. At another point, his conscience will not allow him to eat alone - much as he wants to - but he reluctantly invites Cottee to join him. Despite his best efforts to placate all parties, he is censured by Cottee and the other prospectors for refusing to send for the soldiers. Against "the emotional desires of nearly everyone at the station", he "heroically sticks to principle".²⁸ Apart from the minor misfortunes which plague him, his attempts to preserve the status quo are doomed to fail. His middle-of-the road policy is humane but ineffectual and his hopes to make peace between the two groups must eventually give in to change. Cary portrays him with skill and consistency; one may laugh at Gore but never without sympathy.

Cary's portrayal of Cottee is somewhat perplexing. He is a peculiar combination of philosopher (second class) and materialist. It is an uneasy dichotomy. In conversation, he is able to expose Marie's failure to base her conclusions on a secure logical foundation. He questions her statement that "The Birri are the happiest kind of people . . . we have nothing to give them but disease and lies and poverty and envy and vulgarity". (89) When he asks "who invented this wonderful education" under which the Birri have prospered, her reply is facile: "you had to bring people up to like the right things, the natural things". When Cottee refutes her statement, she is disconcerted and cannot defend herself. She can only appeal

to Bewsher for support. (An American Visitor, p. 90) Cottee also acts as a mouthpiece for Cary's criticism of America's refusal to support the League of Nations:

That's what all you people want, isn't it - the golden city. You want to get rid of politics and all that horrid machinery which is always going wrong and frightening the children - all these complicated diplomacies and Leagues and Unions and Empires and Alliances so that you can go back to natural obligations and natural rights, isn't that the word - back to providence. (91)

He correctly labels Marie an anarchist. Although she cannot match him in argument, her opinion of him finds support in the novel:

"Whether Frank Cottee was right or wrong about the Birri, he was wrong in himself". (95)

Contrasted with Gore, Cottee is intellectually superior but ethically inferior. When Cottee invites him to peep at Marie and Bewsher from the rest-house doorway, Gore declines. Instead, he joins them. From a glance at Marie's expression as she gazes at Bewsher, Gore relaxes knowing that no diplomatic efforts are required of him. Cottee is hardly pleased that while he has been rejected, Monkey Bewsher arouses Marie's affectionate interest at first meeting. Cottee is most irritating after his material success. From his self-satisfied pose, he is able to philosophize on the shortcomings of Gore and Bewsher. As "feudal anachronisms", they were unable to suit themselves to the times but took on the impossible task of harnessing change. He enjoys comparing his

fate to Gore's: "Poor old Gore, when he's rotting on a twopenny pension in some third-rate suburb I'll be a rich man; and we started together. Of course, one mustn't say so, but mine is the better fate - there's no comparison." (An American Visitor, p. 236).

Cottee does believe in paying outward attention to form and sacrifices his cigar when he and Gore unexpectedly meet Marie. Her quality is to bring out the best in both men. Gore had abandoned his reserve for her, and in her presence, Cottee's smugness is shattered and he is forced to question his attitudes and way of life. Finding himself wanting, he busily rationalizes away his admiration for her and prefers to think of her as an ugly little woman and Gore as a "damned official" full of "hokum". (239) Only then can he complacently enjoy his wealth.

Cary's satirical presentation of Cottee appears to reflect his attitude towards philosophers: "He hated theorizers when their theories had no practical human application or no basis in reality. Cambridge Philosophers like Bertrand Russell were among this group, playing games with semantics and abstractions that, however absorbing, had as much application and benefit to human affairs as a crossword puzzle."²⁹ Cary shows his contempt for philosophers who often forget they share humanity's vices or follies by making Cottee a lecherous materialist. Of course, he was not a good philosopher, owing much to "style and caffeine".

If Cottee's character seems muddled, Gore's comments help shed illumination:

He carried the furniture of two or three selves. But he wasn't settled yet and he had never been settled long enough to belong anywhere, to acquire a more than temporary and verbal significance. (An American Visitor, p. 151).

Core's opinion of Cottee is similar to Marie's. He understands that Cottee is a dabbler who has never allowed himself to become fully involved in anything worthwhile. When business is unpromising, he enjoys cigars.

Cottee, yellow and fat from his visit to Africa, can hardly be regarded as Cary's spokesman despite his being given a considerable share in narration.³⁰ Rather, as narrator, he serves to undercut a romanticized view of Marie and Bewsher.³¹ Cary wishes to remain detached and objective and refuses to whisper in an aside to the reader just how to interpret a character. In attempting to understand any character in the novel, the reader has to consider the characters' own words and actions and the comments and reactions of other characters.

Cary makes effective use of Cottee as a narrating center at the end of the novel. His dual picture of Marie may approach Cary's own modified view of her character. At the sound of Marie's voice

Cottee's heart beat and his eyes fill (sic). It transported him once more 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, moreover, that the men and women who lived in this other romantic world, call them sentimentalists if you like, 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 and on good terms with the neighbours. (An American Visitor, p. 238).

Momentarily, a glance at her small white face makes him change his mind: "This ugly little woman a tragic queen, Monkey Bewsher a hero, it was absurd." (238)

Cary's own criticism of Marie is modified by his growing belief that "the faith which lies beneath anarchism is just as necessary to the world as the reason which creates systems of law". (246)

Cary's interest in characters possessing creative imagination recurs in An American Visitor. In Marie Hasluck, he experiments with this theme in a novel way. Ordinarily, creative imagination is an asset and a source of strength. But Cary has not yet found his comic voice and instead shows how Marie's incessant quest for an infallible philosophy leads to tragic results. For her, creative imagination overlaps with self-delusion; she theorizes excessively and adopts textbook substitutes of reality. First, she is obsessed with Rousseau's doctrine of the noble savage. Marie writes:

'In Birri there is nothing of what we in America and in Europe call civilization . . . The independent spirit of the natives and the rarely enlightened policy of the District Officer, Mister Eustace B. Bewsher . . . has preserved the primitive culture of the tribe both from the so-called education of the mission and the development of finance. The result is that the Birri are probably the happiest and wisest people in the world. To pass from what we call civilization into this obscure district of Nigeria is like going out of a lunatic asylum where the keepers are crazier than the patients into a spring morning of the Golden Age.' (An American Visitor, p. 66).

Marie experiences timid doubts about her article but upon seeing Obai she becomes ashamed of these doubts. Her article "could not convey the quality of life in Nok, the quality of this air charged with noble and simple feeling." (67) She persists in her belief despite glaring examples of the pagans' failures to be noble, (her own servant, Henry, is a petty thief) until the natives attack the Christian mission and murder an Ejaw maid. Then her idealistic attitude is replaced by one of suspicion and mistrust and, acting on her own, she orders soldiers to protect the mission. When this extreme reaction proves incorrect, she replaces it by her own version of the Dobsons' reliance upon faith: she is absorbed

"with the discovery which, like those rewarding the chemist or the physicist after years of research, had seemed to her at first only another step in a common place routine of explanation and now began to reveal itself as something enormous, revolu-

tionary; that transformed her whole conception of life . . .

She shivered with excitement. Her body turned cool and light. She seemed to be floating on her bed on golden waves. And even though she perceived that the waves were the sunlight reflected from the undulations of the mud floor, she has the same feeling of elation, of lightness, of confidence and delight. What peace to float like this, cool and tranquil in the security of God's love, God's justice. Or perhaps it was only that she had a temperature. (An American Visitor, p. 221).

She had called the Christian faith another world and that was true. She was in that world now, the world of faith in God, in love . . . She did not need to argue with herself. Her mind, her heart assured her of the fact immediately as she knew that the sun was shining all about her. As the sun filled the air with its transparent flame so God poured his love through all creation invisible only because it was everywhere. (224)

Abandoning commonsense, she clings to a faith at odds with reason and refuses to give Monkey Bewsher his gun, thereby making herself instrumental in causing his death. But even at the end of the book, Marie still has not changed: "I'm not praying, but where Monkey is, the ground feels kind of different". (239) Yet Marie's quest for a suitable mode of interpreting reality, her re-modelling of the imaginative constructs of others, is undermined by her own ambivalent feelings. For underneath her positive attitudes is a contradictory cynicism which she longs to deny but which she acknowledges from time to time. For example, when a pagan mob knocks her off her feet, she is angered not so much at the mob

but at her own reaction to them: "What turned up from the bottom of her mind was that very pessimism which always disgusted her". (An American Visitor, p. 68) Yet she has no illusions about two individual members of the Birri tribe: Henry, the ex-convict or Ali who had been in the stocks for selling little girls. She does, in fact, say "if I wanted a cook and a boy I should take Henry and Ali because I know something about them". (21) These two examples verify her worldliness - a knowledge of reality which her idealism wishes to deny.

Much criticism has been levelled at Cary's portrayal of Marie. Andrew Wright says she "is an idea rather than a human being",³² M. Mahood agrees that Cary "did not manage to bring her to life" and questions whether anyone "could be as naive as Marie about the joys of primitive life".³³ She feels that "Marie is put together from theories, some of them of recent formation, about national character and the natures of women".³⁴ O'Connor finds her "remarkably simpleminded for an anthropologist".³⁵ This last criticism finds substantiation in the novel when Cary initially made her a believer in the outdated concept of "the noble savage". Indeed there is some validity in all these criticisms of Marie. It is true she is not an entirely successful character.

Cary initially seems to have had little sympathy for Marie. In the preface to the novel, he explains how she was modelled upon an American visitor who appalled him by her ideas on

bringing up children: "We believe that children should get their own ideas of right and wrong." (An American Visitor, p. 243). He admits that upon visiting America, he discovered there was no such thing as a typical American view of life but somehow the American refusal to join the League of Nations muddled with his memory of the lady made him wish, or so it seems from his comments in the preface, to retaliate with his portrayal of Marie. She represents America, he feels, in shrugging off the need for authority. So he chooses to make her an anarchist. Yet he qualifies his criticism: "And the modern democracy, as we know it, has a powerful system of law". (247) Marie seems an unlikely result from this kind of thought. Warren French, on the other hand, does not criticize her for being unreal; he feels that An American Visitor is

of the most direct personal significance to the American reader and deserves wide and careful reading because of its trenchant expression of a distinctive viewpoint toward a significant aspect of our national character . . . [Cary] leaves with the reader the notion that undisciplined idealism may be as destructive as self-seeking materialism if it rests upon the same inadequate foundation".³⁶

Cary's portrait of Marie is relevant to his development of creative characters: Marie possesses the drive to create her own world; she desperately needs a philosophy. Her failure is that she cannot create a unified, individual philosophy but adopts

piecemeal the ideas of others and applies them at the most inopportune times.

Eustace Bewsher, on the other hand, possesses Cary's definitive kind of creative imagination. He is a man with a dream - a dream of African unity. All those who know him recognize his dedication to realizing that dream. Gore, acting as a narrating center, gives a valid description of Bewsher:

You knew at first sight of Bewsher that he was a man with a cause, and that he was prepared to tell you all about it on the least excuse. He fixed you at once with a glance which enquired, what's the fellow good for, that is to say, as a proselyte, and at the same time, his lips had a half smile as if he had decided beforehand that you were good for nothing, that is to say, as regards irrigation in Birri or the folk lore of Nok . . .

But it seemed to Gore . . . that Bewsher was one of the happiest men he had ever known. And why not, he had no envy and he had his cause, his hobby, above all, his attachments, (An American Visitor, p. 39).

His creative imagination is absorbed by the "fixed idea that he can protect his Birri from the unsettling and corrupting influences of white civilization".³⁷ His energetic espousal of this cause is an expression of imaginative exuberance which creates its own outlets.

Bewsher is a psychologically grotesque character, grotesque in a comic way. He differs from his counterpart, Bradgate, in Aissa Saved, who is a simple type. Although they

belong in different categories of characters, both men have some things in common: they share personality traits and similar attitudes towards the natives. In fact, Cary has created his own type of colonial administrator and in each of the African novels, each administrator differs only in degree of detailed presentation. Bewsher is more sympathetic and colourful than Bradgate. Yet both men are protective of the natives, conscientious in their work, and blind to making fools of themselves. They make few concessions to public opinion but, absorbed by their projects, never consider their impressions upon others. Their preoccupation and the disparity between their intentions and their results make them comic. In Aissa Saved, for example, as Bradgate wallows in the mud, he considers his demonstration of bridge building a good one. The natives think him silly. Again in An American Visitor, Bewsher, after losing face with the natives, offers them impertinent advice, lecturing them on practical affairs, of government. Ironically, the tribal elders are interested not in Bewsher's advice, but in debating what to do with Bewsher's body.

Bewsher foreshadows some of Cary's most delightful characters. His excitement over being alive links him with Mister Johnson and Gulley Jimson. Even death can not quell Bewsher's ability to laugh at himself. As he lies dying, his mind

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!" (An American Visitor, p. 229).

He has confronted the mobs of Birri before with nothing but confidence that they will listen to him; in one parody of front-line conflict, Bewsher races out to meet the charging warriors. To Marie's horror and astonishment

Bewsher set out at full speed towards the Birri, holding out his arms like a man trying to turn a flock of sheep, and shouting at the top of his voice expostulations in the strongest language. (135).

Marie chases after him to remonstrate about this method of coping with the Birri while Gore also follows armed with a large stick. It is a chase faintly reminiscent of the missionaries' pursuit of Aissa. Stoker, the military leader, and his men wait helplessly, unable to use their superior artillery simply because the three whites are in front of them engaging in most unorthodox methods of counterattack.

Bewsher's imagination is never directed upon what can happen to him; solving the natives' problem is his obsession. He is a man constantly knocked off balance, but, scarcely deigning to notice, he scrambles for a secure position. When Marie first catches sight of him, he is in a characteristic position:

The white man made a leap at the bulwarks and came down on his stomach. For a moment it was not certain whether he was going to dive aboard on his hand, or tumble tail first into the Niger. The legs kicked furiously. Then black hands seized him by the shirt and he disappeared abruptly like a bundle of merchandise. (An American Visitor, p. 37).

He is, both literally and metaphorically, a supremely comic figure;

Bewsher has ostler's or jockey's legs, sinewy and fine and a trifle bandy. The right was decidedly bandier. At the end of his long powerful body they resembled the crooked antennae of some agitated insect as they sought desperately for purchase in the air. (38)

Gary caricatures the physical appearance of many of his major characters including Mister Johnson, Gullely Jimson, Wilcher and Nimmo. This exaggeration of physical traits correlates with his preference for psychologically grotesque characters. He indirectly defends the status of exaggerated characters in his article, "Including Mister Micawber"³⁸ arguing that the 'real' characters in novels leave no more vivid impressions upon his mind than do many caricatures:

Every novelist is taught to make his characters as 'real' as possible, to attempt the illusion that his book deals with actual people. For the reader is an actual person; his living sympathies can be engaged only for another actual person.

Therefore, we are told, a writer should study 'real' people and their ways; he should notice all those little points which distinguish A from B; he should avoid, at all costs, the type,

the caricature . . . Yet, when we read the critiques, and examine the novels which stick most closely to the rule, which should therefore be the most telling, we are left with the uneasy feeling that we have wasted our time.

We remember that Trollope despised Dickens for the exaggeration and falsity of his characters, but that Dickens is an immeasurably greater writer than Trollope; and that it is precisely Dickens's exaggerated and false characters who remain in our memory, who, as it is said, are 'immortal'. We are offered the paradox that 'unreal' characters are among the most effective in fiction and have a vitality that keeps them effective for generations.³⁹

Bewsher's flair is to attract attention; the natives respect his powerful spirit; he excites their imagination and Marie's because they never know what he will do next. Life with him is full of movement, adventure and fun:

Marie . . . thought that he looked more like a half-intoxicated publican on the spree than a distinguished magistrate. Gait and conversation were in keeping. He rolled along like a drunken sailor throwing out jokes which from all she could hear of them, she was not meant to hear. And when the Birri laughed, he too laughed. (An American Visitor, p. 69)

Bewsher is marvellously out of place in a novel burdened with ideas.

Cary has often mentioned his problems with ideas in books. First he had the problem of keeping them within proper bounds; indeed he sometimes sounds as if a major problem was how to excise the ideas from his works.⁴⁰

In An American Visitor, Cottee's reflections too often "threaten to turn the book into a study of colonialism rather than a novel".⁴¹

For Bewsher, circumstances provide opportunities for creative living.

Cary's decision to use different narrators to comment upon Bewsher is to heighten his importance within the novel and to reveal how each character's personality affects his view of Bewsher. An ambiguous portrayal of the British administrator does not result because the reader is well aware of the personalities of the narrators and is required to consider the speaker's bias. Cary's method of characterization is therefore more complex in An American Visitor and places further intellectual demands upon the reader. Yet the portrait of Bewsher used to illustrate Cary's approach is lucid: narrators' commentaries provide a cumulative description of an interesting character whose strength is his sharply defined nature, his integrity and fulfillment as an individual. This type of immutable personality is Cary's favorite. Cary's success with Bewsher, Mister Johnson, Gulley Jimson, Sara Monday - his whole gallery of defined, undeveloping types overturned the cliché that a great writer ought to choose developing characters. Cary's genius lies in celebrating characters who are supremely well defined, who are unmoved by the frolics of circumstance. These central characters, when reflected through other personalities are indeed distorted but the reader, armed with insights into all characters, is in a position to see Cary's grotesque figures steadily and fully.

In An American Visitor, the direction of Cary's

development is indicated by his presentation of two characters, Marie Hasluck and Eustace Bewsher, who possess creative imagination. His technique for criticizing these characters is not to extensively employ author-imposed irony and satire but to direct critical appraisal from other characters acting as narrating centers. The result marks an interesting stage in Cary's development.

(iii)

Mister Johnson

The main purpose of this section on Mister Johnson is to show how Johnson is both creative and psychologically grotesque and how comedy directly results from his character. This will be amply illustrated by reference to the novel.

Cary's final African novel, Mister Johnson, marks a turning point in his development as a novelist. In the earlier novels, Cary had been too ambitious and had included too many characters and too many issues. The novels therefore lacked clarity. The presence of too many characters hindered the establishment of empathy between the reader and the characters. Walter Allen suggests, and with good reason, that part

of the novelist's art is to mediate between his characters and the reader: and he does so with every word he puts on paper, for every word he chooses furthers his expression of his attitude towards his characters and the total situation he is rendering.⁴²

Cary's art in mediating between his characters and the readers improves markedly in his African novels. The philosophical commentaries of Cottee in An American Visitor are inappropriate to the novel form in which dramatization of ideas, not intellectual

analysis, has come to be expected. Lubbock in The Craft of Fiction teaches that "the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be so exhibited that it will tell itself".⁴³ Mister Johnson supports Lubbock's argument.

Cary's best remembered novels are simply constructed works revolving upon a single, memorable character - frequently a rogue. Mister Johnson falls into this category. The novel is restricted in scope: most of the action takes place at a small British outpost. The emphasis throughout the novel is upon Mister Johnson; other characters have relatively minor roles, their interactions with him serving to highlight different aspects of his personality.

Johnson is Cary's first large-scale character: he entirely dominates the novel. He is intensely creative and psychologically grotesque. His distortion is occasioned by his desire to act as an Englishman and the disparity between his intentions and their results are highly entertaining. Cary and the reader are in a conspiracy in enjoying Mister Johnson. In fact, much of the humour consists in laughing at the character. This effect is common in Cary's omniscient writings for he and the reader adopt an attitude of superiority to a majority of the characters.

Cary does make concessions to Johnson. He feels that Johnson's personality can be communicated best through the present tense - an interesting instance of character affecting the author's technique: his reason for writing Mister Johnson in the present

tense is that "Johnson lives in the present from hour to hour . . . and is carried unreflecting on the stream of events; his mood is not contemplative but agitated But as Johnson does not judge, so I did not want the reader to judge. And as Johnson swims gaily on the surface of life, so I wanted the reader to swim, as all of us swim, with more or less courage and skill, for our lives."

(Mister Johnson, pp. 9-11) Whether or not the technique of using present tense succeeds is disputed. A Newsweek review, "Cary in Africa" states that one trouble with the novel is that it is written in the present tense,⁴⁴ while Charles Larsen in a review states that Cary's use of the present tense

is of major importance in understanding Johnson's personality. For Johnson lives only in the present, for the current moment All his emotions are immediate whether they be love, hate, desire, or despair. All his actions are uninhibited and free whether he is singing, dancing, drinking, fornicating, or stealing. The world is only as large as Johnson can stretch it at any given moment, and the reader is always aware of Johnson's being bombarded by the stuff of life.⁴⁵

Mister Johnson does not consider the future consequences of his actions; he is a creature moved by the emotions and sensations of the moment. However, his story could have been told in the past tense. Cary did begin writing it that way, but found it unsatisfactory. Hoffmann, in comparing Cary's earlier composition in past tense narration with his finished work in the present tense, agrees with Cary's choice:

In the final version, the narrator is present at the moment of experience; the reader is drawn into the current of events by the illusion of being present when things happen; he is closer to Johnson because he shares with him the feelings of the moment . . . The use of the present tense gains the reader's involvement in the immediate experience without any real sacrifice of the narrator's detachment as an observer.⁴⁶

Another advantage of Cary's choice of present tense narration is that Johnson is not dismissed as "an egoist, a liar, and a thief".⁴⁷ The reader does not pause to judge and criticize but is swept along with the current of events. The idea of matching tense and character may in itself be incongruous; Cary's argument is certainly unusual. Perhaps it is his argument and not the actual effect of present tense narration in the novel which invites criticism although, as indicated, arguments can be found to support Cary's choice of tense.

In Mister Johnson, Cary first makes use of the picaresque form, which is typically episodic; the presence of the protagonist serving as a force to unify the disparate sections. Technically then, the novel falls within a traditional mode. Mister Johnson is a rogue figure at the fringe of respectable society and his movements within the society - his contacts with the British officials and his own people - provide a panoramic view of the effects of two conflicting cultures in Nigeria. Cary's choice of a picaresque hero provides him with an opportunity to criticize dramatically both the colonial administration and the native population - particularly as it is

affected by the British presence. Cary does, however, modify the form to suit his own purposes: the classic intention in using the picaresque form was to use a central figure not as an object of intrinsic interest but as a convenient device, as a camera to view the changing scene. The central figure did not change or develop. Cary's central figures do not change either but his emphasis upon the central figure does differ from that of the traditional picaresque. His picaresque is not merely a device; instead, Cary's primary interest is the picaresque. If Cary was most interested in the central character and not in the passing scene, one wonders why he did not choose the dramatic novel which is generally used to reveal character. The answer is inherent in the kind of character Cary chooses - the undeveloping, unchanging character. The dramatic form is appropriate for protagonists who develop, who mature. Cary, however, wants to reveal an unchanging character through action and therefore adapts the picaresque form to suit his intention. One oddity does occur in Mister Johnson: Cary introduces a developing minor character, Rüdbeck, the English administrator who matures because of his relationship with the undeveloping protagonist, Mister Johnson. Another modification is an unhappy ending. Although the picaresque novel simply stops because the author has either exhausted his subject matter or is bored with it, nevertheless picaresque novels most frequently have happy endings. This may have happened from coincidence, not necessity. But Cary does choose to end Mister Johnson with the tragic death of his

protagonist. He often intermixes comedy and tragedy probably because he believes this most closely approximates conditions in real life.

The picaresque form has frequently been employed as a mode suitable for social satire. In Mister Johnson, there is some use of satire but one would hardly describe it as primarily a satiric novel. Satire may arise incidentally but is not the main preoccupation of the novel. Cary is more interested in presenting a character's reaction to life and its injustice than in social exposé.

The novel is structurally sound, clear, and dramatically well contrived but these factors alone do not fully account for its success. It is the presence of the indomitable Mister Johnson, the novel's eponymous hero, that indicates Cary's most remarkable achievement in the novel. He is one of the most delightful fictional characters ever created; yet, if divorced from the novel and judged solely by his actions, he is repugnant. He, in effect, renounces his own race and chooses to be an English gentleman. He welcomes and admires the foreigners, adopts their ways, and attempts to ingratiate himself with them.

When he begins working as a clerk for the colonial government, Johnson fails to realize that he is still an African. Though he may have a white man's job, his skin is black, and his error is his attempt to forget his African heritage and make new (sic) with the super-imposed one of the colonialists. 48

His king is the king of England and he prides himself on working in His Majesty's Service. But Clerk Johnson is a creature of imagination, not intellect. Any resemblance between his concept of the British way of life and its reality is coincidental. Cary does not attempt to trace how Johnson's ideas originated but presents them full-blown. For one critic, there is a

myth quality in Mister Johnson's character . . . derived at the beginning from the uncertainty of his origins (his apparent facelessness as a tribesman, a villager, or a member of any geographical area of Africa.⁴⁹)

To illustrate the direction of Johnson's creative imagination and the outward manifestations of his psychological distortion, I would like to refer specifically to the novel. It demonstrates clearly that the distorted nature of Johnson's personality is a source of comedy. Sara and Gulley's psychological distortion also has comic results but distortion and comedy are not always associated. (Two of the characters who illustrate the exception are Thomas Wilcher and Chester Nimmo; they are distorted but are not primarily comic.)

As the novel opens, Johnson is busy falling in love. The focus of Johnson's creativity - his fascination for all things English - has comic application to his courtship when he attempts to make his girlfriend into an English lady. Upon first meeting Bamu, the ferry girl, Johnson finds her so beautiful that, without preliminaries, he kisses her, finds himself challenged by her

family and is soon bargaining to buy her "on the installment plan".⁵⁰ (Presumably his infatuation with Britain is as precipitate and groundless.) Cary has chosen a dramatic and comic means of opening the novel and one which provides considerable insight into Mister Johnson's character. Future episodes confirm his impetuous, thoughtless behaviour. Imagery enforces meaning when Johnson is thrown off balance, and is abandoned to drift downstream. He is frequently surprised by the outcome of his actions for he fails to perceive any causal pattern to existence. The beginning foreshadows imminent disaster for him - the marvel is that he survives so long.

Johnson is an outsider; from his mission school upbringing, he has learned to admire and emulate the white man's way of life. He is typical of Africans who "try to approximate as closely as possible the habits and appearance of white men" and is therefore "bound to make ridiculous errors in social behavior and to live by an incongruous mixture of European and Old African beliefs".⁵¹ This 'incongruous mixture' affects his relationship with Bamu. He acknowledges that Bamu is a foolish, savage girl but feels that with a few modifications which he will engineer she will make a suitable wife for a "government clerk, rich and powerful". (Mister Johnson, p. 14). As a prime requisite for sharing his exalted station in life, she must give up her work. Then she must attire herself appropriately for, in Johnson's view, one cannot be both improperly dressed and civilized. Johnson's courtship is atypical for his problem is not one of undressing the lady but

dressing her. To re-model Bamu, he consults his definitive text - the fashion notes of the store catalogue.

Johnson's imaginative zeal finds a physical outlet as he prances along dreaming of how he will transform Bamu:

Johnson, with his morocco bag of letters under his arm and his patent leather shoes in his hand, travels at high speed, at a pace between a trot and a lope. In his loose-jointed action, it resembles a dance. He jumps over roots and holes like a ballet dancer, as if he enjoyed the exerciae. But, in fact, his mind is full of marriage and the ferry girl. He imagines her in a blouse and skirt, shoes and silk stockings, with a little felt hat full of feathers and makes a jump of two yards. All the advertisements of stays, camisoles, nightgowns in the store catalogues pass through his imagination, and he dresses up the brown girl first in one and then in another. Then he sees himself introducing her to his friends: 'Missus Johnson - Mister Ajali.'

The idea makes him laugh and he gives another spring over a root. How he will be envied for the beautiful girl. But he will not only make her a civilized wife; he will love her. He will teach her how to attend parties with him; and how to receive his guests, how to lie down in one bed with a husband, how to kiss, and how to love. Johnson's idea of a civilized marriage, founded on the store catalogues, their fashion notes, the observation of missionaries at his mission school, and a few novels approved by the S.P.C.K., is a compound of romantic sentiment and embroidered underclothes. (Mister Johnson, pp. 15-16).

Winning Bamu tends to confirm Johnson's feeling of mastery over events. He prefers to shrug off unpleasant aspects of reality, denying himself opportunities to learn the true nature of existence. The key to his maintaining a spirit of joy consists in ignoring or re-fashioning as much of reality as possible. His vulnerability

and resilience are displayed early: he visits Bamu's family dressed for the occasion in helmet, wrist-watch, umbrella and other paraphernalia of civilization. When he leaves, he wears only a loincloth. Instead of being nonplussed over his loss, he is pleased with his superior bargaining power. A contrast of Johnson's and Bamu's attitudes towards reality illustrates, on a minor scale, Cary's interest in the multiplicity of views about reality, a topic which is not only significant within the trilogies but which prompted Cary to use the trilogy form.

Johnson prides himself upon his official position in the British administration; to express his sense of importance and accomplishment, he feels compelled to give frequent parties. This is not a British custom, but Johnson is eclectic in his borrowings. Partygiving is a response to his insatiable need for admirers; and the need to celebrate in song and dance his exuberant delight in being alive. Johnson is both poet and myth-maker. His talents sometimes express themselves in parties which disturb the peace of the British community. At one of his many parties, his creative imagination impels him to express joyously his pride in his work and his passion for England:

Johnson walks up and down in the compound and every moment his walk becomes grander; it is like the walk of the royal guard, but a guard of poets fresh from a triumph of loyalty. Johnson slaps himself on the chest. 'I belong for de King - I 'gree for de King. I Mister Rudbeck's frien'.'

Beer is going round in large calabashes, all the clerks and servants are talking at the top of their voices and the words, 'King', 'home', 'England', 'royal' are heard. Everybody is excited by the idea of patriotism. Every now and then, as Johnson walks among his guests, he makes a few dance steps, and sings through his nose, 'England is my country, dat King of England is my king.'

At one in the morning all boys and clerks have gone except one small boy. But half a dozen townspeople are still gossiping in the shadows. Johnson is walking restlessly in the compound. He has taken off all his clothes except his bright shoes. A thin moon glitters on the shoes, on an empty gin bottle, and the dregs of beer in scattered calabashes. Johnson is singing softly with quick changes of pitch and tone:

'England is my country.
 Oh, England, my home all on de big water.
 Dat King of England is my King,
 De hes' man in de worl', his heart is too big.
 Oh, England, my home all on de big water.'
 (Mister Johnson, pp. 40-41)

From this scene it is obvious how Cary uses Johnson's creative imagination for comic effect. Johnson is not mutely patriotic. His fervent and sincere feelings for his adopted country are loudly proclaimed as drunk and naked, except for his shoes, he sings in the moonlight to his King. This quotation indicates too how Johnson has the power to inspire in others feelings akin to his own.

Johnson's creative imagination finds a more practical expression when Rudbeck uses Johnson as a source of inspiration to spur the roadbuilders to finish their task. No one can equal Johnson in his ability to make work exciting and fulfilling. Workers, inspired by his example, transform drudgery into a work of art and amaze

themselves and Rudbeck with their speed and endurance:

Johnson, in a torn pair of trousers and a carrier's straw hat, is chopping, swearing, or singing, improvising and exhorting from before dawn till long after dark. He is always dirty, streaked with layers of sweat and dirt in which the new sweat trickles crookedly like water on a varnished boat, leaving bright, black trails. His cheeks are hollow with tiredness and his eyes are inflamed with wood smoke. But his voice still conveys the most energetic feeling and his legs, body, and arms change every moment from one expressive posture to another, in sympathy with the voice. He is like a witch-doctor possessed by the spirit. Johnson, in fact, 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 Rudbeck and Rudbeck's triumph, which is his own. He lives in this glory, which is expressed in every yell, in every obscene joke, kick, jump, or swing of the matchet. He does not need to think, 'Rudbeck's road, the great, the glorious, the wonder of the world, is about to be finished and I have helped to finish it.' He knows it in every muscle. It is there all the time, part of the music, the shouts, the shining sweaty backs and their rhythmic muscles, the yelling songs, the triumphant, intoxicating drums, the blue smoke of the fires, the trees toppling and crashing like cliffs, the suddenly expanded sky. It is like the mat under him when he wakes at night, the firm ground by day. He sings like a defiance to the forest:

'Bow down old lords of the world,
Put your green heads in the dust.
Salute the roadmen, children of the sky;
Come, sun and moon, walk now in the dark wood,
Walk in Rudbeck's road with your long shining feet.'
(Mister Johnson, pp. 178-179)

It is clear from these passages how Johnson's imagination expresses itself outwardly in movement, in dance, in song and how easily he communicates his feelings to others so that under his spell they too become momentarily creative.

Johnson's inability to think of tomorrow - his lack of any sense of history - precipitates his criminal activities. In assessing his character, it is necessary to distinguish between his motives and his actions. Johnson is an innocent without any will to evil. But his actions include spying, embezzlement, rake-offa, and murder. He is pained and surprised to find himself in predicaments which necessitate wrongdoing - although at times he cannot distinguish right from wrong behaviour. For example, in response to Tring's accusation of embezzlement - he finds the administrator's code of ethics foreign and inexplicable. In cases when he can distinguish right from wrong and is free to choose, then his decision may be sound. Cary arranges the temptation by Waziri to establish this aspect of Johnson's character. Waziri proposes that Johnson act as his paid informer. With scorn and a consciousness of his loyalty to King and country, Johnson indignantly refuses Waziri's offer:

"I not Mister Bauli, Waziri, I Johnson - I belong for government. I belong for de King - I Mister Rudbeck's frien' - I no take money for King's letters. I no fit do such a ting." (Mister Johnson p. 39)

Waziri has only to wait until Johnson is in trouble. When the clerk is unable to meet his installment payments for his wife and is in debt to Moma and the labourers, Waziri offers him his wife back and money from the native treasury. Johnson has only to sign. When Rudbeck hears of his clerk's illegal borrowing, Johnson fears for his job. Waziri is able to arrange for release of the paper provided

Johnson do some spying. Johnson, at a loss in this predicament, agrees to steal for Waziri. Johnson's lack of foresight, his incredulity and stupidity trap him into situations from which there is no honest way out. But Johnson is more than a pathetic victim of a combination of British-imposed culture and his own naivety. Cary celebrates other aspects of Johnson's character to give him an impressive stature.

Johnson is a creature of imagination, not intellect. Intellect may make survival possible but imagination, in Johnson's case at least, makes it worthwhile. Cary makes excellent use of minor characters to contrast with his hero and highlight his positive qualities. Bamu and her family (one-dimensional, stock characters) are greedy materialists eager to take advantage of Johnson's generosity. Ajali, the government store clerk, is the soul of boredom which is only temporarily dissipated by Mr. Johnson's antics. Malicious and envious, he lives in anticipation of his friend's downfall. Cary's description of Ajali is strikingly accurate for boredom makes him vicious and he "seems to lurk in the hot, stinking twilight of the shed like a scorpion in a crack, ready to spring on some prey".

(Mister Johnson, p. 18) Johnson is filled with human warmth and affection for every living creature; envy, hatred and disgust are emotions foreign to his nature. Regardless of how he is mistreated by others - patronized by Celia, deserted and betrayed by Bamu, cursed and beaten by Gollup - his affection and loyalty are unswerving.

He is one of those people who scarcely notice whether he has friends or not; he gives friendship but, he has no time to ask whether he gets it. He is too busy. (Mister Johnson, p. 67)

Ajali and Benjamin provide Johnson with an audience for his madcap schemes. Although Benjamin is a kind, friendly man, Johnson prefers Ajali's company because he is more obviously astounded and fascinated by the clerk's behaviour. Benjamin is a melancholy soul whose typical response to life's vicissitudes is one of weary resignation. In Johnson's presence, however, he experiences stirrings of adventure, though these are but faint and quickly suppressed. On rare occasions, Benjamin has even been known to grin at Johnson's account of his proposed exploits although the "grin is a little tight, grimace as of pain". (80) Benjamin's lot is a hard one: he would like to share a world with sensible people but during his service at the colonial office, he fails to find anyone who is sensible. (63) He longs for order and stability, for a world in which actions are performed only after judicious consideration is given to their correctness. His conversation reveals his concern with what is appropriate or conventionally acceptable. Johnson's behaviour puzzles and perplexes him. They may belong to the same race but appear like beings alien to one another. Benjamin's attitude to Clerk Johnson is protective and he beleaguers him with advice to which Johnson pays but scant attention. He disapproves of Johnson's intended marriage to an ignorant bush girl while he himself intends to wait for a sensible

girl. But when Johnson asks him to perform the marriage ceremony, Benjamin agrees. His decision is based upon his conception of the duties and demands imposed by "ordinary friendship". (Mister Johnson, p. 34) Benjamin always seeks a reason for his action. Despite his concern with order and correctness - itself a parody of British officialdom - Benjamin is inevitably drawn into ludicrous situations. At Johnson's wedding, he receives an unexpected compensation:

Benjamin reads well with great enjoyment of the words; at phrases which especially please him, he raises his eyebrows as if in surprise and there is even surprise in his voice, as if to say, "But this is better than I thought." (45)

He is a comic although alightly pathetic figure. In circular logic he expresses his sense of the futility of desiring happiness:

He says to Johnson, "It is very unjust for you to lose your job, but perhaps it is lucky. If you go for a laborer, they seem to enjoy life. They are so free from worrying about the bad condition of everything. Yes, and not about themselves too. The secret of enjoyment. Perhaps you think you waste your time if you go for a common laborer. I think so too. It would prevent all the enjoyment." (132)

His propensity for giving advice occasionally rebounds against him:

Johnson looks furious, but Benjamin says in English, "I advise you to give him some small cash - he is very great friend of Waziri."

"I have no money here - if you would lend me a shilling, Mister Benjamin."

Benjamin at once gives the shilling. He is generous with money. (Mister Johnson, p. 36)

Benjamin's desire for an ordered world is expressed by his regularly wearing a clean shirt every day. It is his major bastion against despair. But ultimately, he cannot attain the order he most admires and when Tring checks his books, they, like those of Mr. Johnson, do not balance. Benjamin expects to be jailed but Rudbeck, although shattered that his comparison of Benjamin to the Bank of England is false, intervenes on his behalf.

Benjamin is an interesting if simple type character but he is fashioned primarily to serve as a foil to Johnson. His pessimism, melancholy, and resignation contrast with Johnson's optimism, joie de vivre, and hopefulness. Benjamin is honest, trustworthy and a loyal friend. Johnson, although not technically honest, is also warmhearted and affectionate.

Cary distances himself from Johnson by choosing both Benjamin and Ajali as an audience to whom Johnson can expound his schemes. This frees him from direct author narration. When Johnson himself tells his friends of his projected escapades, the reader vicariously shares their credulous wonder at Johnson's madness. One of Johnson's madcap schemes is to steal Rudbeck's keys while he is sleeping in order to gain access to confidential files for the Waziri.

His imagination is excited by his friends' amazement at his daring:

He is so much excited by his own words and by the idea of the glory to be won in this difficult enterprise that he would be greatly disappointed if an earthquake were to crush the safe and a tornado blow the confidential reports into his hand. He describes in detail how he will steal the keys . . . 'I see Mister Rudbeck - he lie so on his left cheek.' He bends his own head to the left and closes his eyes. 'He frown - he breathe strong through his nose - he tink he angry with road headman for make dem bad bridge. I slip my hand under de pillow, slow, slow . . .'

'What you do if cook come in, cry out tief, tief . . .'
(Mister Johnson; p. 80)

Ajali and Benjamin continue to interject questions and are so fascinated that they will not leave him.

Johnson suddenly perceives his grandeur. He has, at a stroke, become like one apart, a terror in the world. He feels the wonder and charm of greatness. He takes out the knife and carelessly feels its edge in the firelight. Ajali turns and flies; Benjamin retreats backwards, with a wondering gaze, and then suddenly disappears.

Johnson is astonished. He looks after them for a minute with open mouth and wrinkled forehead. He can hardly believe that it is he, Johnson, who can produce such extraordinary effects on other people. (81)

Although his friends are impressed by Johnson's boldness, they foresee inevitable disaster for him. Both help prepare the reader for Johnson's eventual downfall. One of Benjamin's comments is particularly ominous: "Perhaps you go to prison for a long time - many years". (79)

Ajali is contrasted strongly with both Benjamin and Johnson: ". . . his yellow face is full of that special joy which bored and self-centered people feel in the misfortunes of another; a mixture of self-satisfaction and pure nervous cruelty". (Mister Johnson, p. 133). His delight at Johnson's disgrace is unbounded.

Mister Johnson's relationships with the British officials reveal facets of his character and establish the impossibility of his ever achieving a position of eminence within the service. Much of the humour results from the incongruity of Mister Johnson's self-image and the image the various officials have of him. His ignorance is protective for a knowledge of their attitude towards him would be devastating to his sense of self-respect. Blore's feelings about Johnson illustrate the general attitude. Blore is a conservative man enamoured of stability and order, and hostile to any change. Johnson's aspiration to become an "Englishman" appals him. The picturesque native clad in loincloth he can accept but a clerk in trousers disturbs his faith in the universe. Blore is carefully correct in his dealings with his clerk, but Johnson senses the antipathy underneath the official formality - Blore's self-righteousness in denying his advance and in castigating him for withholding funds from some labourers. Johnson's survival as a government clerk is precarious at best although his situation is "of course only a heightened version of the precariousness of the human situation anyway".⁵² After his dismissal for embezzlement of treasury funds, Johnson manages to secure work in Gollup's store.

Johnson has a key to Gollup's store (which he regards as his own) so he helps himself to gin and money. Gollup decides to sit in wait for the robber but Johnson, surprised into action, murders him with the cook's knife. He seeks sanctuary with his wife but is betrayed and taken prisoner. His fate becomes interlinked with that of Rudbeck, the District Officer at Fada, when it becomes Rudbeck's unhappy duty to arrange for Johnson's execution. Johnson has one last request to ask of his friend: he asks that Rudbeck shoot him. Rudbeck is torn between official responsibility and the demands of friendship. His first reaction is to reduce Johnson to an object to be weighed in preparation for the hanging, to

dehumanize the clerk, to turn him from a man into a thing again. This attempt is demonstrated in the scene in which the D.O. weighs Johnson in order to work out the length of rope needed for the hanging. Lacking a scale, he improvises one, balancing the prisoner against a box piled with shillings, sixpences, three-penny bits, and tins of flour and jam. This allows him not only to weigh Johnson but to transform him into the equivalent of these commodities or into a problem in arithmetic, thus making the task of execution less odious.⁵³

But in his later decision to shoot Johnson he "finally breaks through the official requirements into a real, human relationship".⁵⁴

Rudbeck's decision requires a great sacrifice on his part. Officially, now, he too will be a murderer for his orders were to hang Johnson, not shoot him. Hanging is a legal act but shooting is murder.⁵⁵

In this atypical picaresque novel, Rudbeck - and not the protagonist Johnson - achieves maturity. This is unusual in picaresque

writing for generally no character, not even the protagonist, develops or matures. As a catalyst, Johnson made possible Rudbeck's one creative achievement and in dying, he helped transform Rudbeck from an instrument of the colonial service to a fully human person.

Mister Johnson is predominantly comic in tone; even Gollup's murder is tinged with comedy as he calls out to Johnson: "Ere, 'ere. Wot you playing at?" (Mister Johnson, p. 217) Yet in the African novels in which a conflict of alien modes of being is dramatized, "everyone is at cross-purposes with everyone else. Inevitably, the tragic and comic are inextricably mingled".⁵⁶ Johnson, despite dying young, had lived a full life. He was, nevertheless, a victim of a world in transition, a world which his background made it possible for him to enjoy or to endure but not to understand.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST TRILOGY

Cary's choice of the trilogy format is appropriate. His ability to

submerge his own ego into the personality he creates is best illustrated in the trilogy form and the first person point of view. The form of the trilogy enabled Cary to develop the narrating personalities fully, each according to his or her point of view, yet at the same time he could achieve complexity because the themes and the characters of each novel of the trilogy are further developed in the other two novels.⁵⁷

In the Prefatory Essay to Herself Surprised, Cary expressed his aim in his novel and in the trilogy as a whole. His design is to reveal the protagonists of each novel in depth. Each novel is independent of the other novels. In Herself Surprised, for example, Sara presents her own self as she conceives it and also tells of Guiley Jimson and Thomas Wilcher as she knows them. As each character sees the others differently, the three novels together provide a multiple, complex revelation of the major characters, giving a kaleidoscopic impression, for each interpretation, although different, is valid. Sara is more than she perceives herself to be: she is also the Sara she seems to Jimson and Wilcher. The total effect upon the reader as he attempts to understand each character is to make him aware of the mystery of

selfhood. For all the clarity, sometimes unintentional, with which the characters reveal themselves, there is left a sense of incompleteness comparable to one's real life feeling that the self is not entirely knowable.

The reader of Cary's first trilogy is challenged to decide which image of a character is closer to the truth. William van O'Connor suggests that the "pervasive irony of the trilogy does not arise from one set of lies being revealed by a true version, but by our inability to be at all certain about our capacity to know the truth".⁵⁸ The reader must attempt to reconcile contradictory views of characters. For example, Sara perceives herself as a protective, motherly woman while Gulley perceives her as a predatory female. Cary is obviously trying to establish that each person has only a partial view of reality. The trilogy format provides an excellent vehicle for this important theme. While reading Herself Surprised, the reader dare not accept Sara's story as the only possible interpretation of the data of her life. One cannot placidly assume that Jimson and Wilcher are exactly as she describes them for an individual's interpretation of others is modified by his own personality. Each succeeding work in the trilogy ironically counters the authority of the others so that while each appears to be an independent novel and can be enjoyed separately, none can be fully appreciated in isolation. Jack Wolkenfeld argues that

Cary moved so naturally toward the multiple novel . . . [because] . . . he saw reality as

made up of a number of fragments. His use of the multiple point of view corresponds to his conviction that an individual can only grasp one portion of that reality. [He believes, however, that Cary has] an equally strong conviction that there is a single objective reality.⁵⁹

Cary's belief in objective reality is most clearly shown in The Horse's Mouth when he demonstrates how Gulley's visions stem from his sensory knowledge of the real world. This will be discussed in the section on The Horse's Mouth. Cary's preference for the trilogy form relates to his interest in creative imagination. The novels in the trilogy show how each character has created a private world.

Creative imagination, the central theme of Joyce Cary's novels, may be defined somewhat narrowly as a source of personal fantasy. Analysis of the African novels reveals that such a definition inadequately suggests the potential for variations upon this one theme. Individuals possessing creative imagination may differ utterly in personality and in intelligence. This is logical if one accepts Walter Allen's suggestion that it is a quality unique to each person. Allen believes that it is part of each man's birthright but Cary makes a strong distinction between creative and non-creative characters. The non-creative passively accept what fate offers them. The creative imaginatively re-shape reality making it more tolerable or even delightful. A correlation exists between creatively imaginative and psychologically grotesque characters. A cursory review of the creative characters already discussed - Aissa, Marie, Bewsher and Mister

Johnson - indicates how they differ in the direction and the intensity of their creative imaginations. Aissa is most creative in situations of emotional stress and excitement. Marie Hasluck's vision is not totally consistent. She does not have a single unified fantasy but idealizes life by adopting and discarding various views: she is consistent only in her refusal to acknowledge her underlying cynicism. Bewsher's creativity is again different: it is associated with a cause. But Bewsher is also a realist: he knows the Birri people well and has no illusions about them. He does have faith in his ability to persuade them to unite. Mister Johnson, one of the most exuberant and consistently creative of all Cary's characters is a more improbable person (that is, more grotesque psychologically) than the others. Reality seldom intrudes upon Johnson's consciousness: he prefers to ignore it in dance, song and mythmaking. What all four of these characters have in common is imaginative energy which helps them transcend with varying degrees of success the limitations imposed by circumstance and society. None are dull or passive victims: each strives to create a world which, even if it cannot assure absolute happiness and security, does admit the will to survive and enjoy life fully.

(1)

The Horse's Mouth

Because creativity is most obvious and can be most easily demonstrated in Gulley Jimson, an artist both by profession and inclination, I propose to invert the chronological ordering of the trilogy (Herself Surprised, To Be A Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth) and discuss The Horse's Mouth first, then Herself Surprised and finally, To Be A Pilgrim. I would first like to consider Gulley as an artist - a person who chooses creativity as a profession - and then to consider Gulley as a person of creative imagination expressed through his daily life and his interactions with others. Quite obviously, Cary does not confine creativity to the visual artist, writer, or musician. Otherwise, of all Cary's characters, only Gulley would be creative. A case can be argued; however, that Gulley is the most creative of Cary's characters and is simultaneously the most improbable and the most grotesque psychologically. Indeed, I would like to support this argument.

For Gulley Jimson, all the data gathered by his senses are made the stuff of vision. He quotes from Blake to illustrate his dependence upon the senses to gather information for imaginative transformation:

Five windows light the caverned 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.
 (The Horse's Mouth, p. 5)

Every man is informed of external reality by his senses. Although some people may be deprived of some senses, no man can be deprived of all his senses - and still live. But each man differs in his ability to respond to, to manipulate and to transform reality. Indeed, some people are insensitive to reality, to what actually exists: they have eyes and see not. Gulley is not one of these. He is acutely sensitive to visual reality but possesses as well the ability to transform it instantaneously into imaginative reality.

As the novel opens, Cary uses a modified stream of consciousness technique to provide insight into Gulley's reaction to the world around him and how he moves from a literal description of his surroundings to an artistic intuition about them - from literal language to simile to symbol:

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. (5)

This is an excellent example of how Gulley as a symbolist painter arrives at appropriate symbols as his mind interprets the raw material of reality. He does not automatically impose his ideas upon nature

but responds to nature in his own special way and then arrives at an idea which can be given form in art. Even as he works at his paintings, he is constantly modifying and changing them to suit his new perceptions. As the opening quotation from Blake suggests, "caverned man" can see only "small portions of the eternal world". Gulley's visual perception is remarkably acute. Therefore he is always learning more about the "eternal world" and attempting to incorporate his expanding vision in art. As Tauno F. Mustanoja states:

For Joyce Cary, the central theme of the novel was an artist's pilgrimage through a world of everlasting creation, where the original, creative mind is always facing a change of symbolic values.⁶⁰

But Gulley is not totally dependent upon visual information to inspire him to see visions. An overheard conversation can stimulate a vision in his brain: when a customer at Coker's bar tells how hereditary deafness has afflicted his daughter who smilingly pretends to hear, Gulley says nothing but his visual faculty responds:

And I saw 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. (The Horse's Mouth, p. 18)

Gulley's imagination responds to a young couple who are out for an evening walk. He recognizes how nature controls

imagination in everyone who experiences the emotion of falling in love. Too often, that universal distortion of reality is fleeting and the dream maiden fades into a "frow":

Girl going past clinging to a young man's arm.
 Putting up her face like a duck to the moon.
 Drinking 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. (The Horse's Mouth, p. 56)

Only in The Horse's Mouth does Cary demonstrate how creativity occurs as an interaction between the brain, senses and objects in the external world which transmit energy signals to the senses.

One can generalize that this happens for the other creative characters in Cary's novels but only the results of this interaction are given, not examples of how the interaction takes place. These examples illustrate Cary's belief in external reality but indicate too how imagination works upon reality and transforms it.

The title The Horse's Mouth when related to Gullay suggests he is a truth teller, a voice of wisdom. Therefore, his artistic vision must be valid. Yet it is difficult to judge the quality of Gullay's artistry because the circumstances surrounding his productions and the plight of his art works are absurd: Gullay's later art works are not in galleries. Coker's mother uses Gullay's canvas

for "The Fall" to patch her leaky roof. Even before she found a use she deemed suitable for it, some mischievous youngsters had been using the birds on it as shooting targets. Because Gulley has abandoned the lyric style for epic, he needs immense canvases. But his acute poverty puts them out of his financial reach. Therefore he uses walls instead. For his proposed masterpiece, "The Raising of Lazarus", he chooses the wall in Sir William Beeder's apartment:

A good wall, as they say, will paint itself. And as I looked at this beautiful shape, I saw what it was for. "A raising of Lazarus." (The Horse's Mouth, p. 242)

For his final work, "The Creation", he chooses a dilapidated church already subject of a planned demolition. All of these incidents provide marvellous comedy but superficially make Gulley appear ridiculous. And yet, Gulley is not a fool. To appreciate why Cary subjects Gulley's works to such peculiar treatment is not to denigrate Gulley but to make us consider what true art and creativity is all about. Cary's references to Blake in The Horse's Mouth help elucidate the problem of evaluating Gulley as archetype of the artist. I wish to mention only one relevant aspect of Blake's philosophy in this connection. Any student of Blake's poetry is aware of his belief that an artist is not simply a maker of discrete art works to be contemplated and enjoyed. Rather, the artist must continually try to order the data of experience and mould them into art works. No artist should have a rigid formulation of his art but should always react spontaneously and then allow the art work to evolve as inspiration moves the

artist. The work of art is, of course, important but Cary is trying to come to grips with the process of creativity itself and not just its results. Cary, in distinguishing between works of art and artistic creativity, recognizes that art works may be beautiful and valuable but they are results of a process, and in Gulley Jimson, Cary celebrates art as process. Once an art work is completed, the true artist can have no more interest in it for it is permanently fixed and final and, in a sense, dead. Hickson, Gulley's patron, will never know the excitement of artistic creation but can only possess what is dross to the artist. Although Gulley may indulge in a moment's admiring analysis of his "Sara in the Bath", he has no desire to repeat his work. Copies belong to the factory. The artist constantly seeks new forms to express himself. The only time Gulley makes a copy, he does so to trick the Beeders into financing his final work, "The Creation".

He could make money by repeating his earlier style, now that the public has caught up with Impressionism, but it would be repetition, not creation. Whether he is successful or not by society's standards does not matter to him, nor does it matter whether posterity might eventually appreciate his earlier style; he has gone on to something else . . . Society expects Gulley to conform to its taste, and then it will buy his paintings, but to do so would be the death of him as an artist. And the death of the artist, the creator, is the death of society, for it is through the vision of the artist that society is taught new ways of seeing. 61

As demonstrated, Gulley is a creative artist. But Gulley is also creative on a different level. Unlike Mister Johnson, he is a

realist. Everywhere he goes, he is overwhelmed by the persistence of human suffering and injustice. His response to life in a fallen world, one in which misery is inevitable, indicates the power of his creativity. Gulley has a fighting spirit - a determination not to surrender to the grim facts of an oppressive world but to laugh away pain and fear. Gulley's humour gives him courage to accept - at least most of the time - life's hard knocks. Cary emphasizes Gulley's awareness of human misery by showing how he interacts with the poor, the deformed and the slighted. Among his little coterie at Greenbank is a good representation of poor suffering humanity - Coker, Nosy Barbon, Harry the dwarf, and Plantie. Gulley also remembers the failures of both his sister and his father. Sara, a highly creative character in Herself Surprised, has lost much of her imaginative power in old age. These characters are interesting and colourful but one of their chief functions in the novel is to expose Gulley to others whose suffering parallels and confirms his own, although, unlike his friends, Gulley refuses to be circumscribed by most external events.

His friend Coker, the barmaid at the Eagle, suffers because of her physical ugliness. Her only chance for love comes when she meets Willie; she is grateful for the bad lighting in the local church. Coker displays a rough exterior but melts at affection. But her joy at having found love soon sours when Willie elopes with a blonde leaving Coker, poor and pregnant, at the mercy of her fiery-tempered mother. Instead of a love nest with Willie, she has only Gulley's dilapidated old boat house and her mother for company. But

Coker's suffering is transformed into the stuff of comedy as Gulley invents preposterous schemes to evict Coker and her mother from his establishment.

Gulley's protégé, Nosy Barbon, is afflicted with a stutter and a desire to become an artist. His mother has more respectable plans for her son but there is no contest between financial security and worldly success, on the one hand, and art and poverty on the other. Nosy appears as Gulley's spiritual heir for as the novel ends, Gulley passes on to him words from "The Horse's Mouth". Nosy is told to banish all thought of justice and its accomplice - a sense of grievance - and instead to "Go love without the help of anything on earth; and that's real horse meat". (The Horse's Mouth, p. 375).

Fortune smiles on Harry the dwarf but only for a moment. Despite his squat twisted legs, he manages to find a loving wife and to father a son. But his wife is a sensitive creature and although she continues to love Harry is unable to bear her neighbour's derision and the fixed stares of strangers.

Deformity is common among the denizens of Greenbank and if one escapes hereditary deformity, life sometimes corrects this oversight. Rozzie, Gulley's 'wife' loses her legs in an accident while Plantie, one of the more significant minor characters, loses his hand. Gulley's friendship with Plantie has philosophical overtones for Plantie is a devotee of Spinoza. The effect that Plantie's adherence to Spinoza has upon him after his hand is amputated is that

he must contemplate his loss and accept it. For a while he is so lost in contemplation and makes so little effort that he is content to live on the scraps that the tenants of Elsinor, the flophouse, leave in the garbage. He "becomes divided within himself, cannot leave the past and commit himself to a new life, and so "gets stuck" in an inertia of apathy".⁶² Gulley derides Spinoza's ideas because they are polar opposites to his own. He may explode at the indignities suffered in this fallen world or he may laugh to shield his serenity but he could never insipidly accept man's sorry lot and passively observe it. Neither could he accept Spinoza's contention that there is a rational explanation for apparently irrational events. He is too well aware of the fundamental absurdity of existence. Gulley's way of coping with reality is one of energy, pluck and creativity. Once Plantie is ensconced as guardian of the washroom key, the new power and status conferred by his role leads him to react to Gulley's jibe about Spinoza: "A nice object of contemplation for the old tallyscoop" with "Who?" (The Horse's Mouth, p. 292) Plantie no longer wishes to acknowledge Spinoza.

Gulley's own family do not escape suffering fates similar to those of his friends. His father was a traditional artist who believed in using careful composition to depict scenes closely corresponding to real life. For five years, he was successful until modern art made his works appear dated. He is so offended by the decadence of modern art which eclipses his own efforts that he vents his frustration in writing letters of protest to the newspapers. As

a youth, Gulley learns from his father's experience - at least for a while - that the pursuit of art is a fool's goal. He chooses instead a "permanent", respectable job; enters into a conventional marriage and lives the comfortable bourgeois existence until he is afflicted with "galloping art".

Gulley's sister Jenny chooses to make the doomed inventor Ranken the central preoccupation of her life. Unfortunately for Jenny, he is obsessed only with his inventions and when his wife comes into some money, he plans to use it to finance his schemes. Jenny is rejected. Unlike her brother, she has no creative imagination to enable her to cope with her collapsed world and chooses to commit suicide.

Apart from Gulley, the only character in the novel who possesses energy enough to defy life's miseries is Sara. But she is a Sara sadly reduced from the sparkling and vivacious creature of Herself Surprised. Sara's creativity is dependent upon her finding some suitable male to operate upon. Contrasted to Gulley's ebullient mode of responding to life in The Horse's Mouth, Sara's is inadequate. Robert Adams compares her limitations with Coker's suggesting that both suffer from their absorption with the empirically real.⁶³ Coker cannot overcome her obsession with her exterior and seeks in Willie reassurance that she is attractive even though she is not. Sara wants to reject the empirical evidence that her flesh is subject to inevitable decay. "She is crazed by the dread of physical deterioration".⁶⁴ Her imagination becomes paralyzed and she becomes

preoccupied with obtaining a decent burial. She seeks out Gulley not only from nostalgia but to renew the sensual delights which make her feel young again. The scene in Plantie's scullery is a tragicomic example of how Sara seeks to defy old age by asserting the powers of her sexuality.

Gulley's creative imagination helps him overcome his more obvious problems: old age, poverty (with the accompanying problem of finding art materials) and society's treatment of him as an artist. Gulley knows he dare not give in to feelings of injustice and despair, or life will lose its vitality and he will lose his ability to create. Occasionally, however, feelings of injustice rage in Gulley; he attempts to gain revenge and becomes "stuck" - unable to create. So Cary's most creative character sometimes misdirects his energies. Creativity, it appears, is not a passive gift: one must struggle to retain one's vision.

Self-pity is a dangerous form of indulgence. It can become an obsession which freezes the mind on a past incident and dries up the wellsprings of creativity. Gulley counsels all his friends to ignore their sufferings but ironically he does not always follow his own advice. His own fixation is with his millionaire patron, Mr. Hickson, an ironic substitute for the aristocratic patron who once fulfilled society's obligation to the artist.⁶⁵ Thanks to Sara, Hickson possesses a number of Gulley's paintings. He feels cheated out of his work but when Coker leads him to accuse Hickson in his own house, he defends him instead thinking how little Coker

understands art and how it is evaluated monetarily:

You don't understand these things, Coker
 For instance, one might say that pictures haven't
 got any value at all in cash. They're a spiritual
 value, a liability. Or you might say that they
 hadn't got any real value till they're sold. And
 then the value keeps on going up and down. I
 should think Mr. Hickson must have spent a lot of
 money on pictures that he'll never get back again.
 (The Horse's Mouth, p. 128)

Coker is exasperated not only at Gulley's lecture on the difficulties
 of evaluating art but also at his defense of Hickson: "Mr. Hickson
 has been a great patron of art, and real patrons never get their
 money back. Not in their own lifetime, anyhow." (129).

The reason Coker had become involved in the Hickson-
 Jimson controversy was that Gulley had been describing him as a cheat
 and swindler. She wanted him to receive just payment for then he
 could recompense his friends including Coker herself. But Coker is
 also a great believer in justice and is indignant that Gulley has
 been mistreated. Gulley is not being deliberately perverse for he
 does feel cheated but nevertheless respects Hickson's judgements on
 the commercial value of art. Gulley has a more pressing reason for
 defending his patron. He is afraid of becoming "stuck". All while
 Coker and Hickson discuss accounts, Gulley is escaping in imagination
 from their confrontation and its negative effect upon his art. If
 resentment invades his mind, he will seek revenge and be unable to
 respond spontaneously to the world around him and intuitively shape
 it into art. The result will be artistic stagnation or physical

incarceration or both. But when Hickson discreetly summons the police after Gulley pockets some Japanese netsukes, Gulley cannot contain his rage at this injury and shatters a front window. (The Horse's Mouth, p. 131) This explosion costs him six months in jail but, recovering his equanimity, Gulley simply regards it as a rest cure and holiday. These outbursts against Hickson usually expressed by telephone impersonations and threats occur intermittently throughout the novel. Gulley seems to enjoy taunting him, however, for upon learning of his patron's death he is shocked and sorry.

I was so upset that my legs were shaking against my coat. Hickson gone. I couldn't believe it. It made me feel as lonely as a man who loses half his family in a shipwreck. . . . But I knew that Hickson was dead. I knew it just as a man knows when he's had his leg shot off, though he can still feel his corns. And it upset me. (309)

Hickson's supposed corruption is used to reveal the ineffectiveness of both Coker and Plantie's belief in justice. Plantie's insistence on having Gulley defended in court results in his getting a longer sentence than usual and Coker's insistence upon a confrontation between Hickson and Gulley results in another prison term. Cary inverts the traditional relationship between artist and patron. Instead of protecting the artist and facilitating his art, Hickson merely uses Gulley to acquire more art works. As a millionaire collector, he symbolizes the passion for materialism which negates art.

Gulley is sometimes successful in revenging himself upon the materialistic upper classes without becoming "stuck". Aided and

abetted by his sculptor friend Abel, he is responsible for the virtual demolition of Sir William and Lady Beeder's luxury apartment. He weakly rationalizes his role by returning the pawn tickets, but not persanally. He decides to retire to the country to avoid recriminations. Gulley's attacks on the Beeder's living quarters are indirectly attacks on capitalism. The hypocritical Sir William and his Lady Flora want to be very comfortable. Nothing in life appears more worthwhile to them. They smile politely at Gulley's insults and even when their abode and possessions are destroyed they do not inform the police afraid their comfort will be further disturbed. Forgetfulness at Cannes is their antidote to discomfort.

Cary also uses the Beeders to "satirize the ignorance and gullibility of wealthy collectors who never purchase a picture until it has received the imprimatur of a critic such as Alabaster".⁶⁶ Alabaster, pompous even in poverty, is Cary's carefully fashioned portrait of an art critic. He is superbly silly and ineffectual. Although he makes overtures to the rich, he is so poor that Gulley has to help finance his meal. But while Gulley can expect relentless poverty, it is implied that Alabaster's social aspirations will eventually make him comfortable. He invests Gulley's payment in pyjamas and middle-class clothes.

Gulley's creativity in life and in art have been clearly demonstrated, but little attention has been directly paid to his psychological grotesqueness. Cary chooses to make Gulley old, ailing and poor to emphasize the intensity of Gulley's creative powers, his

"drive" and energy. He defies all obstacles. Gulley is a highly improbable character - one whom we are unlikely to meet in everyday life. Within the world of the novel, however, he is completely credible. There are many reasons why he would be improbable in the real world. His attitude to material comforts is highly unusual: he has no permanent residence but finds tumbledown shacks or "studios" for himself and his few meagre possessions which typically consist of his frying pan, some worn out paint brushes and old newspapers used for personal insulation, blankets and stuffing holes in his boots; he has no family to care for him and one of his daily problems is finding enough to eat. From this description, it appears that Gulley's closest real life counterpart is the tramp, but Cary's intention in making such a comparison is ironic. For Gulley is not a tramp; he is an artist. This combination of tramp and artist contributes to his distortion. Because of the "tramp" aspect of his portrayal, Gulley constantly confronts authority. His lack of respect for the law may be illustrated by his dealings with Hickson. His behaviour in this instance might be viewed as an aberration aggravated by his desire for revenge. But even when he is not seeking vengeance, he enjoys flouting the law. One amusing incident occurs shortly after he makes his getaway from the Beeders. With Nosy as his companion, Gulley boards a bus but pretends he wishes to travel in the opposite direction. The conductor gives him instructions which bus to take and drops Gulley nearer to his desired destination. While waiting in a bus queue, Nosy spots a policeman. His startled response draws

the policeman's attention but Gulley successfully diverts his suspicions and manages to wheedle a shilling from him and is then able to take a bus going in the right direction. Gulley regards the law as an enemy of the artist and the free man. He shares Blake's scorn for law, government, and society's institutions. But Gulley not only offends the establishment; he is also rejected by the criminal world. This is demonstrated when he attempts to sell clean postcards as pornographic. For Gulley, rules and regulations endorsed by either established society or the criminal world are made to be broken.

Gulley's attitude towards his friends' misfortunes is again unusual. He accepts the premise that this is a fallen world where suffering is inevitable. His reaction to suffering is laughter. He knows that once a man feels sorry for himself, he will become embittered. Too acute a perception of life's injustice is a luxury Gulley feels he cannot afford. When his friend Plantie the cobbler loses his hand and waves his stump in front of Gulley's nose, he tells Plantie: "It makes you laugh". (The Horse's Mouth, p. 154). When he laughs at Plantie's tragedy, tells Coker her pregnancy puts her in style or imitates Nose Barbon's stutter, he is not being heartless. Laughter, he believes, is an excellent antidote to self-pity.

In real life, one is unlikely to meet an artist willing to put his greatest masterpiece on property scheduled for demolition. Gulley's carelessness about preserving his art works is eccentric. Cary in The Horse's Mouth seems to treat man as somewhat of a joke in an absurd world. Gulley can hardly contain his enthusiasm and

excitement when he finds a wall for "The Creation". His sense of triumph, and glory is undimmed by knowledge that the wall is to be torn down and even when the city's demolition experts begin their work, Gulley continues to paint overjoyed at giving external reality - even for an instant - to his inner vision. "That is, the great comedy, the visionary faculty of man insisting upon its expression in a crumbling world."⁶⁷

These are but a few of the many possible examples which illustrate how Gulley is psychologically grotesque. His idiosyncrasies are associated with his creativity in life and in art.

Cary's presentation of psychologically distorted characters like Gulley is quite different from that of Dickens, an author who is perhaps best remembered for his delightfully distorted characters. But Cary's method differs from Dickens's. Dickens was interested in depicting social movements and trends. His distorted characters are symbols indicating society's wrongs: for example, Micawber symbolizes the desperate struggle for economic survival; again, Juggers is not just a typical lawyer; he is a power maniac. Cary's psychologically grotesque characters are not symbols; he is primarily interested not in society but in the distorted individuals themselves.

The Horse's Mouth is again in the picaresque tradition. Gulley's adoption of a comic mask to help him confront reality with courage makes the novel a more brilliant success than his earlier picaresque works. I have mentioned earlier how Cary as narrator abandons the ironic voice and prefers to distance himself from his

characters. But satire is not absent from The Horse's Mouth: Cary does not participate directly as a satirist. It is Gulley's story and he is the narrator. His awareness and wit make him a superb satirist for exposing the follies of society, and it is society rather than the individual who is the butt of Gulley's criticisms. The typical picaron is a master of the confidence game of fooling others to enable himself to survive. Gulley does live off his friends but his minor deceits hardly fool them. Rather they like him so much they often indulge him. Neither does Gulley selfishly try to take advantage of them. He is generous to a fault when he has the means but he has little opportunity to display his enjoyment in giving. When he sells the Beeders a self-forgery, he uses his profit not only to finance "The Creation" but also to treat friends and enemies alike at the Eagle. Sometimes his confidence games succeed as when he collects money from both Wilcher and Sara. More often he loses. He is most harshly treated when he sells innocent postcards as pornography. When his disappointed customers complain of their loss, a regular pornographic salesman hears about Gulley and eliminates competition by almost eliminating Gulley. Gulley's attempts to regain possession of his "studio" from the Coker tribe, his attempts to fraudulently obtain money from Hickson, and his efforts to sell shares in the William Blake Memorial Association fail. But as a trickster, he is not entirely unsuccessful. He manages to survive without regular employment and although he cannot in his old age create permanent paintings, he does enjoy the opportunity of expressing himself.

His dealings with people of all classes from the outcasts of Greenbank, to the aspiring Professor Alabaster, to the luxurious but empty aristocrats, the Beeders, and the millionaire Hickson provide a panoramic view of society. As a destitute scoundrel on the fringes of respectable society, Gulley provides many insights into the miserable and hard lot of the poor and suffering while exposing the indifference and callousness of the rich.

The apex of his career as a trickster and rogue occurs when he gains possession of the Beeders' apartment while they are away on holiday and proceeds to care for it in a way they cannot approve. This incident is one of the most comic in modern fiction. It gives great pleasure to many readers because Gulley appears not only wildly irresponsible, but in his irresponsibility he acts as an avenger for many class wrongs. It is delightful to find that bastions of comfort are not impregnable. But Gulley's onslaught only makes the Beeders more determined to maintain their comfort and dismiss this reminder of hostile forces existing in the larger world. He makes no permanent effect upon them.

No other character in Cary's novels possesses creative imagination to the same degree of intensity as Gulley Jenson. As a creative artist, he is constantly shaping visions. As a creative person, he is engaged in re-shaping life.

One proof that the world of The Horse's Mouth is removed from that of everyday life is our easy acceptance of Gulley's casual and careless murder of Sara. This action poses a problem in evaluat-

ing Gulley. Cary does not suggest that Gulley has freedom to murder with impunity or invite the reader to approve Gulley's action. Many of Gulley's actions are irresponsible if judged by the standards of the real world. Although Cary makes no overt reference to public opinion, Gulley's own feelings about losing Sara indicate how sorry he is and indicate he has judged himself guilty. He tries to paint but tears drip from his nose to his palette. His creative imagination has a nasty fact to deal with; one that is harder to cope with than Hickson's wrongs. For Gulley has created this problem for himself:

I'm raising up some nasty difficulties, I said, with a great sob, probably for Sara. But who cares. Boo-hoo. There's no doubt I'm damned upset about Sara, worse even than about poor old Hickie. It's quite surprising. I feel as if I'd lost my right leg or even my left leg, which is, on the whole, the best one. Of course, that's just what she always wanted me to feel, the old succubus. Getting after me with all her hooks. So I ought to tell her to go to the devil. (The Horse's Mouth, p. 363)

His efforts to blame Sara are hardly convincing.

Cary's portrait of Gulley is unquestionably paradoxical.

On one level, Gulley is a scoundrel, a rogue. But, on the other, he is a creative artist who invites admiration. The double image is probably a wise choice - certainly preferable to the creation of a sanctimonious visionary, one who does no wrong. Without Gulley the scoundrel, there would be no comedy.

When seen within the larger Blakean myth, Gulley corresponds to Los, the artist. Blake revered Los and Cary shares this

appreciation of the artist. All three, Cary, Gulley and Blake are artists in both words and paint. Blake, like Gulley, was considered mad. Devotees prefer to consider them possessed of "divine madness" in the Platonic sense, but society expresses a lower opinion of both. Both are alienated from society and its mores.⁶⁸ Blake's reaction was to damn society, rejoice in his personal vision and reflect society's opinion of him back on itself. Gulley too refuses to allow an oppressive world to dampen his spirits. Gulley's gaiety while facing death is comparable to Blake's "singing hymns of praise and joy and seeing visions on his deathbed".⁶⁹ Both believe in the primacy of creative imagination and wield it as a sword to fend off the attacks of a rationally unsatisfactory universe.

(11)

Herself Surprised

Sara Monday, the protagonist of Herself Surprised, typifies Cary's concept of a character imbued with creative imagination. Sara's creativity centers upon her ceaseless drive to establish a home, care for a kitchen and mother a man. Her relationship with her husband, Matthew Monday, illustrates her creativity; it also reveals how Sara is psychologically grotesque and develops the theme of the nature of reality. Sara's creativity is invariably associated with men and her desire to make them happy in the way she deems appropriate. When she first meets Matthew, he is a sorry creature much in need of improvement. He was:

held down and cramped by his good mamma and his older sister, Maggie, or Maul as they used to call her. It was Matt, Matt, all day; and where have you been and what do you want in your best suit. It was a shame to see a man already up in his forties so hampered and hagged, like a child, and kept from his rights as a man. All we girls pitied him.

The truth was that though I pitied him then for his poor creeping life, I did not greatly like him. I thought him a poor thing, with his long neck and long nose, his bulgy eyes and his bald head. He would look as startled as a hare when I told him that it was not honest of him to lie in wait for me; and then when he looked at me through the kitchen window, from the garden, his eyes were as sad as a wounded hare. And that, God forgive me, made me want to laugh. He was a joke to all of us girls, for we were a young, careless lot, always ready to laugh. (Herself Surprised, p. 9)

Yet when Matthew proposes to Sara, to her surprise, she accepts. Incidentally, the title Herself Surprised is apt. For throughout the novel, Sara is constantly being surprised by her actions, surprised at events and surprised in the sense that someone has approached her unawares. The reader is frequently surprising Sara, noting the disparity between her words and her actions. Hypocrisy plays a part in Sara's accepting Matthew's proposal: she does not find him physically attractive but she does find his social position attractive. Of course, Sara will not admit any ulterior motive. On the contrary, she protests that she "was afraid to marry a gentleman, with all their rules and manners..." (Herself Surprised, p. 10) Sara may be surprised at her marriage; the reader is not. Facts reveal that Sara is very conscious of social position. Her narrative suggests indirectly that her two associated ambitions in marriage are to flatter Matthew's ego to enhance his self-image and simultaneously to elevate their social position. Unless Matthew's humility is transformed into pride, he will never assert himself or assume a public role. Sara's instinctive method of helping her husband is to flaunt herself before the millionaire Hickson, arouse his sexual interest, and use him to secure prestige for her husband. Sara's method of increasing their social status suggests that she is an improbable character, one who is psychologically grotesque. In real life, one is unlikely to find a wife winning her husband's delighted consent at another man's attentions and persuading her admirer to become a family patron. But Matthew is gullible and easily manipulated.

Hickson is a definite social asset:

For when I got Matt at last to give my garden party, though he would give me no band and no strawberries, only in the plates four at a time till they ran out, yet because Mr. Hickson brought the county member, who was a lord and a famous cricket player, I could have had all Bradnall, and those that were not asked were ready to hang themselves. (Herself Surprised, p. 23)

Although Sara has previously denied any social aspirations, she constantly gloats about her social triumph over the ladies of Bradnall.

Irony is pervasive in Herself Surprised. It is a subtler form of irony than in the early African novels but it is effective in revealing Sara's hypocrisy. In the instance of Sara's marriage to Matthew Monday, she states her indifference to marrying a gentleman and then unwittingly demonstrates quite the opposite. The reader has surprised Sara, that is, recognized her hypocrisy. Sara pretends surprise at much that happens in her life; in fact, she arranges many incidents herself. She uses Hickson to entice Matthew to play the gentleman's game of golf and to suggest improvements in his wardrobe.

Sara delights in frivolous pastimes made possible by her new position:

I would dance all night three nights running, for though Matt could not dance, his cousin would find me partners and come himself. But what was sweeter than dancing and the lovely waltzes of those days were the gardens gay with paper lanterns, and the trees as green as lettuces over the fairy lamps... (p. 36)

Even at a party, Sara sees the world in terms of kitchen imagery. But her "chiefest joy was Matt's new glory when they made him a Councillor". (Herself Surprised, p. 38) This marks the pinnacle of Sara and Matthew's social success.

Cary's fascination with the theme of reality is associated with Sara's creative transformation of her husband. What she has accomplished is to create for Matthew a new image of himself, no mean artistic achievement. Unfortunately for Sara, Gulley appears on the scene and destroys Matthew's new conception of himself with the "reality" he depicts in his portrait of Matthew. Sara's suspicions of Gulley's painting even before it is completed are confirmed:

I was quite right, for first he would not paint him, as we both wanted, in his golf suit, with grass and trees behind, to make a picture of it, but he would have him in a black coat and a stiff collar. The next thing was he made 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. (p. 52)

When the painting is made public, all Sara's creative efforts on her husband's behalf are undone:

Now if the Devil had contrived such a trick, he could not have found a better to drive my poor Matt mad. For it hit him in his two sorest places at once, his great modesty left over from the creper days, and his decent pride, now got in the clubs and by being master in his own house. It had him between two irons like a lemon squeezer and it squeezed the life out of him. For pride would not let him complain that he minded what face he was given, and modesty could not bear the exhibition of his weaker parts, and the laughter of the very workmen in his own foundry. It gave him no peace. All night I would feel him wriggling there beside me, and when I asked him, had he a pain,

he would answer in a despairing voice that there was nothing the matter with him and tell me to go to sleep. (Herself Surprised, p. 56)

Matthew never recovers from his recognition of the essential truth of Gulley's portrayal: he acknowledges his insipid and ludicrous self. Matthew dies shortly thereafter. Sara's creativity must seek new outlets. Unfortunately for Sara, she decides to transform Gulley Jimson. But in Gulley, Sara meets her match.

An understanding of Blake's poem, "The Mental Traveller" which Gulley frequently quotes, helps illuminate Sara and Gulley's relationship and cast it into a broader perspective. On one level, the poem deals with the

... cycle of time in the natural world as it is conceived under the domination of a female will. It is the fallen world of no spiritual progression from which the artist must escape. The principals of the poem are a woman who grows from old age to youth and back and a man who begins as a child and withers into age, returning then to youth. As an aged crone, the woman crucifies the man child. Escaping as a young man, he in turn binds down the woman, now a "virgin bright" and rapes her. Then the cycle turns upon itself.⁷⁰

Gulley's comments show his awareness of how both Sara and he correspond to the female and male in the poem. Their relationship correlates in many ways to the incidents mentioned in "The Mental Traveller". Sara longs to have Gulley all for herself and in old age says wistfully to him what lovely times they could have had if Gulley had not been preoccupied with splashing colours. When they lived

together Gulley's initial attempts to escape Sara's domination included bopping her on the nose but it is not until he captures the essential Sara in art that he escapes her clutches. It is this rather than physical rape which most appropriately fits the stanza:

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.⁷¹

Of all the men in Sara's life, it seems she cares most for Gulley. Both are creatures of imagination filled with zest for life and a marvellous ability to ignore or transform negative aspects of reality. They share a strong tendency to do whatever they want despite the restraints of society. Both life styles make inevitable a clash with those in authority. Their relationship is unsuccessful in the ordinary sense for their creative needs conflict with each other. In order to satisfy her feminine drives, Sara wants to domesticate Gulley and arrange his habits to suit her own. At first, it appears that Sara is in control:

And Jimson was good and sweet and serious, spoken
 as any man in love. Nothing too much for me and
 all truly meant, because of his state. And then
 we could have our own rooms at Miss Slaughter's,
 or take a half house across the road where, as
 Jimson said, there was the latest stove for hot
 water, and a new porcelain bath.

So at the end of a week we were engaged. And yet
 I could not say I wanted it, but that it had come
 upon me. (Herself Surprised, p. 107)

Gulley's persistence during their engagement is too much for Sara. Despite all her protestations about doing what is morally acceptable, Sara admits in an unguarded moment that:

I thought it was not worth while to keep what little decency was left me, and to deny him what he thought so much of . . . (Herself Surprised, p. 110)

Gulley has another surprise for Sara: he is already married. Sara decides to live with him anyway. But after Gulley tires of the 'honeymoon' and spends all Sara's money, he discovers his need for freedom. He resents Sara's attempts to make him a prisoner of her female will. The conflict between them is irreconcilable.

During their time together, Sara serves as an inspiration for his most successful paintings. Art collectors vie with each other in acquiring one of the Sara Monday works. In his depiction of the essential Sara, Gulley captures her quality of original woman, the 'undying Eve', a female force in a large fleshy body, a symbol of fecundity. Cary's verbal portrait supports the truth of Gulley's painting.

Sara's femininity makes her appealing to diverse characters. Her relationship with the creative conservative, Thomas Wilcher, confirms this. Although she works at Tolbrook Manor for seven years before he realizes the advantages of having a live-in mistress, once he does become involved with Sara the confirmed bachelor proposes. Unfortunately, it is too late. When Sara first

mistook his proposition for a proposal, their legal union was not impossible. But meanwhile she has been appropriating unused or damaged household goods to add to her meager furnishings. His niece Blanche who prefers to keep Wilcher's inheritance for herself busies herself with proving Sara a thief. Sara has been so careless about pilfering what appeals to her, knowing that she has been working for unfair wages and secure in her knowledge that Wilcher depends upon her, that Blanche has no trouble in supporting her accusation and having Sara imprisoned.

Sara is incapable of feeling bitter at her plight but summons up her repressed moral platitudes and assumes full responsibility for her behaviour. Now that society condemns her, she can only agree with its judgement and wonder at her own actions. One reason for her surprise is her indifference to the problem of identity.

the problem which engages so many protagonists in the modern novel. Although she has an intuitive knowledge of self that allows her to achieve a high degree of personality integrity, she is not interested in self-analysis . . . 72

Sara is not only morally obtuse but delights in self-deception. In order to justify her actions, she likes to see herself as being passively manipulated by forces she can neither understand nor control. Her self-deception does not have tragic implications in this comic novel for Sara is not really the corrupt, unprincipled person

that society considers her. Her self-deception makes her creativity possible for if she were bound by social and moral restrictions she could never have entered into so many sustaining relationships with so many men. She feels innocent and open until society reveals an opposite interpretation of her character. She ostensibly accepts the truth of its version, is overwhelmed by surprise, but her instinctive shrewdness enables her to affirm indirectly in her autobiography her own essential integrity.

Sara is a fictional relative of Mister Johnson for like him she is filled with a zest for living and an inordinate capacity for joy despite the hardships which inevitably confront her. She unwittingly creates many of her own problems. They stem from her own personality, attitudes and sometimes her ignorance. She easily accepts her responsibility for her 'sins', surprised though she is when society reveals them to her, but she commits them with such alacrity that her penitence seems superficial. It does not affect her ultimate optimism and confidence for as the novel concludes, Sara expresses her certainty that "A good cook will always find work, even without a character, and can get a new character in twelve months . . ." Herself Surprised, p. 275)

The novel, which . . . "exists, for the reader more than for Sara, to explore the tension between the official and the human versions of her life",⁷³ opens with the expression of society's shocked disapproval at Sara's behaviour. The judge, society's mouth-piece, feels that her example "threatens to undermine the whole

fabric of our civilization". (Herself Surprised, p. 1) Sara writes the book ostensibly to warn others of the dangers of following her way of life. But it is also a rationalization of many of her own actions. The novel serves to contradict the judge's opinion for Sara is revealed as a warm compassionate human being whose actions, while they may conflict with contemporary "Victorian" morality, are not reprehensible. As demonstrated, her sexual offenses are an expression of her overpowering desire to look after a man and establish a fulfilling relationship.

"Herself Surprised belongs to the tradition of Defoe's realistic fiction which emphasizes the details of economic, social and carnal life."⁷⁴ The book is episodic following in the picaresque tradition with Sara, the unifying figure of the trilogy, acting like Defoe's Moll Flanders (as well as Mister Johnson and Gulley Jimson) as a rogue figure on the fringes of civilized society. Sara is not typical of the picaresque hero in traditional novels because she is not merely a device to record the passing scene but the chief focus of Cary's attention. Moll and Sara are both involved in a struggle for economic survival. Moll is blatantly a cheat. Sara is inconsistent: her marriage to Matthew Monday suggests that she wants to improve her economic lot. She boasts innocently enough of enjoying her matronly status when, at not quite twenty-four, she has a

house of sixteen rooms, and five servants in, three out; and my landau and my victoria and my governess cart; and my at home days; and

three children; and another started, Mrs. M. Monday of W . . . on the county nursing committee. (Herself Surprised, p. 34)

But in her dealings with Gulley, she is extravagantly generous and wastes her inheritance from Matthew.

Because Herself Surprised follows the picaresque tradition, many of its themes follow automatically as appropriate to this genre. These include Sara's conflict with society, the nature of her roguery, and her observations of society. Cary deviates from the standard pattern for his novel is not especially satirical and lacks the happy ending common to so many picaresque novels.

Cary is not interested in writing a satirical exposé of society's shortcomings for his writings are tragic-comic rather than satirical. For Cary tragedy and comedy are opposite sides of the same coin. Primarily, the first trilogy consists of comic novels - two of them - and the dominant mood is one of irrepressible exuberance. The characters, Sara and Gulley, affirm life and minimize the adversities of an absurd world in which justice fails to triumph. They verge on comedy of the grotesque in such instances as Rozzie's reaction to losing her leg or Gulley's physical collapse at the end of The Horse's Mouth. A happy secure hero would be incongruous in a Cary novel for his theme is life's instability and change and the constant demands these make upon characters to adjust. Periods of intense joy and relative stability do occur but they are transitory and exceptional. Although permanence is an impossible goal, it is

nevertheless much sought after by even the most creative characters. Sara wants the permanence of a home and a husband. But the beulah state of blissful family life is impermanent. It may be considered advantageous to Sara, as a creative being, that she is given so many opportunities of relating to men; without the flux of time and breaking up of old relationships, new ones could not be formed. Her art would stagnate. James Hall states

many of Cary's main characters celebrate the joys of change. Cary tries to show that there is a fundamental accord between human nature and the shifting styles and ideals of the world at large. To the degree that he succeeds, he evaporates the problem that has vexed his contemporaries.

Many modern novels express a strong reaction against change.

Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse is a classic example. Yet, without change, there can be no adventures and surprises in existence. For Sara, things change "like mold in a bread bin". (Herself Surprised, p. 39). She accepts it as a fact of nature.

Herself Surprised follows a simple chronological pattern. There are no sub-plots or variations. It has been criticized for a "monotony of tone and style that prevents the novel from completely succeeding".⁷⁶ Monas's criticism is valid to a degree but may be softened by recognition that the book is an extension of Sara's mind and personality. The style of the book then is indelibly that of Sara herself. I believe Andrew Wright's view helps clarify the problem of style. He states that ... "one of the excellences of her

book is that it is written in a style so plain as to make us believe in Sara's inarticulateness, even as we read what purport to be her words."⁷⁷ Emotionally, Sara is highly developed but intellectually she is naive and untutored. She lives on an instinctive emotional level and is sensitive to men's moods. Gulley may appreciate her animal vitality - Sara is very much preoccupied with her flesh - but he can hardly discuss art with her. Neither can her husband Matthew discuss with her either his business or affairs in council. Sara's men cannot turn to her for mental stimulation but they do respond warmly to her all-embracing femininity even when they try to resist her as does Gulley when she interferes with his freedom. She represents food, warmth, sexual satisfaction and all the delights of the body.

To associate Sara with the kitchen and nourishment and identify her as a lifegiving force, Cary consistently has her perceive nature in terms of the kitchen. On one of her outings with Hickson, Sara admires the evening sky:

It was about sunset with a sky like a kitchen fire, all sparkles below and blue ash on top; meaning perhaps a storm tomorrow. But the air as warm as new milk and still as water in a goldfish bowl. The water was as soft and bright as sweet oil; it seemed that you could have put it on your tongue and tasted its luxury.

There were many islands on the lake, one with a bridge to it, like a willow pattern; but the bridge in white stone and the temple on the island like a little Royal Exchange with pillars; but all white and clean, as if from a wedding cake. (Herself Surprised, pp. 28-29)

Another time, she visits the country with Nina, 'Gulley's mistress, and finds religious inspiration in nature. Kitchen imagery persists as she describes the scene:

And this was indeed a lovely day, to make anyone religious. The apple trees were just budding with new leaves, and the sky so pale blue and clear as a baby's eye, and the air blowing fresh as if straight off a sea; and some little thin clouds floating high up like muslin sleeves on a washing day; and I could smell the new hawthorn leaves in the shiny hedges, like a warm iron when you try it on your cheek. (Herself Surprised, p. 64)

Before submitting to Jimson's advances, Sara again delights in nature. All the world has the familiarity of a cosy kitchen as she identifies nature with food. These images suggest Sara's optimism and faith in a bounteous nature:

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 on it 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. (109)

The various images associating the world of nature with the kitchen indicate Sara's ability to feel at home in the world; for her, it is a larger kitchen. Sara's ability to adjust to change is demonstrated when her poverty forces her to seek work as a servant at Tolbrook. Instead of feeling uneasy in this new environment, Sara regards the establishment as her own:

So here I am, I thought, mistress of my own world in my own kitchen, and I looked at the shining steel of the range and the china on the dresser glittering like jewels, and the dish covers, hanging in their row from the big venison one on the left to the little chop one on the right, as beautiful as a row of calendar moons, and the kitchen table scrubbed as white as beef fat and the copper on the dark wall throwing out a glow to warm the heart, and the blue delf bowls like pots of precious balm.

. . . And, indeed, I felt bits of myself running out from the grand kitchen into pantry and scullery and larder and beyond into the passage and the stillroom and even to the wood cellar and the boot hole as if I was really a king or queen whose flesh is brought up to be the father of all his countries, and not to forget the little bye-lands even when they are on the dark side of the sun. You would say I was putting out in buds like a shallot with my big kitchen heart in the middle and my little hearts all around in the empire of those good faithful offices, all fitted up as they were, even the cupboards, in the best of country materials. (Herself Surprised, pp. 182-183)

Sara's creativity gives her power to make a home wherever she is. In relating to the men in her life, she used a similar creativity to provide them with a feeling of home and security. Matthew and Wilcher enjoy it but Gulley, after a time, rejects it as stifling his freedom. This does not suggest Sara's creativity is inadequate but that Gulley must be creative in his own way.

Cary makes effective use of one significant image in another context, the clash between one's self-image and the projected image perceived by others. While on her honeymoon in Paris with Matthew, Sara inadvertently confuses a glimpse of her reflection in a mirror with that of someone else. The "other" person in the mirror

looks like a "fat, common trollop of a girl . . . jumping out of her skin to be in a Paris hat". (Herself Surprised, p. 2) Sara is forced to acknowledge the image as her own - herself as seen by an unbiased world. Had Sara not been taken unawares, her impression of her own appearance might well have been approving. The reflection in the mirror represents visual reality. Sara's mental perception of herself, however, represents imaginative reality which, for Cary, is more intriguing.

Sara's partial view of reality is an inevitable result of her creative imagination. Because her view of the world is a unique expression of her own personality, it is therefore limited. To explore Sara's imaginative resources, Cary must provide a range of situations to test her exuberance and her capacity to sustain her imaginative world. Her approach to life can be admirable only if it is maintained in the face of adversity. With the death of her husband, Sara loses her home; instead of despairing about her situation, she becomes involved with Gulley and has a wonderful time. After Gulley leaves her, she is momentarily downhearted but soon regains her cheerful disposition and finds herself a job. At Tolbrook, instead of complaining about her low wages and the lack of servants to help with the work there, she makes the place her home. When fired for petty theft and then imprisoned, Sara's creativity finds expression as she writes the story of her life. Sara is undaunted in the face of adversity because she possesses creative imagination. That gift makes her great.

(iii)

To Be A Pilgrim

Thomas Wilcher's creativity is somewhat paradoxical. Creativity is usually associated with the creation of something new. But the material which Wilcher makes the subject of his imaginative transformation is the past. Wilcher is obsessed with history and tradition. To care about the past to the extent Wilcher does is an act of imagination. Unimaginative man lives in the present and is limited by the world of the senses. Wilcher, although a slightly senile old man, confined for the most part to his own room, is imaginatively free to project himself back into the lives of relatives and friends long since dead, and re-create his past life. In doing so, he analyses and re-evaluates people he knew and indirectly learns to accept himself. Wilcher has always regarded himself as uncreative:

... I was put in the position of that heart which in a man's body does all the work and gets no attention or thanks whatever. The brain, the will, the passions, what do they care about that poor humble creature, pounding away forever in his dark prison, on the everlasting treadmill which gives to brain, will, etc. their light, and their life. (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 178).

Many of Wilcher's actions and beliefs, when judged separately, are uncreative and he therefore can support his own contention. But

Wilcher does not perceive the full truth about himself. His longing to be a pilgrim, a wanderer has been realized for he is part of all the free adventurous spirits he has known. The title, To Be A Pilgrim, is ironic in intention. In imagination, Wilcher has indeed been a pilgrim.

Like Cary's other creative characters, Wilcher is also psychologically grotesque. Cary uses the device of an old man's daydreaming, his re-enactment of the past, to give an aura of credibility to Wilcher's introspection. But he has exaggerated Wilcher's concern with the past to a degree which makes him grotesque. That is, in real life, it is unlikely that anyone could re-create the past as vividly as does Wilcher for perfumes from the past linger in his room: he can see, touch and hear people with a clarity possible only in fiction.

His eccentric behaviour makes him grotesque in another sense. Wilcher is an old man bordering on senility. He worries that his relatives might have him committed to an asylum. His senility is revealed by his indifference to such matters as fastening his pyjamas, making indecent advances to strange young girls, talking to himself, listening to voices from the past and his old man's suspiciousness of strangers. Although Ann, the doctor who cares for him, is his relative he neither trusts nor likes her at the beginning of the novel. He is able to view himself objectively as a tiresome, unattractive old man who cannot expect either affection or understanding from the young.

To Be A Pilgrim is a structurally more complex novel than Herself Surprised. The earlier picaresque novel consists of a review of Sara Monday's past life but moves chronologically through a series of episodes which develops her intimate portrait. The second novel in the trilogy, unlike the other two, is outside the picaresque tradition. But first person narration again has the advantages of verisimilitude, immediacy and consistency of characterization. Most of Wilcher's story occurs in the past as through his reminiscences he meets again the people he has loved. In his imaginary travels, he searches for insights into his own character. "He undertakes a 'journal' not in order to justify himself to the world, which is Sara's motive in Herself Surprised, but to explain himself to himself."⁷⁸

The novel opens with Wilcher's account of his loss of Sara but his determination to marry her once she is released from prison. The failure of his previous efforts to intervene with his relatives on her behalf undermines his protestation that he will marry. His plan is one of the three major motifs running through the novel, the others being his life in the past peopled largely by relatives who have since died and his life in the present with Ann and Robert, two of their descendants.⁷⁹

Wilcher makes imaginative journeys into his past which help change his self-image. As a youth, he is revealed to be unsure of himself, a follower rather than a leader. He wants to emulate his brother Edward's success at college and tries hard to

affect the dandy. Although he can dress the part, his tone is never correct and he fails to win acceptance. Edward is quite accomplished in dealing with the opposite sex and Wilcher would like to know how to be equally successful; he feels that there is some theory which he only needs to learn. Failing that, he hopes Edward will arrange for him to have a mistress. He wants a mistress not only for the obvious reason, but also to follow in Edward's footsteps. He is aware too that in great civilizations of the past, it was a custom. Instead of some sophisticated sensual arrangement, he learns only of a readily available servant at Tolbrook and upon his return allows himself to yield to her expert seduction.

When Edward tires of his affair with the actress Julie Beles, Wilcher inherits the relationship but it is an effete imitation of a real affair. Eventually, Julie's personal disintegration, compounded by her alcoholism, makes the arrangement so unpalatable to him that he continues it only to avoid hurting her feelings. He stops visiting her only when Sara agrees to share her bed with him on a regular weekly basis. Wilcher's affairs are pathetically absurd for instead of being spontaneous and passionate they consist of appointments ordered by the clock. Incidents such as these could provide the stuff of comedy but because Wilcher narrates them, one feels sorry for him.

Because Wilcher lacks confidence, he needs others to stimulate him. His sister, Lucy, Robert's mother, was mischievous and imaginative. Her sense of adventure impels her to marry Puggy

Brown, a butcher turned preacher, and although she is only superficially religious, her way of life represents to Wilcher an act of faith. She knows it is not "happiness and comfort but adventure [that is the] secret of a protestant pilgrimage".⁸⁰ She deserts the genteel life of Tolbrook for the squalid backstreets of industrialized cities where she displays a knack for settling great hordes of Benjamites in people's homes. Although her hands become rough and her nails broken and ragged as she acts as char for the sect, she finds fulfillment, a fulfillment which only a wanderer who abandons a familiar world can know. Attracted by the excitement of having a cause and impelled by his desire to follow his high-spirited sister, Wilcher is tempted to join the Benjamites.

The novel demonstrates Wilcher's ambivalence in many ways. His reaction to the Benjamites is two-fold: he wants to forsake his family as did his sister and join their sect; he also wants to flee from them for their ideas pose a threat to his deep-rooted need for rationality and order.

Wilcher turns to his family for patterns upon which to model and shape his own life but ultimately rejects their modes of being and makes choices which determine

the terms of his own entrapment. To live his father's life was of course impossible even in Wilcher's own youth: but equally impossible were the courses pursued by his brothers and sister. Wilcher's faith was too deep to be abandoned for the desperate nihilism of his elder brother Edward, who gave up a promising career in the government; his faith was too complex to

reduce itself to the notion of duty by which his soldier brother Bill lived; his temperament was too conservative to respond more than sporadically to the enthusiasm of his sister Lucy.⁸¹

Wilcher's conservative way of life may result partially from his feelings of insecurity, his lack of self-confidence. He describes himself as ugly, possessed of a short inconsequential body and goggled eyes. His mother's feelings towards him are lukewarm; she is tolerant of him but unmoved to any pitch of love for her younger son. His brothers are casually fond of him but are really indifferent to his existence. He grows in the shadows of his sister, the vibrant and brilliant Lucy, and his elegant and clever brother, Edward. Instead of creating an independent life style and developing his own talents and interests, he depends upon others for stimulation and guidance.

In his first sexual adventure, a result of his appeal to Edward to arrange an affair for him, he suffers a "paralysis of will". As his servant-lover succinctly phrases it, "he bees and he bant". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 70). Wilcher finds it difficult to surrender himself to emotion. He may also be disturbed to find himself surrendering the dominant role within his own household for the only way he can relate to her sexually is by submitting himself to her advances. He is reassured when upon meeting her later, she is again the humble subservient creature that she was before. Even as an old man sharing Sara's bed, he expects her deportment to differ

in private and public encounters. Sara's awareness of her place assures the success of their arrangement for she quickly stifles Wilcher before he can make revelations he may later regret.

Wilcher, in the past, had generally failed to understand people and their motivations. He had idolized his brother Edward out of all proportion to his actual self. Envious of Edward's imposing physique and classic features, his culture and political success, he had failed to balance these with his brother's failings. Edward was probably the loneliest of all the family as his comments upon existence imply: "The question is, of course, whether life is worth living". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 68) When Thomas asks if he believes in God, Edward's response is: "Oh, yes; I mean I believe in His existence. But how does one keep up one's interest in Him"? (69) Edward's nihilism leads to his failure. His brilliant success as a politician is based upon hypocrisy. He has calculated what approach will ensure his election and espouses causes to which he is indifferent. About life's central activities he coins clever but cynical epigrams which distort and mock eighteenth century optimism. He is unable to care deeply about either possessions - he is quite ready to sacrifice Tolbrook to pay his debts - or people. When he tires of Julie, he refers her to his brother's care just as he abdicates his responsibility for Tolbrook and automatically expects Thomas to continue its upkeep. Edward's decadence leads to his political failure, the collapse of his marriage and his eventual death for he really lacks the energy, faith or creativity to care deeply about anything.

not even cutting a first edition.

Ann, Edward, Julie and John, Amy's son, are at opposite poles from Wilcher and Cary's other creative and energetic characters. Julie passively submits to Edward; having no faith herself she can hardly inspire him. Latterly, she sits out her existence. Her physical immobility parallels her spiritual stagnation. John's despair differs from Julie's. Hers stems from loss of Edward, youth and beauty. She is an aging actress who is only fully alive before an admiring audience. But John's presence in the novel as a representative post-war character illustrates how exposure to evil and human suffering undermines faith in the value of existence. After his involvement in the war, he can find no cause large enough to interest him. He drifts into marriage with Gladys, a frivolous fun-craving flirt and then allows her to evict his mother. In John, Cary shows how a boy of intelligence and promise changes into a lost soul. Life without faith is hardly worth enduring.

Bill, Wilcher's brother, and his wife Amy represent simple, unquestioning faith. So great is their faith and optimism that suffering and death hold no fears for them. The little comedy in the novel centers around them and most especially around Amy. Even her appearance is comic:

The politicians gaze at her in astonishment. She is dressed in electric blue, which gives to her high complexion the brilliance of a ribstone pippin. She is almost cubical in shape, as always when she is nursing; and her hat, of the largest size, is

perched upon the top of a roll of hair so high that it is nearly as long as her whole face. (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 165)

In her eagerness to be with Bill, she sets out to visit him although she is in an advanced state of pregnancy. She has the baby on the train and is pleased that the doctor is a veterinarian:

I'd much rather have a vet than a real doctor . . .
I'd be ashamed to ask a real doctor to manage in a railway carriage. But, of course, you won't mind, will you? You're used to cows. (160)

Until he views Amy in retrospect, Wilcher can only find her ridiculous in a nice way. But he comes to appreciate the quality of her faith so that towards the end of his own life, he relives the time of Amy's own death finding it both comical and courageous.

The novel shows Wilcher's contemplation of his family's lives, his temptation to be as they are - to try on their lives and wear them as his own. It takes him a long time to realize that he is a complete and separate person whose very ambivalence is an intrinsic part of his character. In articulating the past, Wilcher gradually accepts the validity of his own approach to reality. He is not inferior to others in his family, only different.

The depiction of Wilcher as a man who resists change is established early in the novel by such a minor but telling detail as his manner of dress: "My hatter tells me there is only one man in England besides myself who still wears a curly-brimmed bowler". (2)
Dress is also used to indicate various periods in history and to

provide insights into characters.

Early in the novel, Wilcher and Ann move to Tolbrook, the house which assumes a central symbolic importance throughout. Cary is not a symbolist writer but in To Be A Pilgrim he does use the symbol of Tolbrook Manor to unify his novel structurally and thematically. It symbolizes Wilcher's love of tradition and his resentment towards being its preserver. His relatives make him a prisoner of his home; his physical imprisonment parallels his emotional attachment. For critics such as Walter Allen and R. W. Noble Tolbrook is an effective symbol for England, "or at least one aspect of English tradition". Although Tolbrook Manor physically serves as a kind of prison to Wilcher, he is a willing prisoner for it is the house of his childhood which his imagination likes to re-inhabit with his own family. It is his present dwelling and his past home. Wilcher wants to preserve his home just as it used to be. Except for him, its former inhabitants are dead but he can still hear their voices and can re-enact scenes from the past so vividly that they become co-existent with the present but more meaningful. The house itself is in a state of decay and Wilcher is at a loss to decide what to do about it. He prefers to do nothing and ignore the dilapidation of its buildings, the waste of its once fertile fields, and the danger posed by rotting trees. To him, his nephew is a personification of the forces of destruction and change that Thomas has resisted all his life. Robert does not try to mask his obstinate determination to convert Tolbrook Manor from its decayed state into a working farm. He does not

question his own right to make changes to a place he has not yet inherited but acts as if it is his by birthright. To say he is imbued by the spirit of creativity is hardly exact but as his wife Ann says when she agrees to continue their marriage on Robert's conditions, "he haa got a way". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 324) The opposition between uncle and nephew surfaces early in the book. Robert had gone away to Canada eight years before the novel opens because Thomas refused to allow him to make changes at Tolbrook. Wilcher's present debility gives Robert an opportunity to assert himself. He wants to cut down the rotten trees in the driveway and overcoming his uncle's opposition proceeds to have his way. At first, Wilcher cannot bear to lose even one tree during his lifetime for each of them appears distinct and individual. He counters Robert's suggestion that an ash be felled with: "Yes, yes, but it's not your tree, Robert; that's my tree, or rather Uncle Bill's tree - he planted it for the Jubilee of '87". (10)

Their meetings consist of a series of confrontations about the farm. To Robert, they are improvements, but to Thomas all change is retrogressive. Robert's arguments are valid; commonsense supports his contention that rotten trees are dangerous and it is ridiculous for a man who owns ten cows to buy milk. (15) While Wilcher is reliving the past, Robert makes improvements. But Wilcher's mind encompasses dichotomous views. For when he beholds an enormous traction engine making holes in his gravel, he is filled with exhilaration. Even as he notices smoke "full of smuts as big as flies". (43)

blowing into the second-story windows he only thinks: "Who cares, curtains will wash, and they are only new curtains". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 43) He is overwhelmed by the "majesty of power" of the great engine as it "throbbed and jerked and rumbled with steam". (43) He perceives Robert as a creator: "And everywhere one perceived the delight of the maker in his creation, which is, precisely, the joy of the Lord". (43) When Ann warns him that Robert is about to pull down some of his trees, he contradicts his early view and agrees with Robert's view that the trees are rotten and that he is right to clear them.

Robert is devoid of sentiment, not only about the past. When Ann is in labour, he is busy repairing a tractor. When the baby is born, he is three miles away at a blacksmith's. He expects Ann will understand:

There's one good think about Ann - she's not so much of a sentimental girl. She'll understand I just couldn't be round the whole time. And I couldn't lose my place now [in the line-up to get the horse shod] when I've been waiting more than half an hour. (111)

Wilcher does experience a slight heart tremor when he sees the results of Robert's activities:

I could not find a single landmark . . . Every landmark was gone. Not only the winding farm lane with its great trees, the beauty of this valley, but the very shape of the ground, once marked by the curve of hedge and shrub. (112)

But his words contradict his feelings: "It's a wonderful change - you have certainly done great things here". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 112) This scene vividly illustrates Wilcher's contradictory views. His mind tells him it is foolish to feel affection for sticks and stones, the inanimate and impersonal. But emotionally, the catastrophe of a changed landscape is unbearable. Even when commonsense tells him that change is useful, necessary and inevitable, Wilcher opposes it. The nadir of the effect of Robert's innovations on him comes one day when he enters the saloon, a once magnificent room of white pillars, decorated cornices, and classic panelling. Robert has stored a new reaper, binder and furrow plow inside explaining to his uncle that "this old barn" will save a new machinery shed at least.

Rakes and hoes were leaning against the classic paneling, garden seats were planted before the inner doors, and a workbench stood under the great central chandelier of the three, under which, as my grandmother has recorded, Jane Austen once flirted with her Irishman. Upon the one chair remaining in a corner a yard cat was suckling two kittens. It needed nothing more to say that barbarians had taken possession. She did not even run from me, but lay watching, with up-twisted neck and the insolent calm ferocity of some Pict or Jute encamped in a Roman villa. (123)

This description draws an analogy between Robert's onslaught against Tolbrook and the barbaric sacking of Roman villas. Robert is depicted here as a barbarian insensitive to the culture he destroys, whereas Wilcher's "moving awareness that a high culture was destroyed once before in Britain gives poignancy and strength to his feelings".⁸²

Another negative aspect of Robert's meddling and improving is highlighted by the description of his 'mending' the grandfather clock without permission. He not only fails to make it work but misplaces a great part of the works. Robert is a doer, not a thinker. His imagination expresses itself in action, in transforming nature to suit his practical purposes. (He is generally more successful than the episode of the clock would suggest.) He lives in the present and his own projects dominate his interest. Wilcher's imagination does not seek practical expression. Because he is a thinker, a man with a sense of history, his imagination seeks to encompass both past and present. His sense of fulfillment comes from understanding the larger world and accepting his own position in it. Both Wilcher and Robert are creative, but the nature and expression of their creativity is quite different.

Cary uses a comic image to attack Robert's changes but confirm their victory when he describes a grinning and horned Pan in white marble "famous among the scholars of architecture" carrying "on one horn some laborer's luncheon, tied up in a red handkerchief; and round his waist, mixed with the marble flowers and grasses, hangs a bunch of real onions on a string". (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 326) But by the time the novel draws to a close, Wilcher has so accommodated himself to the inevitability of change that "the very ruin of this beautiful room is become a part of . . . [his] happiness. (327)

Thomas Wilcher is a complex character, probably the most difficult of Cary's creations to comprehend fully, for his nature is

ambivalent and contradictory. His problem is the reconciliation of

freedom with security, revolution with conservatism, spiritual needs with material necessity, moral ideals with worldly temptations, and cultural change with conservation.⁸³

This dualism is asserted by the form of the novel itself consisting as it does of a presentation of events past and present as they are viewed by the narrator. In his mind, both are co-existent but the past intrigues him more. This is demonstrated by the greater subtlety and discrimination he exerts in attempting to understand it. At one point in the novel, the voices of the past are so strong that when Ann's voice recalls him to the present it is her voice which seems that of a ghost. Another time, he describes a water party occurring in the present which is but a ghostly comparison to a similar event in the past.

Emotionally, Thomas Wilcher is divided. He longs to be a pilgrim free of earthly goods, a burden which he feels impedes his instinctive aim to quest and discover. Yet every pilgrim must bear a burden. Simultaneously, he intensely loves his burden, Tolbrook - the Wilcher's ancestral home - and chooses to abandon the pilgrim way in order to devote himself to Tolbrook's preservation within the family. He abhors it as a prison while adoring it as a mistress. Thomas Wilcher may not be free to adventure physically yet in memory he is free to discover himself and his own ultimate values by re-creating and examining the quality of his own life and the lives of

his contemporaries.

In the novel, Wilcher is contrasted as both object - eccentric in appearance and action, senile, ridiculous and ugly, truly a "queer object" to a stranger's eye,⁸⁴ and as an intelligent subject whose rich inner life is saturated with emotion. This double focus upon Wilcher implies the inconsistency of one's inner and outer life, the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Wilcher's scope is known only to the reader indicating that in real life, human understanding and communion are difficult to attain. Other characters fail to perceive fully Wilcher's essential being; neither does he know himself until he is an old man questing through his past. Old age exacerbates the problem of relating to others for young people with a different historical perspective cannot understand the world of the elderly or penetrate their isolated condition. Yet after presenting this thesis the novel ultimately denies it for to some degree human communion between the generations is achieved. Ann's close contact with her uncle enables her to grasp his reverence for the past and respect it enough to share it. This is shown by her attempt to recapture the past by writing her father's biography, a feeble contrast with Wilcher's vivid imaginative re-enactment of past events which parallels Ann's writing. Ann's questions, projections and analysis indicate how little of the past can be known by future generations. Yet Wilcher himself does help bridge the gap between past and present so that Ann comes to feel his values are worthwhile. She comes to realize the necessity for faith and hope to the extent of participating

in religious observances.

Stephen Shapiro's article, "Joyce Cary's To Be A Pilgrim: 'Mr. Facing-Both-Ways'" examines another facet of Thomas Wilcher, namely his death wish. This tendency is substantiated in the novel for when Wilcher is seized by the mob during a political rally, he submits tamely to them "wishing for the peace of death".⁸⁵ But this inclination is not developed to any significant degree within the novel unless one equate a clinging to past forms and tradition with death. But in Thomas Wilcher, Cary shows the past as the raw material upon which his imagination works. It is not uncommon for most humans to momentarily give vent to a longing for death under conditions of extreme anxiety or misery. Wilcher's feeling is not central to his character. Certainly, he never contemplates suicide. He does, however, have some desire to humiliate himself: he wishes to be Julie's slave; he is satisfied with accepting Edward's faded mistress; he abases himself by his indecent approaches to young girls and in suggesting they may want to call the police, he seems to seek punishment. These actions perhaps stem from low self-esteem.

Wilcher's neurotic need for possessions which may be regarded as extensions of himself⁸⁶ may be partially explained by a need to bolster his ego. Even as a child, Wilcher fought with Lucy over his things and later, after their father's death, he and Lucy battle over a chair, a source of bitterness which separated them for years. The chair, like many Wilcher possessions, had strong associations for both of them. Certain things through their associations

tend to assert the "continuity of human life",⁸⁷ and for Wilcher, these things have tremendous appeal. Nevertheless, he also feels that possessions are his own special curse burdening him with such responsibilities that he cannot follow the kind of creative urges that move him, such as his longing to be a missionary. By accepting the responsibility of Tolbrook and its traditions, Wilcher accepts oppressing limitations. He is ruled by routine, a kind of living death, and for all his efforts he feels no sense of accomplishment or fulfillment. He feels thanklessly condemned to be a money manager; unquestionably, Wilcher's assertions about the importance of money in its positive and negative aspects have much validity. It is apparent that materialist preoccupations negate Wilcher's aspirations to be creative in the way his sister Lucy is. Cary's own feelings against the evils of materialism perhaps lead him to depict Wilcher as a failure sexually. He never marries and has no offspring. Only through his influence with Ann and indirectly with her children can he pass on his spiritual values if not his genetic code.

Jack Wolkenfeld feels there is "a terrible irony in this allegorical description of the British, upper-class gentleman, the preserver of the society who has no organic relation to what he is conserving but is rather the weighted-down victim of his possessions and his own lack of vitality".⁸⁸ Wilcher may lack vitality when compared to Sara and Gullely but compared to almost all the other members of his family, he is optimistic. At the end of the novel, he tries to dispel Ann's joylessness, counselling her not to take life too

seriously. But her apathy is deep-rooted; she cannot even summon the energy to make her marriage succeed. That Ann is Edward's daughter in spirit, or lack of it, is revealed by her response to Wilcher's suggestion that religious wars can destroy civilization. Ann asks: "Would that matter very much?" (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 236)

Wilcher is an atypical character. He is not creative in the same way as Cary's other creative characters. They generally expect and even welcome change but Wilcher opposes change. Cary acknowledges that the conservative desire to preserve the beautiful is as valid as the artist's desire to create it. Wilcher's creative imagination focuses upon the past, organizing it into an artistic whole and passing this conception to future generations: he is both creative and conservative.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND TRILOGY

In the political trilogy, Cary explores Chester Nimmo and James Latter, two characters who have allowed their creative imaginations to become corrupt and a third protagonist, Nina Nimmo, who is extremely passive and uncreative. Nina is intrinsically interesting but her most important function in the trilogy is to reveal essential aspects of her husband's character. Chester Nimmo is the central figure of the trilogy and the three novels exist to explore his personality and his corrupt imagination.

Technically, Cary's use of Latter and Nina resembles his use of Ajali and Benjamin in Mister Johnson. Their fascination with Johnson served to highlight and dramatize Johnson's personality. Similarly, Nina and Latter are both obsessed with Chester Nimmo. The complexity of Cary's trilogy depends upon their presentation of Nimmo from their own viewpoints. Through the most complex character of the trilogy - Chester Nimmo - Cary explores the associated theme of the multiplicity of reality. To Latter, Chester is a despicable opportunist and scoundrel; to Nina, he is ultimately a good man forced to adopt devious means of achieving worthwhile goals; to himself, Chester is a man of compassion and faith trying desperately to surmount the many obstacles which prevent him from serving humanity.

The reader has to analyze each novel and make allowances for each narrator's personality and viewpoint in order to understand and evaluate Chester Nimmo.

All three characters may be described as psychologically grotesque; the nature of their distortions will be clarified during the analysis of each novel. Chester Nimmo is divided by his idealism, and his desire for political success: political survival frequently requires him to abandon his idealism. His willingness to make compromises suggests the degree of his corruption. Because of him, Nina Nimmo is emotionally divided so that at times she appears schizophrenic: fascinated with her husband to the point of obsession, she cannot decide whether Chester is good or evil - or both. She cannot solve absolutely the mystery of her husband's personality and has insufficient energy for self-examination or personal development. James Latter is also psychologically grotesque. His narrow code of truth and honour paradoxically leads him to commit murder. In his dedication to a limited, literal truth, Latter contrasts with Chester Nimmo, a politician who knows well the necessity of compromise. Latter's presence in the trilogy prompts the reader's re-appraisal of Nimmo's character and ameliorates a final judgement.

In the novels previously discussed, there was a correlation between creative imagination and psychological grotesquerie. In the political trilogy only Chester Nimmo is freely creative but Nina and Chester are psychologically grotesque. Nina is most improbable in her relations with men. She marries Chester while pregnant with

James's child and later, while still married to Chester, bears another child for James. As an older lady in Not Honour More she marries James (after divorcing Chester) but allows Chester to move in and then maintains an unlikely ménage à trois. Despite her premonition that James will kill her, she continues to live with him but is careless of placating him. Indeed, he finds her in compromising positions with Chester. Cary manages to depict Nina as both ladylike and naïve, and an innocent in strange circumstances.

Latter's distortion consists of the ironic discrepancy between his devotion to truth and justice and his violent attacks upon both Nina and Nimmo. Superficially, it seems impossible to accept Latter's grotesque character, but, within the world of the novels, he is completely credible. Outside the fictional world, he would be improbable.

An unexpected twist occurs in Cary's presentation of Chester Nimmo. In both Prisoner of Grace and Not Honour More he appears psychologically grotesque when described by Nina and James Latter while in his memoir he appears quite ordinary - a simple and sincere person who consistently desires to do good. His love for politics does not seem irreconcilable with his deep religious nature, rather politics for Chester becomes a practical expression of his Christianity and his commitment to work for economic equality. What seems so clear and straightforward to Chester, however, appears warped, incongruous and comic when perceived through both James's and Nina's viewpoints. Although they do not agree in their opinion of

Chester, they are both disturbed by the gap between his professions of idealism and his political machinations. To them both, Chester is psychologically grotesque.

Cary does not celebrate creativity in Nimmo; he criticizes and judges Nimmo for allowing his imagination to become corrupt for he is not freely creative but selects from his numerous ideas those which are politically advantageous to him:

... Chester's imagination suggested to him every day hundreds of truths and it was always easy for him to find among them one that "suited" him. And certainly at that time (taught by experience) he was very careful in his choice of what to be excited about. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 70)

Nimmo uses his imaginative powers to manipulate people. Some of his political machinations indirectly result in death. Domestically he plays politics, inducing guilt in his wife Nina by suggesting she treats him condescendingly as a class inferior. This has a devastating effect upon her. She is reduced to being his psychological prisoner, and is denied any creative or imaginative outlet. He also has a negative effect upon James Latter. In reaction to Nimmo, Latter becomes locked in his own rigidity. Nimmo's presence in his life - in marrying the woman he loves and symbolizing all he despises in politics - polarizes Latter's emotions. His obsessive hatred and resentment of Chester Nimmo blocks his imagination and precipitates the tragic outcome of the trilogy. In focussing upon just one vision of the world, and that a wrong one, James Latter

places himself in the unenviable position of the artist who falls in love with his art work and can no longer engage in continual creation. Both William Blake and Gulley Jimson fear this stagnation and as one observes the debilitating effects of Latter's being "stuck", one realizes the validity of Blake's and Jimson's fear. Latter destroys himself and those he loves because of his false vision. Both Nina and James doubtless contain the seeds of their own failure - Nina's passivity and James's insane obsession - but Nimmo acts as a catalyst in developing their negative qualities.

All of Nimmo's creative efforts are directed towards attaining and keeping political power. Yet Cary does not utterly condemn Nimmo; by contrasting his attitudes and actions with those of James Latter, Cary suggests that Nimmo is worthy of a conditional respect. Nimmo is the dominant personality within the trilogy. In Prisoner of Grace, Nina attempts to defend her husband from various slanders but ironically provides evidence against Nimmo. Except the Lord is Nimmo's personal memoir which details important events from his youth which shaped his character. Nimmo's mastery of rhetoric persuades the reader for the duration of the novel that Nimmo is deeply religious and humane, desiring political power only to serve others. Evidence presented by Nina and James Latter ultimately undermines the credibility of Nimmo's own statement. Not Honour More, the final novel in the trilogy, is James Latter's autobiographical attempt to justify murdering his wife. By balancing Latter's devotion to plain, 'simple truth' and his desire for 'simple justice'

with Nimmo's recognition of compromise and tolerance, Cary appears partially to vindicate Nimmo. From another perspective, however, Nimmo is indirectly responsible for Latter's personal disintegration. His intrusion into James and Nina's lives has negative effects upon both of them. Nina becomes increasingly passive and uncreative; she is obsessed with Chester and has no real life apart from him. In her desire to accommodate others, in her apathy and fear of spoiling her comfort, Nina lacks the energy and initiative to assert herself and is instead acted upon. When life's problems appear insoluble, she turns to suicide instead of imaginatively restructuring her experience. In coming between James and Nina, Nimmo has provoked extreme negative feelings in James - feelings of suspicion, hostility and revenge which ultimately destroy Latter's personality. What Cary suggests in the trilogy is that when creative imagination becomes perverted, evil results. Chester Nimmo's manipulations of the people closest to him ultimately destroy them.

The second trilogy presents greater complications than the first in evaluating the sincerity of each narrator's account, for each individual's self-analysis and interpretation of the other major figures is more subtly revealed. The reader is therefore required to be even more acute in analysis, synthesis and empathy to comprehend the chameleon impressions he receives. It seems, superficially, that Cary's stated belief that only partial insights into characters in real life are possible applies to his own understanding of his fictional characters. Some ambiguity remains even after analysis. For

example, the gap between the Chester Nimmo of his own story and the Chester Nimmo of Nina's account is too great to be reconciled completely. How he evolved from the poor, naïve boy of Except the Lord into the wily, consummate politician of Prisoner of Grace is not fully detailed. Imaginative gymnastics are required to accept the two figures even after one interprets Nimmo's own story in the light of Nina's comments about his ability to deceive himself, his skill in making his platitudes credible and his passionate oratory. Before one can appreciate Chester's own story, information gleaned from Prisoner of Grace must be applied. But Chester's portrayal of his own boyhood evokes such sympathy that it is impossible not to be convinced of his sincerity even when warned in advance by Nina that he is capable of any distortions which will further his political ends. Nevertheless, value judgements are not impossible. Authorial intention may be determined by internal evidence within the novels and confirmed, at least in some instances, by Cary's own comments relating to his intentions in depicting Nimmo. Ordinarily, characters in a single novel are not so difficult to judge as characters in a trilogy. Ambiguous characters may appear more easily in a trilogy. The most ambiguous character in Cary's political trilogy is Chester Nimmo. Understanding Nimmo is difficult because each novel gives a different portrayal of his character. For example, Nina's narration is supposedly a defence of her husband but she indirectly condemns him by stressing his politically motivated compromises: Nimmo's own self-portrayal is idealized: he emphasizes his noble aspirations and

glosses over the occasions when he abandons his basic beliefs. His story does, however, corroborate Nina's accusations of expedient compromise. The novels do not so much contradict each other as modify interpretations of events and motives. In the final novel of the trilogy, James Latter defines Nimmo as a crook. Because of his simplistic attitudes, and his jealousy of Nimmo, he exaggerates his rival's faults. For Latter, compromise is totally unacceptable. Anyone "guilty" of compromise is a liar and a cheat. The novels do agree that Nimmo does not always honour his commitments. They disagree in apportioning blame. The viewpoints presented are relative to the three individuals. A kaleidoscopic, not a contradictory, impression is achieved. Cary is ambiguous because he recognizes that people disagree in their value judgements of others. The reader is required to balance each account and arrive at an independent judgement. But Cary does not hesitate to clarify his own interpretation of Nimmo when questioned about him. Of Nimmo, he says:

Nimmo has been called a crook. He is not meant for a crook. A crook is essentially a man who is out for himself, who has no principles. Crooks are uninteresting people because their range is so narrow. In state politics they are especially dull. The question had to be how does a real politician, the handler, the manager of people, who is also a man of principle, keep his principles? How far do his ends justify his means?

I am not pretending that Nimmo was a completely admirable character. There are few such anywhere in the world. He is an egotist like most successful politicians.

Probably no man would give himself to that craft; certainly he would not succeed in it, without a great deal of conceit. Politicians need great self-confidence. Nimmo was a man, too, not very scrupulous in his eloquence. But the modern leader of the people needs to be a spell-binder, and poets have never been very scrupulous in getting their effect. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 5-6)

Because of Cary's ambiguity within the novel - an inevitable result of his kind of trilogy format - readers are unlikely to concur absolutely in their interpretation of Nimmo. But differences of opinion about Nimmo's character would be limited to a reasonable range. The Nimmo who emerges from my own reading is a darker, less sympathetic character than Cary appears to have intended him to be. The individual reader's judgement would be modified by his tolerance of "necessary" unscrupulous behaviour. Cary's accomplishment is that his trilogy does give the real feeling of politics, its confusion and ambiguity. Chester Nimmo epitomizes the crux of the politician's dilemma: to what extent must his principles be modified for the sake of his retaining power? Nimmo's principles are exceedingly flexible but in his defence it must be said that unless he has power, he can make no improvements and Chester does want to alleviate the poverty and wretchedness of the lower classes.

In using the theme of politics as the unifying idea of his second trilogy, Cary includes not only human relations in the public, national sphere but also in the private, domestic sphere. Cary explains his intention in a prefatory essay to Prisoner of Grace,

the first novel of the trilogy. The difficulty of a book about a politician is that people will tend

to read it as a book about government. But politics is the art of human relations, an aspect of all life. That is why I wanted to tell the story through the eyes of a wife whose marriage needs a great deal of management. I wanted to give the complete political scene. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 5)

Chester's marriage does challenge his political ingenuity. Many obvious barriers exist between him and Nina; these include class differences; Nina's suspicion that Chester has married her for money - not love; and Chester's awareness that he is not the father of Nina's children. Nina's simplistic attitude towards politics also makes her distrustful of Chester's manipulations of people and his stratagems for political success. In fact, she has tried to leave him to join James Latter. Despite these major problems in their relationship, Chester and Nina remain married for approximately thirty years - a proof of Chester's political skill.

Cary's political trilogy concentrates upon one subject and one central personality; therefore it is more tightly constructed thematically than the earlier trilogy, but, in mood, the individual novels contrast sharply. All three novels are first person autobiographical accounts which turn to the past to justify or exonerate the characters' actions and attitudes in the present. In the first trilogy, two of the novels were in the picaresque tradition. Structurally, the novels in the political trilogy are, to use

Edwin Muir's phrase, novels of character. The characters in such novels are static; the author's task is to arrange situations which reveal various aspects of his characters' personalities. Conventionally, the plot of a novel of character is 'loose and easy'.⁸⁹ Gary's choice of structure is not a drastic deviation from his modified picaresque in which attention is drawn not to society but to a static, undeveloping picaron. None of the three major characters in the second trilogy is strictly a picaron, although some similarities are easily detectable. For example, Latter is a murderer; Nina bears two children for James Latter while married to Chester Nimmo and Chester himself engages for political purposes in many shady deals. Neither Nina nor James live by their wits as would a picaron but Chester as a youth was engaged in a struggle for economic survival. But this struggle was brief, ending in an arranged marriage to Nina, a woman of means. Although some characteristics of the picaron are associated with each major character, these are incidental rather than definitive qualities. None of the characters exhibits a slick ability to promote himself or assure his economic survival as would a picaron. Financially and socially, Latter and Nina belong to the upper class and although Chester is upwardly mobile, his rise is not based solely on luck or financial opportunism; rather, his talent and choice of career largely determine his social status. He is a leader with a genuine cause, although he is not absolutely loyal to his cause. The three major characters do not live on the edge of society but are members of the establishment. Even for them, life

is far from certain and secure, but they enjoy much more security than did Gulley, Johnson, or Sara. Because of these differences, Nina, Nimmo and Latter are not picaresque.

The mood of a typical picaresque novel is generally light, although dark passages may occur - for example, Gulley's accidental killing of Sara in The Horse's Mouth, an incident which elicited no deep emotional response. The political trilogy does not contain any picaresque novels. Cary's change in structure is appropriate to the darker mood and theme of corrupt imagination. The individual novels vary in mood from Nina's droll account of Chester's bedroom behaviour, Chester's sentimental memoir to Latter's grim story of jealous obsession, but the overall effect is somber.

Individual works in the political trilogy are not as sparkling and exciting as novels of the art trilogy, but the trilogy does achieve a greater unity; characterization is made interesting and complex through the juxtaposition of various viewpoints. Cary's development may be somewhat uneven but this is partially accounted for by his approach to writing: his creativity compels him to experiment with theme and form.

(1)

Prisoner of Grace

Prisoner of Grace, the first novel in Cary's political trilogy, is Nina Woodville's story of her marriage to Chester Nimmo, an artist of politics, and her relationship with the inflexible man of 'honour', James Latter. The men in Nina's life are polar opposites. Nimmo is adept in revising his principles to achieve and maintain political power. He is sincere in his desire to improve the social conditions of the poor and is a strong opponent of class divisions which he feels unjustly favor the rich at the expense of the poor, but he is frequently forced to compromise his positions to serve his political ambitions. He is pragmatic, not doctrinaire, and learns that compromise is a necessary part of political survival. James Latter contrasts starkly with Nimmo. He creates a simplified image of himself as an isolated soldier of honour, the sole honest straight human being in a deceitful world. His inordinate capacity for self-deception makes him blind to many of his own failings. Yet, for judging others, he uses rigid black and white distinctions. Even Nina, the woman he loves, is subject to his suspicions. For Chester, he feels utter contempt. He cannot fathom that a politician "lives in a world of half-truths, complexities, and impurities not because he is a liar or a crook but because that's the way he finds the

world".⁹⁰

Caught between these two men by sexual and psychological bonds is Nina Woodville. She writes her story to exonerate the character of her husband in anticipation of written attacks or "revelations" about Nimmo and herself.

The background against which the major figures of the novel interact is the ambiguous world of politics, fraught with confusion, violence and human manipulation. In writing this trilogy, Cary attempts to create an archetypal politician possessed of rhetorical brilliance and persuasiveness, and driven by his desire for power, a man of integrity who sincerely cares for people but who paradoxically sacrifices his integrity, without admitting it to himself, for political expediency. Nimmo's dilemma is typical. Cary is sympathetic with the real problems he faces and yet refuses to establish a double standard which would ameliorate his implicit criticism. In an article, "Political and Personal Morality", Cary states:

In fact, there is no double standard. Lies are always lies, evil is always evil; public and private morals are governed by precisely the same law.⁹¹

Although Cary denies that there is a special political morality and insists upon the importance of personal integrity in politicians, he recognizes that "all responsible statesmen make use of a special language"⁹² for sometimes deception is necessary in the public good.

In his portrait of Chester Nimmo, Cary does not depict either an ideal or a totally depraved politician.

Although no analysis of Cary's trilogy would be valid or adequate without some consideration of the nature of politics and Nimmo's role as politician, yet Prisoner of Grace is also Nina's personal story. She is deeply affected by Chester's political manoeuvres for he plays politics even in the bedroom. Politics permeates their personal interaction and she is very much a victim of Chester's ploys and machinations. How this stifles and limits Nina's freedom and her potential for creative expression is central to the novel. His rhetorical power has a deep emotional impact upon Nina. Nimmo uses her membership of a socially superior class to exploit her emotionally and evoke guilt feelings which bind her to him. She is made to feel herself his moral inferior whom he forgives and accepts as his "prisoner of grace". In the title, it is Nina's grace, not Chester's, which makes her his prisoner. Although she does not love him, she recognizes his fundamental desire to do good. She continues to live with him and support him emotionally not only from goodwill or mercy, but because, in her one attempt to desert him, Chester was able to stir feelings of guilt within her. She is afraid to leave him and perhaps destroy his career because she may not be able to live with herself afterwards. This interpretation of the title is suggested in Cary's preface to the novel. On a more obvious level, however, Nina becomes a prisoner because Chester pardons her for becoming pregnant by another man, and consents to marry her.

His grace or favour in this case may coincide with self-interest because Nina's social position and money offer him an opportunity to promote his political career.

Nina's story of her youth with her Aunt Latter and cousin James illustrates how her passivity and lack of self-assertion develop. Aunt Latter is dominating and gives Nina little opportunity for independence. She does receive a "stern training in manners", (Prisoner of Grace, p. 25) a training which teaches her to be pleasant and accommodating and to conceal her true feelings and opinions. She is fashioned in the mould of the Victorian female who places docility above morality. Interestingly, Aunt Latter allows herself the freedom of self-assertion and is quite active in local politics, habitually sponsoring poor but promising young men.

James Latter is the other dominating force in Nina's childhood. At turns, he bullies and comforts her. His attitudes are maintained throughout the trilogy but at the close of the novel they coincide when he loves her even as he murders her. As a boy, he flaunts his reckless courage before Nina when to her horror he dares the biggest waves in a rough sea. In retrospect, it is ironic that she turns to James, snuggling into bed with him for security whenever she is disturbed by storm or nightmare. One incident which Nina recalls late in the novel highlights James' tendency to defy danger or even death. He chooses to go sailing on a cold March day so stormy that fishermen keep their boats sheltered in the harbour. The fishermen warn James not to venture out:

But this warning, for Jim, amounted to a "dare", and he was always ready to kill himself for a whim of pride or glory (or, as Aunt said, cussedness) . . . (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 225-226)

James has no qualms in demanding that Nina accompany him for without her help he cannot manage the boat. He fails to consider her safety. If he is to risk his life, then Nina must do the same. Her reaction to James' demand is typical: she is not "brave enough to refuse". (226) Nina habitually complies with his demands. Her first pregnancy results from submitting to his advances merely to keep him quiet.

Nina's passiveness is demonstrated in all her relationships. When Aunt Latta arranges her marriage to Chester Nimmo, one of her political protégés, to avoid scandal, Nina finds herself doing what is requested. This is her most salient characteristic, a result of her early domination and her Victorian training in obedience and accommodation. Oppression stifles her freedom and creativity and makes her a vacillating victim of her own divided will. Her problem is aggravated by her desire to feel needed which raises such tragic implications at the end of the book. After finally divorcing Chester to obtain freedom to live with James, she finds herself a reluctant member of a ménage à trois. Because Chester needs her, she cannot summon the necessary strength of will to evict him but tolerates his presence even while suspecting James will be driven to murder her.

The first scene Cary wrote for Prisoner of Grace,⁹³ the crucial scene at the railway station, focuses upon Nina's struggle

between her desire for personal happiness with James and her unwillingness to hurt Chester's career. Although her story indirectly exposes Nimmo's faults, she does believe in his work and feels many of his actions are justified by their results. While Nina is waiting for the train which will take her to a new life with James, Nimmo arrives and expertly arouses her sense of guilt and obligation with his talk of her superiority:

Perhaps you haven't loved me - I couldn't expect that. The difference between us was too great - all the differences. I understood at once that for you I was worse than a foreigner - I was a kind of savage; even my religion was repulsive . . .
(Prisoner of Grace, p. 90)

Nimmo's ability to play upon her feelings with his words is exemplified in this scene. After assuring her of her freedom of choice, he then makes a speech depicting her marriage as an important sacrifice to a cause bigger than personal desires:

And he was sure I agreed that our marriage had been good in its fruits - it had led to good for others. It had been blessed with our work for right and good things. "And now if I have the chance of the Battwell seat, I can hope for a much wider sphere of action - a much greater usefulness. I really think, Nina, that our life together has had God's blessing upon it, and you might blame yourself if you broke it up." (92)

By the time the train arrives Nina is again Chester's prisoner. She describes her dilemma:

I seemed to have no will to do anything, or rather I had two wills which were fighting inside me, tearing me apart. I can never forget the agony of that time, which must actually have lasted three or four minutes before the train went out. And really I think it was a kind of relief to me when at last it did so, for it made a decision for me. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 95-96)

Nina is torn between two unsatisfactory desires. Her knowledge and understanding of her cousin James would give her only a spurious sense of freedom if they did live together for, in reality, she would have to subjugate herself to him. Her own personality and upbringing prevent her from having any vision of the possibilities of freedom and creativity that were realized by Mister Johnson with his roadbuilding, Sara with her men and soufflés, Culley with his paintings; and were at least perceived, if not realized, by Thomas Wilcher. But Nina conceives of freedom and fulfillment only in terms of a union with James Latter who is hopelessly unsatisfactory in his rigidity, arrogance, simplicity and dominance. When they do marry, he imposes rules for her rests, bed-time and diet yet exposes her, at his whim, to sailing in the roughest weather and enduring twelve-mile walks on the moor. Ironically, her reaction to this "life of slavery" is one of satisfaction, "deep security and independence".

For I saw that so far from being Jim's slave, I belonged to myself more intensely than ever in my life before. And just as in those first days of escape at Axwell, I was enjoying an extraordinary peace. In the worst moments of the day when Jim was at his most pernicky, I still had that deep

security and independence.

It was from this secret place, the independent calm, as of a private fort, that I found it so easy to submit to his whims, that I could say to myself, "Perhaps Jim has always needed to govern something or somebody and now that he has neither horses nor Lugas he can only rule over me." I must not say that I had found out how to laugh at Jim, but there was laughter in the walls of my fort and in my happiness . . . (Prisoner of Grace, p. 365)

Of the three major figures, she is the most sympathetically portrayed. Cary, however, was at first so dissatisfied with his characterization of Nina, fearing that she appeared mean and petty in her criticisms of Nimmo, that he was tempted to cast aside a year's work. (8) He reversed his decision upon adopting the use of brackets which he felt made Nina

a credible witness. They enabled her, even in the first person, to reveal her own quality of mind. She had, in short, a brackety mind. The brackets made the book possible, without the brackets there could have been no book. (8)

Unless Nina appears naive and unaware of the implications of her statements, she will assume the role of Chester's critic (and incidentally lose her special charm). The reader will not enjoy the ironic disparity between Nina's intention (her expressed desire to exonerate Chester) and its results. Cary's decision to use brackets helps maintain the difficult balance between an informed, yet innocent Nina.

One example of Nina's use of brackets occurs when Chester

suggests that James Letter be welcomed at their home:

"And how," he said, "could we forbid Captain Letter the house?"

"You mean that people would talk?" [Nina asks]

This hurt Chester, because it had naturally occurred to him (it couldn't help it) that people would be interested to see how we received Jim (for there was always gossip, probably much more than we knew of, as we both suspected), and he looked at me with a mournful glance (he gave his eyes this expression by opening them rather wider than usual and raising his eyebrows) and answered me rather sadly (which was fair, because he did really despise gossip) that it was not a question of gossip but of common kindness and family duty. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 67)

In the bracketed section where Nina describes how Chester "puts on" a mournful glance, her description undermines his sincerity. Her casual observation that Chester appears often to assume expressions and play roles for political reasons. Nina's other bracketed comment that Chester's expression of sadness is real, and not assumed, reveals her attempt to be fair to Chester - to judge him honestly.

This minor incident demonstrates the psychological tension which results in Nina's divided personality. She can never simply accept Chester's words but is compelled to analyze his motives and separate the genuine from the assumed. Her psychological split is more explicitly revealed when in a bedroom scene she reveals her divided response to her husband's ideas:

"I tried to stop him [from talking] by saying that he must not blame himself for everything, but he began to kiss my forehead, and to my horror I realised that I (at least the second woman) was growing almost as excited and tearful as he was. And I begged him, "Don't, don't; you're too tired!"

But instead he asked me to pray with him; and though I was surprised (and all the time the top woman, the angry one, was more and more determined not to be 'drawn in' by his tricks), I was quite glad to do anything for peace and jumped out of bed at once and knelt down beside him. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 44)

This is an excellent example of Chester's persuasive powers which are effective upon his suspicious and critical wife. When trying to persuade a stranger, Chester would be more convincing, but Nina's intimate knowledge of his thought processes, and his machinations make her more difficult to manipulate. Yet Chester does control her but only at the cost of her psychological division.

No consistent type of comment is included within Nina's brackets; sometimes the material is factual; sometimes it supplies a colourful detail, an insight into a personality, an ironic comment, or even an image. Cary's decision to employ brackets for multiple uses was a wise one. Using brackets solely to demonstrate Nina's divided reaction to Chester would have degenerated into a tiresome, artificial device.

Nina's preference for brackets demonstrates the play of many ideas in her mind, her lack of ability to construct logical arguments and her desire to qualify her statements in order to be

truthful. If Nina had more skill in logic and argument, she would not have needed brackets but then she would be a different personality - one who could not so easily be made Chester's victim or suffer from a mental division. Cary's use of brackets successfully reveals Nina's mind and personality.

Nina is a first-hand witness to Chester Nimmo's character, and unless she appears credible the work is a failure. Giles Mitchell points out the discrepancy between Nina's intention in writing the book and her final accomplishment and wonders if any revelations by others could possibly be as damning as Nina's own.⁹⁴ Her account reveals both her political naivety and her honesty. The work is confessional in nature with its straightforward account of her sexual involvement with James before and after her marriage to Chester. She does not gloss her own shortcomings and exaggerate Chester's but is equally frank about them both. The result is far from a simplistic justification but is satisfying as a candid portrayal of the complexities of human nature. Chester's intentions are honourable; his devotion to alleviating the misery of the poor is genuine but his egotism, love of power and the nature of political life itself conspire to undermine his creative efforts. Nina does ultimately vindicate him: he is, to use his own religious terminology, a sinner but one worthy of forgiveness.

Nina is little suited to life with Chester. She finds talk of a political nature both boring and exasperating. Upon her first meeting him, his animated conversation, doting looks and

proposals to the "queen of his soul" (Prisoner of Grace, p. 19) make him a grotesque figure to her. Chester prides himself upon his exalted use of language but from Nina's reaction it seems he has not yet mastered the art of rhetoric. It is doubtful whether he is a good speaker in the ordinary sense of suiting words to the occasion for his language is generally heightened: it may be suitable for stirring crowds at political rallies but for everyday communication is peculiar. Nevertheless, it is oddly effective. While Nina can hardly contain her giggles at Chester's words and manner, she finds herself unwillingly sharing his emotions.

Nina has no political aspirations and Chester's schemes seem to her absurd. She is inclined to regard Chester's habit of perceiving the world through a religious haze as ridiculous: especially ludicrous to her are his prayers before sex. But Chester's powers of persuasion are so great that Nina's passive nature is imprinted by his emotions which briefly become her own while she is under his rhetorical and emotional spell. Chester has awakened a sense of guilt in Nina: she sees herself through his eyes as a useless but ornamental member of the upper class. A double vision of herself results and she becomes emotionally disturbed and psychologically grotesque.

Nina's pregnancy provides Nimmo with an opportunity of gaining enough social status to proceed to his political goals. James Latter does offer to marry her but really prefers not to because marriage would ruin his career. Aunt Latter agrees and arranges

Nina's marriage to Nimmo. She can both save James and aid Nimmo. She deprecates Nina's own wishes feeling that by her carelessness she has relinquished any right to shape her own life. Aunt Latter is far from heartless but she does understand Nina's capacity for letting things happen. Nina's own comments about her condition confirm this:

... you simply don't have to do anything except bear it, and just by bearing it you get a special sort of power to go on; you even feel a little sorry for people who haven't been through the same awfulness and don't know what it is like. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 21-22)

After her Aunt's explosion upon discovering Nina's condition, Nina simply falls asleep thinking "cheerfully that Aunt would arrange something as soon as she got over the shock". (23)

Cary consistently reveals Nina's character by her interaction with her Aunt Latter, her cousin James and Chester Nimmo. Particular scenes dramatize significant aspects of her character. The railway scene reveals her divided will; the encounter with her Aunt Latter about her pregnancy indicates her passive acceptance of events, her amorality, and desire for peace; her tolerance of Chester's presence in James' and her lives after the divorce demonstrates her belief in Chester's greatness, her desire to be needed and her reluctant sacrifice of personal happiness to what she believes is a "greater" good.

Nina is of intrinsic interest but, as narrator, she is instrumental to the reader's understanding of Chester Nimmo and the

kind of political life he represents. Chester's main objective in life is to achieve political power. His marriage under conditions comically inappropriate to his religious convictions gives him his first real political opportunity by raising his social class. He benefits too from Nina's inheritance which provides funds to advance his political interests.

Chester's standard political technique is to attack. Shortly after his marriage he launches his career in local politics by attacking the incumbent council including many of Nina's relatives. To Nina, all his charges are lies. But his approach of attack and slander is so successful that he is not only elected for the local council but is also proposed for a county council. Nimmo's imaginative grasp of what approaches will assure political success involve him in incidents provoking violence. His pro-Boer platform, including an attack upon the government in power, first brings him into the national limelight. The Chorlock incident in which a hall is wrecked and a young boy so badly hurt that he eventually becomes epileptic is an important step to Chester's fame, but national eminence is attained by his role in the Lilmouth affair. During his speech at Lilmouth, Chester's religious background provides him with political verbiage when he attacks the troops as "butchers in the pay of Pontius Pilate" and accuses England of having "sold Christ to the High Priests of the Rand for gold". (Prisoner of Grace, p. 55) Rioting erupts. Nina's eyes are blackened and an incensed mob rip at Chester's and her clothes. They barely escape in an ambulance.

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Nina is amazed at Chester and Goold's jubilation at their political coup. She is also perplexed that the London paper's denouncements of Chester should be regarded by him as a triumph. She learns that being known is often more important than the reasons for being known. People are apt to forget the reasons but remember and vote for the name. Nina cannot reconcile Chester's hypocrisy, his provocations to violence and his distortions of truth with his prayers and platitudes. She is disturbed and baffled by living in Chester's world:

It was at this time I began to feel among "political" people the strange and horrible feeling which afterwards became so familiar to me (but not less horrible), of living in a world without any solid objects at all, of floating day and night through clouds of words and schemes and hopes and ambitions and calculations where you could not say that this idea was obviously selfish and dangerous and that one quite false and wicked because all of them were relative to something else. The lies were mixed up with some truth (like Chester's belief in a class plot), and the selfish calculations (like Goold's planning to make trouble at Lilmouth) melted at the edges into all kinds of "noble" ideals (like Chester's passion for freedom and free speech). (60)

Nina finds herself influenced so much by Chester's example that she begins to play politics with him, hypocritically praising him and assuring him he will be Prime Minister, while inwardly detesting him. (62) Life for her would be simpler if only she could accept him so she offers kisses as an incantation to make herself love him, but the spell fails.

Ninno's political causes occasionally coincide with his

true feelings. After the Boer War, when Chester is considering whom to attack next, he toys with associating himself with education but rejects it in favour of attacking landlords. Offering himself as the champion of the poor, he advocates the abolition of poverty. He does suffer a couple of minor setbacks but his platform pays off when he is unexpectedly nominated for Tarbiton and his career begins in earnest. To facilitate his advancement, Chester needs to improve his financial situation. Purchasing shares in a syndicate for making electricity solves that problem. Success agrees with Chester and when he is able to fraternize with "great" men at "great" parties, he even loses his intense fear of class plots.

His business dealings inevitably draw him into a conflict of interest scandal when, during the Contract Case, he is accused by the opposition of using his position to gain profitable information. For once, Nina adamantly supports her husband's innocence. Her defense is not entirely convincing for her own account suggests that Nina is easily duped by Chester.

The picture of Nimmo as a political opportunist is complete when Nina describes how Chester's dedication to pacifism, the platform on which his career began, is abruptly transformed when he is invited to become Minister of Production in the War Cabinet, a move which eventually leads to his defeat. Nina labels his change of policy "ratting". His argument for his revised outlook is an interesting example of how words can be used to disguise truth. Nina summarizes his speech. He

"confessed to being deeply misled" and to never having believed it possible for any civilised people to be guilty of so dastardly a crime (the invasion of Belgium) against the very basis of civilised religious liberty, which was the sanctity of the pledged word. And so, with a reluctance which those who knew him and his record could understand, he had been compelled, as an act of conscience, to support the cause of truth, which was also that of peace and freedom, against aggression which he could only describe as devilish. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 267-268)

Anyone unaware of Chester's character might accept his explanation as an example of a valid change made necessary by new insights but Nina's explanation suggests that Chester is primarily interested in promoting his career. Ironically, he misjudges the reaction of the public and loses their support because of his decision. Nina's reaction to this speech suggests Chester's verbal power. She describes herself as being "moved by his words" even though she knows he is "ratting".

Part of her mind supports Chester:

And I told myself that Chester had really been surprised by the sudden attack on Belgium, that he had been indispensable in the War Cabinet, that it had been his duty, just as he had said, to ignore a pledge given under other circumstances; in fact, that in real life one cannot always keep pledges. (268)

But another part of her mind is uneasy for she imagines Chester's calculating mind saying:

"I can break my word with impunity, because, in the rush of new and important events, people will forget about the whole matter." (268)

This example illustrates how Nina suffers a kind of schizophrenia because of Chester. She is never sure that what he says is true and sincere or whether it is a politically appropriate lie.

This aspect of Nina's personality - the uneasy balance of conflicting viewpoints and her inability ever to resolve them - makes her appear psychologically grotesque. In real life, such a disordered personality might require psychiatric attention. In her own story, Nina is a credible narrator and gives a convincing account of how life with Chester has caused her mental and emotional tension. In Not Honour More, when James Latter's presence further aggravates her uneasy mental state, she attempts suicide to escape from a world which she cannot hope to control.

In tracing Nimmo's political moves, Nina unwittingly makes a damning case against her husband. Scant evidence is offered to show how he helped people but much exists to show how he helped himself. His various machinations attest to his imaginative powers but these are corrupted and perverted in being directed to unworthy ends.

Nimmo's corrupt imagination has dark implications in both the public and private sphere. His marriage continues to exist only because he manages Nina by playing upon her emotions. Giles Mitchell suggests that Nimmo's triumph over "the Slapton-Latter family, an extension of his victory over Nina, seems to suggest symbolically the defeat of an effete gentry by the lower classes."⁹⁵ Aunt Latter is unceremoniously evicted from Chester's home when her presence becomes

irritating to Bootham, his chief household spy. He may owe his career to her but gratitude has become superfluous. Similarly, in dealing with James, he arranges to have him sent to Africa under suspicions that make his return home difficult. His influence over James's and Nina's son Tom is also devastating for when Tom realizes that his purported father is a liar, (Prisoner of Grace, p. 192) he can no longer take anyone seriously. His talents are wasted in artistic mockery of Chester and all he represents. His lack of faith eventually leads him to commit suicide. His sister, Sally, however, succumbs to Chester's persuasive eloquence, reducing herself to an admiring extension without a life of her own.

His friendship with Goold is governed by political considerations for when Goold's ostentatious living becomes a political liability for Chester, he will no longer associate with him. He plans an attack on Goold based on his knowledge that Goold had permitted tinned meat to be sent to the troops, even though he knew the meat was bad. Chester condemns Goold's behaviour only for political reasons. Privately, Chester does try to make up to Goold with a knighthood.

The most damning evidence of Chester's negative effect upon people is Nina's story of her life with him when she is so manipulated that she can never realize her own selfhood. Their marriage is an unnatural union promoted by Nina's Aunt to solve the problem of Nina's pregnancy, and accepted by Chester largely as a stepping-stone to political success. Chester appears to be devoted to Nina -

excessively admiring her appearance, generously giving her presents and constantly being solicitous about her well-being. In his memoir, he equates her "nobility" with that of his own mother. Yet their marriage is for Chester a social and political coup and maintaining their union while at the same time asserting his dominance is a challenge to Chester's ingenuity. When Nina attempts to leave him at a politically inopportune moment, Chester uses psychological manipulation to bind her to him. Later, when his career is, in essence, finished, he grants her legal freedom to marry Lutter. He makes a mockery of Nina's marriage to Lutter by joining their household and thereby confirming his ultimate power over Nina. This move catalyzes James Lutter's destructive qualities and precipitates the tragic dénouement of the trilogy. Lutter despairs of controlling Nina in life and instead chooses to murder her.

Nina never categorically states that Chester does not love her. She accepts his outward show of devotion as an indication of his genuine affection for her. Nevertheless, her narrative compels the reader to question how Chester does truly feel about his wife. The reader is placed in a quandary similar to Nina's: it is impossible to determine exactly Chester's true feelings. Do love and political self-interest coincide for Chester in their marriage or are his protestations of love politically motivated? An example illustrating the latter is his courtship of Nina. Chester comes to his very first meeting with Nina prepared with exaggerated speeches of devotion. These speeches are not for Nina the person - a human being he knows

and admires - because, at that point, she is a stranger to him. But Chester's creative imagination has worked upon the bald fact that he can share through marriage Nina's wealth and social position. Because of his idealized self-image, Chester cannot tolerate the idea of being a base political opportunist. He stresses, in his proposal, that he has admired Nina's beauty and charm from afar, desiring her but never even daring to hope his dream might be realized. Whether this is false cannot be proven, but one suspects his prior feelings were not profound but consisted - if they did exist - only of a casual admiration which any man might feel for a lovely and charming female. The thought of possessing her and making her advantages his own stimulated Chester to exaggerate and elevate this passing fancy. Nina never denies Chester's devotion and loyalty, because in convincing himself of his love for Nina, he is empowered to convince her. Yet his attitude towards her is complex: he knows she is his class enemy; he knows her children are not his own; he knows she finds him odd and ridiculous and finds his political success incongruous. Nina has ambivalent attitudes towards Chester's success: she is partially supportive, partially resentful. When Chester was beaten "by a Liberal who actually supported the Empire . . ." she could not help the thought, "You see, after all, trickery doesn't always have its own way." (Prisoner of Grace, p. 63) Chester is aware of Nina's negative attitudes towards him: she loves another man and harbours some contemptuous feelings for her husband. Chester never directly reveals any resentment about Nina's feelings; he appears to

understand and accept them. What intrigues and challenges Chester is using his knowledge of Nina to control her; it enhances his feeling of power to keep Nina psychologically bound to him. He does not make her a prisoner against her will but rather so confuses and divides Nina that she becomes, in essence, schizophrenic. Indeed, Nina's barrier to achieving full personal maturity is her lack of will, her extreme passivity. This quality exists in her prior to her marriage to Chester as Cary demonstrates by showing her interacting with James and her Aunt Letter. James is attracted to Nina not only by her feminine attractiveness but also by her tendency to acquiesce to his suggestions. He seeks dominance and Nina is habitually submissive. In her relationship with Aunt Letter, Nina shirks all responsibility, most notably that of her pregnancy: she falls into a tranquil, unworried sleep after deciding that her pregnancy is not her problem, but her Aunt Letter's. Confident in her Aunt's ability to master any situation, Nina abdicates all responsibility and passively waits for her Aunt to decide what ought to be done. Whether passivity is a permanent facet of her character or a casual habit engendered by her dominating Aunt Letter, Cary does not explicitly state. Nina's description of her feelings in Prisoner of Grace suggests the devastating psychological effect of being torn between two opposed interpretations of her husband's character. Because of her uncertainty about her husband, an uncertainty which he appears to encourage intentionally, she submits to him. Their relationship does not foster Nina's maturity or independence but inhibits her

development. Instead of seeking self-fulfillment, Nina becomes obsessively fascinated with Chester: her book reveals that understanding and judging Chester, trying to determine whether he is predominantly either good or evil is, for Nina, a major preoccupation.

Their sexual relationship reflects the peculiar nature of their basic relationship. For Chester, their marriage is a political triumph: "the sex act is an especially gratifying political triumph, that is, a victory won over class barriers".⁹⁶ Nina is not intellectually certain of what their marriage represents to Chester, but intuitively, she is suspicious of him. She does unintentionally supply evidence suggesting that Chester does not love her "for herself alone". She judges herself possessed of a split personality: part of her is "quite furious still and watchful of every move by this cunning enemy, and one of them so close and sympathetic to him that she felt all his feelings like her own". (Prisoner of Grace, p. 44) Giles Mitchell suggests that this split "accounts for Nina's attempts throughout the novel to support utterly irreconcilable positions".⁹⁷ The part of Nina which hates and despises Chester is aware that she is partially used as a sop to his ego. She mentally scorns his sexual excitement while removing herself from full emotional involvement with him:

"Look at him now, how ridiculous he is really, almost crying with excitement and greed; here is your prophet of the lord" (for you may be sure that the more excited Chester was the more certainly he would begin with some "religious" words - it was like grace before

a meal), "your great man, wriggling and panting and sweating like a nasty little animal". (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 62-63)

But Nina's objections to being mastered by Chester are, from one point of view, based on illusions about herself. For part of her personality desires passive submission. This is illustrated by her relationship with James Latter. As already indicated, she is happiest when he is most rigidly dictatorial. Chester is not as obviously domineering but through subtle manipulation, he nevertheless controls Nina. Nina correctly describes herself as a prisoner because in her youth and married life, she never achieves independence and self-fulfillment. In her closest personal relationships, she knows only domination.

Cary's interest in describing Chester and Nina's sexual relationship does not stem from a desire to write about sex - it is a subject of peripheral interest to Cary as a writer. But his description of Nina and Chester's sexual relationship suggests the symbolic importance of this aspect of their lives. A dark comedy results from Chester's intertwining religion, politics and sexual passion: Chester's prayers and exhortations at bedtime stir him and Nina to a lurid pitch of emotional excitement, an excitement which Nina finds shocking as she realizes Chester's power over her emotions.

"The growth of Nimmo's power over Nina, epitomized in the sex act, parallels the extension of his power in the political world; the progressive loss of all mutual trust between them, and the use of a

language which disguises the truth of their marriage, parallels Nimmo's gradual loss of political ethics."⁹⁸

Most husbands would be more than a little annoyed if their wives indulged in love affairs after marriage. But Chester is hardly a typical husband. In fact, he arranges Nina's adultery with James Latter. When James returns after his discharge from the army, Chester insists that Nina invite him to their house. She accuses him of being motivated by a desire to avoid gossip which would have political repercussions for him. Chester, never at a loss for a noble reason, says it is "not a question of gossip but of common kindness and family duty". (Prisoner of Grace, p. 67) Chester arranges that they spend a great deal of time together for it seems he "needs the tension that will be caused by his wife's proximity to her cousin."⁹⁹ His lack of jealousy at their intimacy suggests his confidence in managing and controlling Nina regardless of her own feelings. He appears to mastermind her seduction by James in his own backyard, making her a "proprietary offering to Jim and ultimately to his own ego. The resulting sexual excitement intensifies his spiritual renewal . . . "¹⁰⁰ Chester seems to stage their relationship as another exercise in manipulating people. Always aware of other people's feelings, he knows how to play upon them to his own advantage. He knows Nina cannot live with the responsibility of spoiling his political opportunities; he seems aware of her weakness for pleasure. A holiday and the excitement of participating in a political campaign make her forget her involvement with Latter even

though she is bearing his child. Her pregnancy, instead of ending her marriage, brings Chester more votes.

All Nina's attempts to escape from her marriage fail but when Chester is finally defeated, he decides to free Nina because there is "no longer any political reason why . . . [she] should not be divorced". (Prisoner of Grace, p. 360)

Under the patina of comedy -- the politics at bedtime and Nimmo's sexual advances after their divorce -- runs a darker current. Nina's subjugation is hardly humorous. Chester's treatment of her is a gloomy example of how one human being preys upon another. Cary's portrait of Nina does not conform to the standard conception of the devoted wife whose *raison d'être* is to advance her husband's career. Nina is an asset to Chester from a sense of obligation, not love. Her story is a study in psychological entrapment. Cary affirms his belief in the desirability of freedom and creativity as means to full human development by exposing the negative effects of Nimmo's machinations upon others. The people closest to him lead unfulfilled lives. Death often follows in his wake. Publicly, his presence provokes rioting and loss of life. Privately, his influence leads to Tom's suicide. Nimmo himself does not escape for after defeat he becomes a ludicrous and pathetic figure, a parody of his former self. His death in a lavatory described in Not Honour More is ignominious to a degree "unparalleled in Cary's work". 101

No politician is consistently successful. Setbacks and defeats are typical, for public taste and attitudes change. At the

close of the novel, Chester appears dated, out of fashion. Like a typical power-seeker, he cannot accept his change of status but constantly seeks for new means of impressing himself upon the public consciousness. He cannot reconcile himself to loss of power. But Chester in his heyday is a master of political intrigue. The entire novel is a testimony to his craft, cunning, and skill. Gary chooses to include Latter's moves on behalf of his beloved Lugas to contrast his clumsiness with Chester's adroitness. "The whole incident is a kind of political fable which demonstrates the perils of naive idealism and the ironies it leads to, and it shows clearly that Jim is intended as a foil to Nimmo in politics as in love."¹⁰² Latter makes the mistake of trying to help the Lugas and not himself. Helping others is a difficult task: it is easier to help oneself. Jim's failure is highly comic. No one is interested in his book about the Lugas and when he brings a deputation of chiefs to London at enormous expense, they are persuaded by some African students that they are being exploited. Instead of appreciating Latter's efforts on their behalf, they vote him out of office and accuse him of having "concealed essential information and failed to disclose financial commitments". (Prisoner of Grace, p. 361) This is especially ironic for Latter has financed their trip himself. They refuse to return home because they enjoy "the corrupt civilization of Europe too much". (359) The whole incident points out the complexities of managing people; the political game is not for amateurs.

Except the Lord

Except the Lord, the second novel of the political trilogy, comes as somewhat of a shock after Nina's story. It is Chester Nimmo's memoir written while he is living with Nina and James Latter and seducing her almost beneath Latter's nose. Chester's account of his boyhood and youth and the forces which most influenced his development is hard to reconcile with the character of the man Nina describes in Prisoner of Grace, or the man James Latter describes in Not Honour More. The boy evokes sympathy and respect. It is impossible to read the book and not fall under the spell of Chester's story; its simplicity and candour make him a credible narrator even after Nina has so severely discredited him. Yet, if one takes into account Nina's report of Chester's inordinate capacity for self-deception and his persuasive eloquence, then the gap between the two Chesters may be bridged. But a further problem is raised in terms of the trilogy as a whole for if one accepts Chester's account of his upbringing - and it is convincing - then Cary does not satisfactorily describe how the man emerges from the boy. One is compelled to reevaluate the sincerity of each narrator and perhaps question whether Nina's class prejudice does not bias her against Chester more than she realizes. The main problem in assessing the unbiased truth is that Cary wishes to show

that each person has only a partial grasp of reality so that a narrator's credibility cannot be determined to an absolute degree. Yet one novel does not totally deny the truth of the other. Nina frequently mentions Chester's habit of using elevated language and the opening paragraph of Except the Lord confirms her viewpoint. Chester's language is pretentious and exaggerated: the three women in his life are "noble"; his memories of his family are "sacred to memory" while his story "throws light upon the crisis that so fearfully shakes our whole civilization". He cannot be accused of understatement.

Nina's description of Chester as being different or odd is supported by Chester's own words. The whole Nimmo family are considered strange by their more conventional neighbours for Chester's father is a lay preacher who believes in the doctrine of the Second Coming. Village children pursue the younger Nimmo accenting their strangeness by calling their names as though in incantation: "Chester Nim-mo; Geor-gina Hel-en". Mrs. Coyte, the father's employer, regards him suspiciously and forbids him to practice conversion on her farm: "None of your nonsense preachings in my cottage," she orders. (Except the Lord, p. 14) As a child, Chester is self-conscious and senses he is a butt for the jibes of others. When his father loses his position as an independent yeoman and is forced to move into a three-room cottage, Chester feels that people "rejoiced in our fall". (21) Nina, too suggests that people tend to laugh at Chester calling him "Pretty boy" and "The maiden's prayer". (18)

Her initial tendency to find him ridiculous is not unique.

Nimmo is a plausible narrator. His story corrects the narrowness of Nina's account. The poverty and insecurity Nimmo endures are beyond the scope of Nina's comprehension for her protected life blinds her to the validity of Chester's complaints against class. The basis for Chester's obsession is clearly explained in Except the Lord. His memories of his family's oppression by landlord and social superiors make his class hatred comprehensible. The reader is presented with a broader view than either Nina or Chester for he vicariously experiences what each feels but is unable to communicate to the other. They live as strangers for neither truly comprehends the other's real nature.

To accept Except the Lord at face value as the total truth about Chester Nimmo is to deny any validity to Nina's own description of Chester. But Cary never suggests that Nina's account is invalid or distorted to any real extent except for the inevitable distortion which any narrator introduces because of his feelings and personality. Chester's narrative although truthful does not present the whole truth of his life and personality. Rather, it is an idealized portrayal of himself and it does not deal with the mature Chester when he has assumed political office and is fully embroiled in political life. Chester omits references to his adult life perhaps because he "cannot deal with these years"; he "cannot explain in his own words the events of his political career".¹⁰³ Confronting his later developed self can only make him uncomfortable. There are too many

complications, contradictions and paradoxes in his mature self for him to fashion a universally acceptable personal image. He prefers as a politician to present a simplified version of his character to enhance his appeal to the reader. Chester has convinced himself of his own sincerity and is therefore able to appear credible. He is not averse to depicting his faults but presents them as discrete errors resulting from inexperience or naivety or an inadequate philosophy rather than faults which recur whenever political motives clash with private motives. For example, when Chester acts as a strike leader, some of his actions and those of his colleagues result in violence. Georgina, his sister, accuses him of being instrumental in arranging an ambush of some carters:

She asked me at once if I had heard of the attack on the carts. I said, 'yes,' and she answered, 'Did you set them on to it?'

As I climbed into my seat, I answered 'No,' but I was glad that my face was hidden from Georgina. I even felt a momentary discomfort in my breast, such a pang as that which comes when one is called upon to destroy something precious and irreplaceable.

But in the same instant there arose in me a sense of glory and triumph, something quite unexpected in its force and puzzling even to myself - I had lied to Georgina for the cause.' (Except the Lord, p. 254)

The incident described above reveals an intrinsic factor of Chester's personality - a capacity for politically motivated deliberate deceit. Chester criticizes his own behaviour in lying to Georgina "for the cause", leading one to assume that, in his maturity,

he would not repeat this behaviour. But Chester's image of himself in his youth ironically corresponds with the husband whose behaviour so disturbs Nina. In Chester's account of his conversation with Georgina, no indication is given of her reaction to Chester's lie. She does not probe further but changes the subject. One assumes she either believes Chester or sees no point in pressing her accusation. Nina, however, is acutely sensitive to his lies and distortions. Chester's negative creativity - his directing imaginative energies to self-promotion, his apparent sense of power in deluding people - has a crushing psychological impact upon Nina: she resents being manipulated but most intolerable to her is the sense he creates in her of being in an evanescent "floating" world, a world which resembles Alice's Wonderland in its uncertainties. She has a desperate need for truth and certainty. This helps explain her need for James Laffer. In Chester's presence, she is nervous and apprehensive: intuitively, she suspects him, but intellectually, she cannot analyze his moves sufficiently to predict or understand them. Paradoxically, she supports him because she thinks he is basically good and is stunned to observe what plots and stratagems are necessary to achieve "good" results. Chester's job as strike leader involved his seeing that the "active elements" of his group - those who committed acts of violence - did not go too far. He describes one incident which he was required to investigate:

Two houses at one side of this place had been wrecked. All the windows were smashed, the torn

curtains hung from them in rags, and the street was littered with broken furniture - the pitiful furniture of very poor people.

There was blood on the pavement, and in the gutter opposite a man was lying.

One of the two men chosen for an example had run away, he had been stopped and beaten, but not so severely that he had not been able to walk to hospital; the other, the one I saw, had tried to defend his home. He was now lying insensible among the broken crockery and splintered wood, the torn shreds of stuff which had been his household possessions. His face seemed like a pulp of blood, no features could be recognized.

I should have liked to say that I was sick with horror at this spectacle of my work so coolly arranged in the office. But my own words contradict me - they have been preserved for nearly fifty years in a column of the Lilmouth Advertiser, luckily for me an obacure and long defunct sheet:

'The women were obviously much alarmed in case I should recognize them - there is no doubt that the new policy has had all the success we anticipated in bringing the scabs into line, B and L and party deserve high praise, for the efficient manner in which the assignment was carried out (Except the Lord, pp. 260-261)

Chester presents these examples as errors of his youth and fails to recognize that throughout his political career he continues to commit similar errors. Nina and James Latter tell of other conflicts in Chester's political life and how he frequently has to justify oppressive actions as inevitable by-products of worthwhile goals. But the stark sense of horror evoked by Chester's description of physical brutality makes the reader seriously question whether any goal can be justified when accompanied by such atrocity. Chester acknowledges the horror: he clearly sees the painful ugliness of the scene. But

he accepts it. He refuses to abandon his policy whatever the cost in human suffering. The reader shares Chester's horror but ironically has an independent reaction. Feeling that a nightmare of violence is unjustified, he rejects the policy. The mature Chester also criticizes his own youthful reaction but he is more concerned about the negative political effect that public awareness of his former attitude would provoke. Really, Chester has not changed. His career bears witness that he consistently places politics before people.

Paradoxically Chester believes in the sacredness of the family, a belief rooted in his own experiences. For him, the family is the microcosm of the state and the lifeblood of religion. In a letter to Nina after the birth of her first child, he writes:

True religion . . . centres in the family - for the Protestant, priesthood resides in every parent responsible for a child's upbringing. That is why we are bound to stand for any state policy that can secure the family unit as a unit. For it is only in family life that the freedom and dignity of a responsible citizen accords with his religious duty, and who shall say that one, who knows the burden of authority over helpless dependents, is thereby weakened in responsibility towards the state that is a father to its people. (Except the Lord, p. 104)

Chester is aware that Nina's child is not his own although he will never admit this to her. His letter therefore is not an expression typical of a proud parent. But in it he acknowledges indirectly that in fulfilling the role of a parent, an individual makes a worthwhile contribution to the state. Chester feels that caring for Nina and her child is both a responsibility and a personal duty which he

performs not simply for his 'family' but for the state. In speaking of the family of his youth, Chester speaks more spontaneously and warmly; he celebrates their family life together. The shadow of eviction, he recalls of his very early childhood, fails to affect his happiness in belonging to a close, united, loving family in an "enchanted world of affection". (Except the Lord, p. 8) His character is formed by the quality of his family life; its bonds are strong enough to give him emotional reassurance despite the many disasters which assault it. As a boy, he exalts his father believing him to be a great man. His own career parallels his father's in many respects. In listening to his father preach, he receives his first appreciation of the power of oratory and develops his own in his careers as preacher and politician. His father is involved in political turmoil: he is chosen to act as treasurer to a miners' friendly society, a euphemism for a union. Chester also becomes deeply involved in political agitation. Except the Lord gives the "thought and feeling of Nimmo's youth, the roots from which the radical politician grows . . ." ¹⁰⁴ Cary challenges the reader to assess Chester's sincerity in describing his family life. His portrayal is probably more idealized than realistic, a product of creativity used to falsify his past experience. He corrupts his imagination, but only mildly in this instance; distorting, creating a halo for the past. Chester, the writer, is one with the consummate politician. He courts his reading audience just as he woos the masses at political rallies. His political purpose in writing,

one assumes, is to enhance his own reputation: he realizes that people can tolerate and sympathize with anyone modest enough to admit his faults. Indeed, no one could possibly find him credible as a human being if he did not reveal the negative aspects of his character. But much may be forgiven a loyal son, a devoted brother, a loving member of a family. And Chester, the old man glorifying his past, well knows how to win the sympathy vote, how to minimize his shortcomings and exaggerate his virtues. The reader must evaluate Chester within the context of the trilogy to avoid being duped by his words.

As Chester describes the hardships his family endured, one must question to what extent he is telling the truth - and there is a real core of truth to his story - and to what extent he glosses his past to elicit sympathy. The problems of survival inherent in a life of poverty are disturbing. Consumption is prevalent among the poor. Chester's mother would have been spared an early death could the family have afforded to send her to a warm country. Georgina, his over-worked sister, who shoulders the burden of family responsibility after their mother's death, also succumbs to the disease. When Chester's father loses his farm and his independence, the uncertainty of keeping the family together is a major worry. Chester's hatred of the rich and their power over the poor develops from his early experience. Mrs. Coyte can evict him at her whim, and eviction means the separation of the entire Nimmo family. Along with the happiness of family love and loyalty, Chester cannot forget

injustice and hardship: the tuberculosis which killed his mother, the malice of neighbours who were envious of his mother's education and his father's moral ideals, the bankruptcy which drove them off their own farm into labouring jobs.¹⁰⁵

Although Chester when he is very young harbours no resentment for the rich, (they seem to belong to a different world) this soon changes:

There was a time within the next years when the hatred of social injustice and of the fearful inequalities of our society became an obsession with me and Georgina, a pressure that tormented us even in our dreams. (Except the Lord, p. 40)

In Except the Lord "Nimmo's tendency to measure his transgressions by the standards of family loyalty is a major theme".¹⁰⁶ As a boy, Chester trusts his father's word as absolute. The foundation for his belief in justice stems from his father's teaching that the wicked are punished and the good rewarded. (Except the Lord, p. 9). His father, however, never punishes his children physically. His power of disapproval is generally strong enough to control them. Georgina's high spirits sometimes require strong measures. After her attack upon the factory girls from Battwell, her father talks to her about the devil in her heart and resorts to prayer to drive out her devil. (34) But loyalty to their father's teachings, though not to him personally, diminishes for Georgina, Richard and Chester as they mature. Georgina learns

to make necessary compromises with her father's high ideals when they impede the family's economic survival. Her lie about G.'s dealing with her is obvious and deliberate, shocking to the father, Chester and herself. But she believes it necessary for the family's good that she conceal G.'s sexual molestation: again, she rejects her father's prayers against her working in the beerhouse. She consistently makes "practical compromises for the well-being of their motherless family".¹⁰⁷

Georgina's disloyalty gives her inner strength but Richard's disloyalty is devastating to him. His intellectual absorption with reasoned truth, not the truth revealed by faith, makes him reject their father's teaching. When the "spirit of their father's religion" dries up in Richard,¹⁰⁸ his life becomes narrower and meaner. He rejects the opportunity of challenging work at the University to have more time for himself. Nimmo worries that his political concerns compare meanly with Richard's new interest in family life; but Richard's failure to live up to his promise and the narrowing of his spheres of interest suggest that Chester's choice is larger and more worthy.

Chester's own faith in his father's authority is badly shaken when the Second Coming, prophesied by his father after painstaking calculations using the correct sources, fails to occur. This event frees Chester: "it removed me from my complete trust in my father's wisdom and so opened the way to political agitation".

(Except the Lord, p. 125) Had Chester's religious faith not been

shattered, he might have followed his father's career and chosen to become a religious leader. Cary's choice of the Second Coming as a turning point in Chester's life is ironic: it suggests that Chester is somewhat gullible. But if one grows up in a family which accepts the doctrine of the Second Coming, then it is difficult to deny it. To do so is tantamount to denying one's own family and Chester's loyalty to his family - not simply from the political advantage of family loyalty - is one of his strongest characteristics.

Chester's preparation for his career begins with an earlier transgression against his father's known wishes. His father's whole education of his children is against falseness and hypocrisy. This principle forms the core of his objection to plays. But when the Lillmouth Great Fair offers Chester the opportunity of seeing his first play, the temptation is irresistible. He tries to rationalize his "sin" by arguing to Georgina that the story of the play is true, and therefore his father would not object. But Georgina bluntly refuses to support his distortion. "Of course it was a play - it was feigning - with real actors." She said this in a tone of strong indignation. "But I don't care." (Except the Lord, p. 96)

Chester's attendance at the melodrama Maris Marten is of central importance to the first part of his story. It crystallizes all his felt but previously repressed hatred for class oppression. To appreciate its impact upon him, a summary of certain key experiences and observations of poverty is helpful. His family's "poverty

and his father's evangelical fervour are the real basis for his sincere indignation at social injustices".¹⁰⁹ Chester further describes the wretched social conditions heard of or known in his youth which drove men to drink:

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

Wesley has described the state of our mining villages before their conversion - there were still towns all over England where great regions containing millions of souls were nightly given over to scenes whose bestiality could only be surpassed by their hideous rage against everything that dignifies humanity - vice delighting in foulness only to express the spite engendered by its own despair. (Except the Lord, p. 57)

During the Ranstone miners' strike, Chester observes scenes of suffering which profoundly disturb him:

I myself was well acquainted with poverty, I had seen friends changed in a few weeks by some family disaster from plump and gay comrades to waifs, thin, anxious, ragged. But living in a small hamlet of farmworkers, I had never known a general distress.

Now suddenly we found ourselves among a crowd of men and women of whom there was not one who did not carry the marks of long privation. The men's clothes, unnaturally clean, hung upon them, the hollow cheeks and bright feverish eyes turned in silence upon the speaker were those of famine.

The women in a smaller group stayed apart, some sitting in a close group on the rocks beside the stream, others standing on the hillside. Many had brought their babies. The young mother then, like an African native, would carry her baby with her wherever she went, not trusting it out of her

sight. And if the men seemed starved, I had never seen so thin and worn a crowd of human beings as those women. It was once explained to me by some factory owner during an industrial dispute that my sympathy for the suffering of the women was somewhat exaggerated. Women, he said, have small bones, and a week or two of short commons will make them seem almost transparent. I said to him that I admired his transposition of starvation into short commons, and that women should starve and their babies starve in a dispute between men seemed to me at the least an anomaly.. (Except the Lord, p. 67)

Family life is at the mercy of economic conditions and Chester describes woman's lot as particularly hard:

For women in those days, the break up of a home was often a break up of their lives. Many a girl in the bad times passed in a year from bridehood and motherhood to the workhouse or the streets. For the men would move away following the work where it was to be found. They were expected to do so. (68)

Cary includes examples of Chester expressing sincere emotional shock as well as expressions of contrived or sentimental emotions. Each example must be analyzed for ironic overtones. In this instance, there is no reason to doubt Chester's sincerity. Chester's experience of poverty must be appreciated before the impact of the play can be fully realized. Cary's reasons for including the above description is to stress Chester's genuine concern for the plight of the poor and suffering he observes during his youth. Because he does care deeply for people and sympathizes with their distress, he cannot be dismissed simply as a political opportunist. In Prisoner of Grace, Nina confirms Chester's deep attachment to his own class.

Chester's initial motivation for attaining political power is the improvement of the economic conditions of the poor. Cary stresses this quality of concern in Chester for it serves to sustain in the reader a modicum of sympathy for him even when he is most reprehensible. Chester's identification with the poor is a cause of tension and conflict in his marriage for although he loves Nina, she is nevertheless his class enemy. His marriage symbolizes a victory for his class but ironically he avenges his own people by deserting them - by uniting with the oppressor. The hollowness of this union is suggested by their failure to have any offspring; a union of the two classes is unproductive.

Maria Marten is the story of the seduction of a "virtuous child of poor cottagers" by a rich landlord. (Except the Lord, p. 68) Corder, the stage villain, seduces Maria by "threatening to raise her father's rent to an impossible amount and evicting him if he can't pay". (92) Maria symbolizes the virtue, innocence and helplessness of the poor. Corder represents the oppressive, Satanic landlord.

Chester describes his experience as an illumination. For the first time, he quivers to the "mysterious power of the actor". (98) He now understands fully the power he had previously seen exercised by his father - "the spell of the orator". (99) Chester grasps that this power can be his: with his own voice, and his own will, he too can sway others. It is, he states, a question of "striking the right attitudes". (99) Chester's words suggest he is willing to adopt whatever attitudes are necessary to appeal

to a larger audience. His comment undermines his expressions of loyalty to the lower classes; luckily for Chester, it is a politically popular move to help the poor. The validity of this aspect of his narration is supported by Prisoner of Grace. Nina feels that Chester's imaginative power lies in selecting the most suitable idea and giving it emotional sincerity with his voice. Like an actor, he can make an idea a part of himself so that when he speaks his voice has the ring of sincerity.

Chester's obsession with class injustice is re-inforced by the play. But Chester's most interesting reaction is to Corder, the villain of the piece. His fascination with Corder provides a clue to the crime "of which it is . . . [his] purpose to trace the source and nourishing". (Except the Lord, p. 94) Presumably, this "crime" relates to Chester's loss of faith and his adult egotism, pride and lust for power. The key to Chester's failure lies in his allowing the attributes of Corder to dominate him; politically, his genuine desire to help the poor is overwhelmed by his determination to attain power even at the cost of the original use for which he wanted power. Chester's creative imagination is stirred by the play. Its importance is that it prepares him for his destined work. Unfortunately, even at the moment when he perceives the possibilities for his future, his identification with Corder leads to the corruption detailed by Nina in Prisoner of Grace - his friendship with the materialist Goold, his accepting shares in a syndicate for making electricity - selling out to the capitalists

in order to ensure his financial survival; his breaking of political promises: as a pacifist, he had always pledged never to sit in a War Cabinet but breaks his pledge when it becomes politically feasible; his general tendency to do anything to promote his political success.

Chester's identification with the villain of a classic Victorian melodrama is ironic. The villain is, of course, the most colorful character within a melodrama but Chester's admiration for him suggests that he lacks discrimination: Corder holds everyone spellbound by his exaggerated mannerisms but he is both flashy and cheap. Chester, fascinated by Corder's ability to capture the audience's attention, elevates him to the status of Milton's Satan. The villain of a melodrama is the embodiment of evil but, unlike Satan, Corder is comic - a lurid figure whom no one takes seriously - that is, no one except Chester.

Chester's attitude towards the characters in Maria Marten is too simplistic. He makes stark black-white distinctions such as the melodrama itself makes between Maria and her employers. She is the helpless innocent; they are the ruthless oppressors. For Chester, Maria represents the lower classes while her employers represent the upper classes. From the specific characters and situation of Maria Marten, he generalizes about both classes, sympathizing with the poor and condemning the rich. His conclusion is an over-simplification of the real life situation. The poor are not always good; the rich are not always wicked. Chester himself

makes a stock response and uses sentiment, not logic, to elicit a similar stock response from the reader. Chester's feelings are exaggerated and not entirely genuine. His response to the play relates to his later tendency to compromise. Because his initial case against the upper classes is based upon an over-simplification, he can therefore discard it without self-reproach whenever compromise becomes politically expedient. His personal philosophy thus lacks precision and clarity. Nina's uncertainty about Chester is reflected in his own inner uncertainty.

Cary's choice of topics - the Second Coming and the melodrama María Marten - both subtly undermine Chester. They both suggest his fundamental lack of taste, discrimination and balance. Silly and superficial events (and non-events) have a disproportionate impact upon him. Chester's reactions are not unacceptable in themselves but his failure to perceive the gap between the absurdity of the events and their profound impact upon him undermines his credibility.

Chester is an impressionable adolescent at a time of religious and political turmoil. England is inundated by subversive political pamphlets and, when Chester reads one, the frame of his faith is broken. His respect for his father gives way to ridicule and he goes through a confused and tormented period. He is rescued from despair when he listens to Lanza, a gifted orator, who argues that family love is real and natural, a counterforce to violence and cruelty. Chester's faith is restored but faith in humanity

replaces his former faith in God. His contact with Lanza converts him; the imaginative stimulus melds his religious intuition and political notions into the ideological framework which supports his future career. Again, Chester refers to his new insight as an illumination.

On the leaflet which had such a profound effect upon Chester's psychological development are listed names of leaders of the Proudhon Society, an association praised by Lanza as the father of his cause. A member of this society, Dr. Dolling, resides in nearby Tarbiton so Chester visits him and learns that revolutionary work is far advanced in the neighbourhood. He soon becomes dissatisfied with his association with Dolling who appears to do little for the poor so Chester joins forces with a more militant revolutionary, Brodrigg, and finds himself in the dangerous position of recruiting members for a secret union. Farmers were fearful of publicly acknowledging membership in a union for this could jeopardize their jobs. Religious acquiescence to authority and feelings of class inferiority contribute to keeping farmers and other groups of workers from agitating for higher wages and improved working conditions. Once Chester is embarked upon his career as union organizer, he discovers himself in a constant state of apprehension that he will be betrayed. His apparent prosperity (Georgina buys him a new overcoat) arouses the antagonism and suspicion of some union members who attack Chester and leave him unconscious. He learns of the fearful risks of political life, the want of security and the

ingratitude of those he serves.

The next step in his career as political agitator involves his work with Pring, a leader who advocates violence for the sake of violence, who cares for the cause and not people. But Chester is to learn the truth about Pring only through personal experience. At first, he is proud to be involved with the Lilmouth Strike, to be one who commands commercial inactivity, to need a bodyguard to accompany him. His sense of power and importance deserts him, however, when he witnesses firsthand the result of Pring's policy of violence.

In a subsequent difference over the treatment of Brodrigg, Pring decides that Chester is superfluous. This marks the nadir of Chester's career. Not only has he lost faith in God but also in man. Emptiness and frustration overwhelm him and he turns to family life for consolation. While making a little homily one evening, his father quotes from the Psalm:

Except the Lord build the house, their labour is
but lost that build it; Except the Lord keep the
city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Lo,
children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage
and gift that cometh of the Lord. (Except the Lord, p. 284)

When the quotation is applied to Chester - Cary does associate the phrase with him almost as a personal motto - the final line is especially ironic: Chester has ~~no~~ children in fact, only in name, for James Latter is the father of Nina's children. Chester's determination to give the children a political upbringing eventually causes

Tom to commit suicide. Sally has little individuality but unquestionably accepts and promotes Chester's ideas. If "the house" symbolizes Chester's political career, then the Lord must have abandoned him for he ultimately loses political power and prestige. Chester's comfortable assumption that the Lord is on his side is indirectly denied by the other books in the trilogy.

Imagination is a primary factor in shaping Chester's character. His reaction to Maria Marten, the subversive leaflet and his father's reading indicate how Chester is impelled by chance occurrences to fashion imaginative constructs out of all proportion to external data. The book, "an apology for his life"¹¹⁰ shows Chester as impulsive and imaginative with a capacity for good that is corrupted by his longing for power. Interestingly, his personality is formed by a series of accidents.

Conversion and loss of faith recur throughout his life; his memoir is written during his final conversion "prompted by failing health and the fear of death".¹¹¹ The character of Nimmo presented in Except the Lord is, when judged in isolation, essentially noble and sincere. Chester knows how to make himself appealing. Although Nina's testimony in Prisoner of Grace alters our conception of Chester, it is impossible not to respond sympathetically to him.

However, Cary, through his implicit commentary in Prisoner of Grace and Not Honour More, shows the irony of Chester's assurance that his later

Liberalism, "which inspired that great government in which I served", was always a creative union of worldly concern and Christian ideal.¹¹²

While under Chester's spell, the reader cannot easily perceive irony which discredits Chester. A final judgement cannot be rendered until the trilogy is complete and James Latter has the last, if not the final, word.

(iii)

Not Honour More

In his political trilogy, Cary explores the theme of imagination in a novel way. In the first two books, he shows through the person of Chester Nimmo how creative imagination is corrupted to serve political ambition. The impact upon Nimmo's wife is to make her his voluntary prisoner, and to deny her any imaginative expression. Little attention is paid to James Latter: he appears intermittently but the devastating effects upon his character caused by his long isolation from a warm, loving domestic world are not exposed until he tells his own story. Human devotion is replaced by devotion to truth - a narrow, rigid truth - which transcends all other considerations. After affirming in the early novels the power of imagination to catalyze energy and freedom, Cary now considers the dark and sordid world of James Latter. James is not totally devoid of imagination. But he has created a limited and rigid interpretation of reality: his world is an imaginative construct - a grotesque distortion which assumes an obsessive fixity. Paradoxically, his capacity for creating this inflexible outlook is evidence of creativity for no cohesive view of the world is possible without imagination. But Latter differs from Cary's typical creative characters for they are engaged in continual creation while he has

created just one fixed interpretation of the world and allowed it to dominate him. This costs him his freedom. Even his choice of profession (he is a soldier) is related to his personality - his need for rule and regulation, for control and order. He does rise to the rank of Captain but in a regiment in a remote African outpost. A distinction exists between great Generals, who are creative, and subordinates who must obey injunctions issued by their superiors. Lattar, because of his failure to free his imagination, can attain only a circumscribed success.

Not Honour More is James Lattar's attempt to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" to Policewoman Martin while awaiting execution for his wife's murder, an action which he does not regret. He has murdered the woman he loves because of her indifference to his code of literal truth. Lattar wastes no feeling upon what might have been, but concentrates upon justifying evil with truth. His concern for truth lies at the heart of the novel and has larger relevance to the whole trilogy. Lattar's simplistic attitude towards truth is tested and contrasted with Nimmo's comprehension that important issues arise in the affairs of state and home which cannot be served by truth alone. Rather, truth can result in injustice and violence. Lattar's naive devotion to truth shows the frozen quality of his imagination. Cary disagrees with Lattar's code for although he states that lies are always lies, he admits that democratic statesmen must use "a selected, an arranged truth".¹¹³ Lattar's inability to conceive that truth can be

manipulated for larger ends is his greatest weakness. His rigid imaginative construct leads him to assert with violence his conception of truth. He views himself as a vigilant avenger of justice in a corrupt society and compares himself to the soldier in Lovelace's poem, "To Lucasta: On Going to the Wars", who forsakes his woman for war because without honour, love would be meaningless. He fails to perceive the inadequacy of a code whose logical expression is murder. The title of the novel, borrowed from the closing lines of the poem, is ironic. Latter's conception of honour is distorted and false, a parody of real honour. The soldier in the poem equates a capacity for profound love with a sense of duty:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Lov'd I not honour more.

To prove his manhood, he fights for his country. In doing so, he becomes worthy of his lady. Latter, on the other hand, does not examine himself or question his own worthiness; he takes it for granted. His assumptions about Nina, however, are negative. His one unsatisfactory imaginative response - perceiving himself as a man of truth and honour in a world of devious opportunists - leads him ultimately to judge and condemn her.

James Latter's viewpoint as expressed in Not Honour More is needed to complete, through juxtaposition, the balanced portrait of Chester Nimmo. Latter's dedication to truth is used as a standard by which Nimmo is finally judged and vindicated. If Nimmo represents

the liberal politician, then James is the conservative individual whose intolerance of change, instability and uncertainty makes him essentially anti-democratic. He uses his code of simple truth and honour as a moral yardstick to be applied in every situation, in public and in private politics, always failing to recognize its inadequacy.

The historical background for the novel is the general strike which has paralyzed all of England although Cary concentrates on the local scene at Tarbiton, a microcosm for the uncertain situation throughout the rest of the country. In these potentially volatile circumstances, Cary pits Nimmo's rhetorical mastery against an initially hostile group. The scene is important because it emphasizes Latter's refusal to recognize any value whatsoever in Nimmo's ability. To him, Nimmo is "top talky boy", (Not Honour More, p. 19) an expert in wangling who helps nobody but himself. Latter does recognize Nimmo's political genius but fails to appreciate that Nimmo's ability to impose calm upon a riotous assembly even by presenting himself as their saviour, the man who will solve their problems, is preferable to Latter's own approach. Latter's code would provoke him to direct action, to use army techniques of quelling an uprising with arms. He would prefer police armed with truncheons, not politicians armed with talk to settle an unruly mob.¹¹⁴ By allowing Latter freedom in the novel to carry out his code to its ultimate limits, Cary through implied contrast affirms the superiority of Nimmo's method. In a fallen world, humanity is

better served by the flexible, pragmatic politician than the inflexible, idealistic soldier. The "power of compromise and the ability to see the wisdom of an opposing view"¹¹⁵ is upheld over sincerity without imagination. Latter's

ferocious sincerity without imagination is far removed from virtue. It only marks him a dangerous man... His cliché-bound outlook colors his thinking so completely that in a complex situation his judgement is wholly untrustworthy.¹¹⁶

(It is not contradictory to refer to Latter's lack of imagination once it is admitted that after he creates his limited outlook, his imagination becomes inoperative.)

James Latter's confession is filled with unintentional self-satire for his concept of honour is obviously perverted. He presents himself as an embodiment of the soul of truth and honour, refusing to see that by his very own standards he is condemned. This is revealed by minor but telling details such as his carelessness in financial affairs. He pays the taxi driver with a cheque which is later refused for insufficient funds; he is unmoved by this breach of decorum - if not honour - in the economic world. Instead of assuming responsibility for the state of his finances, he assumes in his typical manner that he is incapable of error. Therefore, the bank must be at fault. He has no qualms about being overdrawn but is surprised that the bank won't cash his cheque just because there is no money in his account. Apparently the bank cannot recognize a man of honour. He orders a full report from them and considers

"they had behaved ~~very~~ badly in refusing a small cheque without notice", (Not Honour More, p. 76) Latter's reaction sets the tone for all his personal interactions. He is always right. The catalogue of his honourable deeds includes gambling debts, desertion of a pregnant girlfriend, adultery and finally murder.

Not Honour More is a novel which cannot stand on its own but is an inextricable part of the second trilogy. But even as the anti-climactic ending to the work, it is technically unsatisfactory. Its failure may be attributed to that quality of its author which is simultaneously his greatest strength and most serious weakness, namely, his ability to assume imaginatively the identity of his protagonist. When he chooses as narrator the inarticulate and unreflective character, James Latter, then he automatically introduces stylistic limitations. Latter expresses himself in clichés, in terse elliptical sentences and in a vocabulary "like that of a police officer giving evidence."¹¹⁷ Helen Gardner's criticism is perceptive. After acknowledging some of the above limitations she continues:

...he showed considerable skill in modifying Jim's way of speaking enough to make the book just readable without destroying his characteristic lack of expressiveness. All the same, it was an almost impossible task he set himself, as if Jane Austen had decided she must re-tell the story of Emma through the mouth of Miss Bates, or Dickens had let Mrs. Nickleby tell the story of Nicholas Nickleby.¹¹⁸

Cary is willing to assume responsibility for the novel's turgid style because his primary concern is to capture the essential character he chooses to portray. The novel itself is flawed but,

without its existence even in this somewhat unsatisfactory form, the trilogy would be denied its final balance. Without it, Nimmo's artistry in politics and the value of compromise could not be supported. By denying the converse - polarized in James - of all that Nimmo represents, Cary affirms the necessity of Nimmo's approach to politics. The novel is not without its own fascination for it focuses upon the world from within a grotesque mind, a disturbing but illuminating experience. Latter's *idée fixe* is "honour" and he uses it to order all the data of experience; it determines his partial grasp of reality. His approach is morally unsatisfactory and more limited than those of Cary's typical protagonists for he uses violence to increase the total of human misery for himself and others.

Throughout the novel, Latter's lack of understanding of the political and domestic situation make him constantly suspicious of plots. He feels honesty is a special quality in him and a very few of his acquaintances. The private relationship involving Nimmo, Nina and James is a microcosm of the larger outside world. On a small scale, it reflects the violence, suspicion, uncertainty and lack of trust and communication in the larger milieu. In depicting the domestic crises, Cary uses a comic approach. His darkening vision is indeed intensified, not relieved, by his use of comedy. Technically, the novel does not fit into the genre of dark comedy, however, for Cary does not identify with Latter's outlook but treats it satirically.

The first section of the novel revolves around the peculiar love-hate triangle existing at Palm Cottage. James surprises Nimmo making advances towards his wife and erupts into violent retaliation. Tragedy is averted when, as James shoots, Nimmo does a surprisingly agile back somersault through the glass. Assuming Nimmo is dead, James does not fulfill his intention. Anticipation of gunfire recurs for when James learns that Nimmo is still alive, he wants to silence Nimmo with his gun. Nimmo's reaction to the threat of death is unusual: He simply does not take James seriously - at least, not enough to remove himself from the scene. This coolness probably results from his supreme confidence in the power of his tongue to protect him. He rejects police involvement because of its detrimental effects upon his attempt to re-enter active politics. Yet the grounds of Palm Cottage are seldom free of police, as well as reporters and curious onlookers. In the first section, attempted violence fails. Pistols are not always loaded and bullets miss their mark.

Nimmo is accustomed to threats upon his life; the woman Brome frequently creeps into his house, eager for vengeance for the death of her son. She blames Nimmo because he did not prevent his being inducted into the army although he should have been exempted as medically unfit. Brome's attitude parallels Latter's own. Both seek justice. Ironically, Latter sees her as a hopeless lunatic. In fact, her case against Nimmo is stronger than his own. After all, he is guilty himself of playing the same

game for which he would murder Nimmo. Latter's rigidity prevents him from ever seeing the truth of his own errors and from experiencing any empathy with another. He cannot sympathize with the pathetic old man. Nimmo, at seventy, is a shadow of the man he once was. He no longer has political power or even physical stamina. His heart is so weak he cannot expect to live much longer. The following scene underlines his helplessness:

Nimmo was with Grant, the bodyguard. Grant was carrying him in his arms like a baby, wrapped in his red dressing gown, and wearing a red stocking cap on his head.

Nimmo was always a small man, and at seventy he was much shrunk up. He looked like a sick monkey in the stocking cap which he always wore to keep his head warm at night. (Not Honour More, p. 44)

All Latter has to do is wait. But his obsession with his honour blinds him. He is not only a political fool; He is also a domestic fool. Because no one takes him seriously, he eventually commits the sordid crime of killing his wife with a razor.

Latter's interpretation of Nina's character suggests little new about Nina but much about himself. Prisoner of Grace suggested that Nina was swept up into the fervour and excitement of political activity but it did not suggest that Nina obsessively enjoyed the glamour of public life or gloried in mass admiration. The problem of evaluating the different narrators makes it difficult to decide to what extent Nina enjoys the limelight. It

is probable, however, that Latter's dark suspicious nature causes him to exaggerate Nina's pleasure in public attention. He is deeply irritated by her participation in Nimmo's campaign:

Countess and wife in smartest new spring frocks.
 Bought for occasion, i.e. for any revolution on
 any side. Both smiling all round. Flushed with
 joy. Pushing out bosoms. Giving love call,
 'Let us come together in the name of our dear
 lord. Let us adore him, the prophet of love.'
 (Not Honour More, p. 17)

And again:

My house was full of ladies sizzling in the
 dream of his glory like apple fritters.
 Especially my wife. For her, it was an act
 of God. She bought another new frock for
 the next political crisis. And no one
 thought it funny. (19)

Latter's belief that Nina frivolously enjoys the social aspect of political life prepares the tone for his final violence towards her. His capacity for sarcastic criticism at a time when he does not suspect her of encouraging Nimmo's advances is foreboding. If he feels this way towards an innocent Nina, how will he feel towards a guilty Nina? The tragic dénouement confirms our dark suspicions.

When Brighton, a political enemy of Nimmo's, suggests to Latter that a divorce naming Nimmo as a guilty party would ruin him politically, James is so sure of his wife's loyalty that he defends her innocence. The basis for his belief is soon shattered, however, and the chance of tragedy increases. Latter's belief in Nimmo's

innocence is based upon his own visual evidence. He had seen Nina, her back towards him, push Nimmo away, defending herself from his advances. Unfortunately, James observes that her position relative to a picture of Tivoli enabled her to see him reflected in the picture. Latter's faith vanishes. This scene is important for it indicates Latter's legalistic approach to judging Nina. One specific failure outweighs the consideration of a lifetime's many gifts of love. He later uses a parallel approach to convict her of betraying his code of honour. His judgement, possibly a false one, dictates she must pay with her life.

After the many years James has known Nina, only his frozen imagination can account for his astonishment at the revelation in the picture incident. Nina, in her desire for peace, consistently accepts all overtures. For her to give comfort to an old man with whom she has lived for thirty years is hardly grounds for Latter's condemnation. But he is a simple-minded fool and dangerous because of his innocence. He lacks the courage to refuse Nimmo's presence in his life and cannot accept the resulting domestic triangle. Instead of changing the situation, he merely reacts with outbursts of rage and violence to specific inevitable scenes.

Brightman informs Latter that Amelia Jones, a nurse at Palm Cottage, was fired for catching Nimmo and Nina in an incriminating situation. When Latter questions Nina about this, she confirms the truth of Brightman's accusation. Latter's reaction foreshadows the final tragedy. He is seldom without a pistol so he immediately

pulls the trigger to shoot her. Fortunately, Nimmo has removed the cartridges. In his mad rage, Latter hurls the pistol at her forehead. When she quietly accepts his attack, sitting with an indifferent air while dabbing at the blood "running down her forehead from a deep hole", (Not Honour More, p. 29) Latter is infuriated at what he terms her old trick. He becomes solicitous but when she refuses to grant instant forgiveness, he reverts to his suspicious attitude:

4 She looked at me with the same hard face, and I didn't want to talk to her any more. I didn't want to look at her in case I should see how corrupt she was. Even now I didn't want to believe she was hopelessly rotted, all through. But it was hard not to believe. (62)

Before Latter has an opportunity to resume his attacks against Nimmo, the political situation worsens and Nimmo contrives to involve him knowing that if he accepts a position as Special Constable under his orders to keep the peace, then Latter's soldier code of duty and loyalty to his superior will protect Nimmo at least for the duration of the strike.

It was plain enough why Nimmo wanted me to serve. I couldn't go shooting him while I was under his command. And I couldn't put out statements to the Press while I was a policeman. (90)

Latter's decision to accept not only prevents an abrupt early end to the novel but also enlarges its political scope. His obsession with his private crisis is temporarily suspended, as the larger crisis dominates his interest. His reactions to events during the

political turmoil are not dissimilar from his reactions in the domestic sphere. They reveal his inability to tolerate uncertainty and his desire for simple truths and rigid order. He despises people who change their political affiliations or who even consider that some political change is necessary. To a conservative mind, such as latter's, change is treachery or cowardice. He attributes political revision to people's inability to withstand tension. Ironically, his own daughter-Sally is included. He cannot understand how she can change from a "good solid Liberal" to a "half Fascist". To his dismay, his own "good, solid, responsible" volunteers

go soft towards common or garden plan-merchants like Brightman, Pincomb and the rest...A lot of minds were melting like neapolitan ices at a gymkhana when thunder's coming on, going soft at the edges and the colours running a bit. The white getting in the red, the red into the white, and the green all over the plate. (Not Honour More, p. 146)

There is, of course, some justification for Latter's charges. His problem, however, is in failing to recognize that people's attempts to find new political solutions in the crisis are preferable to his own tendency to pit violence against violence.

On the domestic level, Latter is constantly imagining plots, mostly against himself. On the political level, he again is obsessed with plots. He fears that Nimmo's desperate grasping for political power will lead him to affiliate with the Communists in double-crossing his own Emergency Committee. (107) Plots do exist

but Latter suspects practically everyone of plotting. One interesting exception is Fred Varney. Latter uses only superlatives to describe his goodness: the "truest, the straightest, the bravest, the loyallest". (Not Honour More, p. 79) Nothing suggests that Varney is not a fine person. But the key to Latter's idealized portrait is revealed by his recollections about their relationship. Varney has suffered many misfortunes: like James, he has lost in love but unlike him, Varney has experienced the shame of poverty and dependence. James has been able to help Varney find work. Varney's gratitude enhances Latter's self-esteem and in return he elevates Fred to a ludicrous degree. The satisfaction of being able to help others is important to James: it explains his patronizing devotion to the Lugas. He does not help the Lugas solely from altruistic reasons. Rather, serving them gives him a feeling of accomplishment and power, a feeling denied him in his most important relations. He sublimates the frustration of being a dishonoured husband and a father by establishing himself as protector of the Lugas. Ironically, at the first public opportunity, they express disloyalty and ingratitude. Considering his motivation, he may deserve such treatment. In his relations with Nina and Nimmo, he is placed in a position intolerable to his pride and manhood. Nimmo's financial and professional success contrasts with Latter's failures. Latter cannot acknowledge his own children and has been denied their love and recognition. Finally, his victory over Nimmo in marrying Nina turns to ashes when he finds himself cuckolded in his own home. He exaggerates the importance

of his successful and flattering relationship with Fred because it contrasts with his history of failure.

In the second section of Latter's story, the central incident is the Maufe case which has repercussions in section three as well when the private and public strands of the novel are inter-linked and brought to a tragic dénouement. Some knowledge of the plot is necessary at this point. Employees in most firms participate in the General Strike. Potter's employees are an exception. Workers at this old shipbuilding firm are determined to cross picket lines, and do so. Pincomb, a Communist agitator, incites a crowd to march on Potter's, so James orders Pincomb's arrest. In attempting to arrest Pincomb, Constable Maufe wallops him with his truncheon and provokes a general outcry over police brutality. When Nimmo refuses to ratify the Watch Committee's support of Maufe, James resigns. He returns home and finds Nimmo in his bed and Nina busily explains why. Nimmo's promises to check into the Maufe affair and Nina's attempted suicide restrain James from making his usual response with a pistol. James and Nina arrange to begin a new life far away but first they must await Maufe's trial. Because Maufe was one of his own men carrying out his own orders, Latter's loyalty to him is absolute. Within the limitation of his code of loyalty and duty, Latter acts honourably. He is condemned by the inadequacy of his code. When Maufe is found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison, Latter decides to study Nina and Nimmo's correspondence for evidence that might exonerate Maufe. Instead he finds that Maufe

has been deliberately sacrificed for political expediency. Nimmo feels support of Maufe would jeopardize his career. He writes:

'What we have to do is prove to the country and the world, at this moment, that there is still such a thing as British justice. That this is not yet a police state where a constable can beat up a citizen merely because he disapproves of his political opinions.' (Not Honour More, p. 217)

Because Nina has supported Nimmo's stand, Latter decides she must die and appoints himself her executioner. His failure to be creatively imaginative - his becoming "stuck" or obsessed with a narrow unsatisfactory imaginative construct - results in tragedy.

Cary's major theme is creative imagination and, although James Latter is not creative himself, Cary uses him to indicate the dangers of limited imaginative powers. Latter's narrowness and rigidity make him suspect anyone who deviates from his code. For Latter, Nimmo is the embodiment of evil. He cannot understand Nimmo's tolerance and compromise. Latter only perceives the world in stark terms of black and white - of absolute right or absolute wrong. Cary himself has great respect for truth and for honour; in his condemnation of James Latter, Cary does not condemn these values. But his broader perspective helps him realize a spirit of compromise and tolerance is more beneficial than a blind adherence to simple truth. Latter, of course, arbitrarily decides just what is true.

Not Honour More cannot be judged on its own merits but must be evaluated within the context of the political trilogy. At

the centre of the trilogy is Chester Nimmo whose imagination finds political expression. No final judgement can be made of Nimmo until each account - his own, his wife's, and James Latter's - is considered. Cary's decision to end Nimmo's life in a watercloset suggests that Nimmo ultimately cannot be exonerated. Latter's view may be incorrect, but Nimmo has allowed his imagination to become corrupted. He is psychologically grotesque (a characteristic he shares with James Latter) and this characteristic finds expression in tragedy with bitterly comic overtones. Disaster befalls the people closest to him: his wife, her son and her lover.

The political trilogy is better unified than is the art trilogy but when each separate book is compared, the novels in the art trilogy are superior. Cary is better remembered for his comic works celebrating creative imagination than for darker works in which imagination is corrupt.

C O N C L U S I O N

A constant theme in the Cary novels discussed is creative imagination. For almost all the characters who possess this quality it is a source of strength enabling them either to ignore or to transform the negative aspects of reality. Associated with creative imagination is a distorted personality which may be described as grotesque. This refers to a deviation from the norm but without the negative connotations sometimes associated with the word. No character, with the possible exception of James Latter, is macabre or grotesque in the sense of the horror movie monster. Most characters tend to be roguish, lovable and comic. Occasionally, however, this quality exists in a darker form as when a character's creativity has a detrimental effect upon others. Chester Nimmo is a prime example.

Cary's creative male characters suffer from an associated physical distortion. They tend to share certain physical traits. Bewsher, Johnson, Jimson, Wilcher and Nimmo are all short. Jimson and Wilcher are both bald; Jimson has a flat nose; Wilcher's nose is short. Jimson is missing a front tooth and Wilcher cannot do without his round spectacles. The men are frequently seen in motion. Johnson especially likes to take grasshopper leaps and can

kick up his legs to the envy of a cancan dancer. The limbs of some of these characters appear slightly askew: for example, Bewsher's jockey legs are bandy, the right one decidedly bandier. When Johnson sits, his knees reach up to his nose. Their physical appearance helps emphasize their psychological distortion. This may not have been a deliberate device, however, for Cary describes Mr. Carr, the missionary who is not psychologically grotesque, hopping on his bicycle, jumping violently up and down and wriggling his narrow tight behind on the saddle.

Creative imagination may be expressed in various ways. For Aissa, it is religion; for Johnson, roads and becoming an Englishman; for Wilcher, his house and tradition; for Nimmo, politics. Sara Monday embodies eternal womanhood; each object in her kitchen becomes special - a symbol of her as a source of nourishment. Gulley expresses himself artistically; his brushes, paints and walls are symbols associated with him.

Socially, Cary's creative characters are often outcasts; for example, Aissa, Mister Johnson, Sara and Gulley. Chester Nimmo, however, is successful in his social aspirations. He needs social approval and recognition in order to realize his political goals. Only Wilcher is, to the manner born, a gentleman of the establishment. Yet for him, it is a source of loss: it prevents him, so he feels, from fulfilling his creative urges. Membership in the social establishment can prevent creative fulfillment if one is bound by tradition and cannot seek new forms. And yet, Cary recognizes that

stability and a passion for preserving old forms are important. He both respects tradition and fears it. His way out of this dilemma is to conclude in Wilcher's story that England itself is a pilgrim and that Wilcher's passion for tradition, his role as a preserver is paradoxically creative. He may not be creative in the usual sense but what he does permits creativity to happen.

An underlying assumption in Cary's interest in creative characters is that man has an innate desire to create. God, the creator as artist, wrought order out of chaos but fallen man inherited an imperfect world, a world of limited chaos. In this fallen world, each man possesses a potential for creative fulfillment. Some men fail to recognize this potential. Others - and these others are the protagonists Cary celebrates - recognize their creativity and are engaged in continual creation. For example, Gulley's walls must tumble; Gulley must never be satisfied with just one of his own works, for then his art would stagnate. Cary's underlying assumption that man creates in a fallen, imperfect world is not original. Writers have been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by this theme. Blake, whose ideas Cary incorporates in The Horse's Mouth, was obsessed with this theme; it permeates all his work. What is unique about Cary is how he chooses a serious religious subject and embodies it in characters who may be ridiculous, unintelligent and even criminal but who inspire affection and even admiration. Cary's development as a writer shows he had no fully preconceived idea of his intentions. But in retrospect, the unifying theme of man's creativity is evident.

Cary's genius gave him insight enough to love common humanity - the outsider, the black man, the rogue; nor did he exclude the aristocrat or the politician. Cary does not idealize his characters; on the contrary, he exposes with satire and irony their many faults. But he does recognize and celebrate man's special quality - his creative imagination - a quality which makes him fully and delightfully human.

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