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# The Captive and the Free

Joyce Cary



PENGUIN BOOKS

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## THE CAPTIVE AND THE FREE

JOYCE CARY

Born in Donegal, Ireland, of a Devonshire family long settled in that part, Joyce Cary was given for first name, according to a common Anglo-Irish practice, his mother's surname of Joyce. He was educated at Clifton and Trinity, Oxford, and he also studied art in Edinburgh and Paris. Afterwards he went to the Near East for the war of 1912-13.

Subsequently he studied Irish Cooperation under Sir Horace Plunkett, and in 1913 joined the Nigerian Political Service. He fought in the Nigerian Regiment during the First World War and was wounded at Mora Mountain. On returning to political duty, as magistrate and executive officer, he was sent to Borgu, then a very remote district, where he made close acquaintance with primitive native life. His health, however, had never recovered from war service and he was advised to retire from tropical Africa. He then began to write, and his first novel, *Aissa Saved*, was published in 1932. His other books which have been published in Penguins are *The Horse's Mouth*, *Herself Surprised*, *A Fearful Joy*, *To be a Pilgrim*, *Mister Johnson*, and *Spring Song and Other Stories*. He died in March 1957.





JOYCE CARY

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THE CAPTIVE AND  
THE FREE

PENGUIN BOOKS  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
MICHAEL JOSEPH

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## INTRODUCTION

BY DAVID CECIL

I VISITED Joyce Cary regularly during the tragic and heroic days of his last illness. Every time I went he was visibly worse; his fine aquiline head showed sharper and more wasted, and the dreadful paralysis had extended itself till, towards the end, he had become nearly immobile. But his glance remained keen and concentrated; and the flame of his spirit was still burning, kept alight by his sheer will to win the race he was running against death in order to finish his book.

Here is the book. It bears the mark of the extraordinary conditions in which it was written. Though Cary managed to tell his tale to the end, we are aware that he has not succeeded in evolving the final form in which to present it. There was no time for the successive and drastic revisions involving cutting and expansion on an extensive scale, to which he liked to subject his books, and of which Mrs Davin speaks in her prefatory note. Indeed, that its form appears as finished as it does is largely due to her skilful editing, which was guided by her intimate understanding both of Cary's intentions and his method of work. But signs of incompleteness remain. Some strands in the story, the marriage of Joanna and Hooper for instance, surely need further development; and the end of the book is a little indeterminate and confused. The last chapter, in particular, fails to convey the necessary sense of finality. Threads are left hanging, we long to know more as to what the future of the main characters is likely to be. The ultimate impression is a little too much like that of a piece of music of which the theme has not been fully resolved.

Yet *The Captive and the Free* is one of Cary's most important and memorable books. Like most of his works, it is the consequence of a double inspiration. On the one hand he was stimulated to write by a general theme. He wished to tell a story which embodied his sense of some important aspect of human experience. But he was also stirred to write – more instinctively and unconsciously – by his absorbed and delighted interest in the working of human nature and especially in its extreme and eccentric

manifestations. His main characters are generally oddities and outcasts, inspired it may be by some divine fire, but freakish, cranky, often shady and at odds with the conventional world: Gulley the lawless artist, Nimmo the political adventurer.

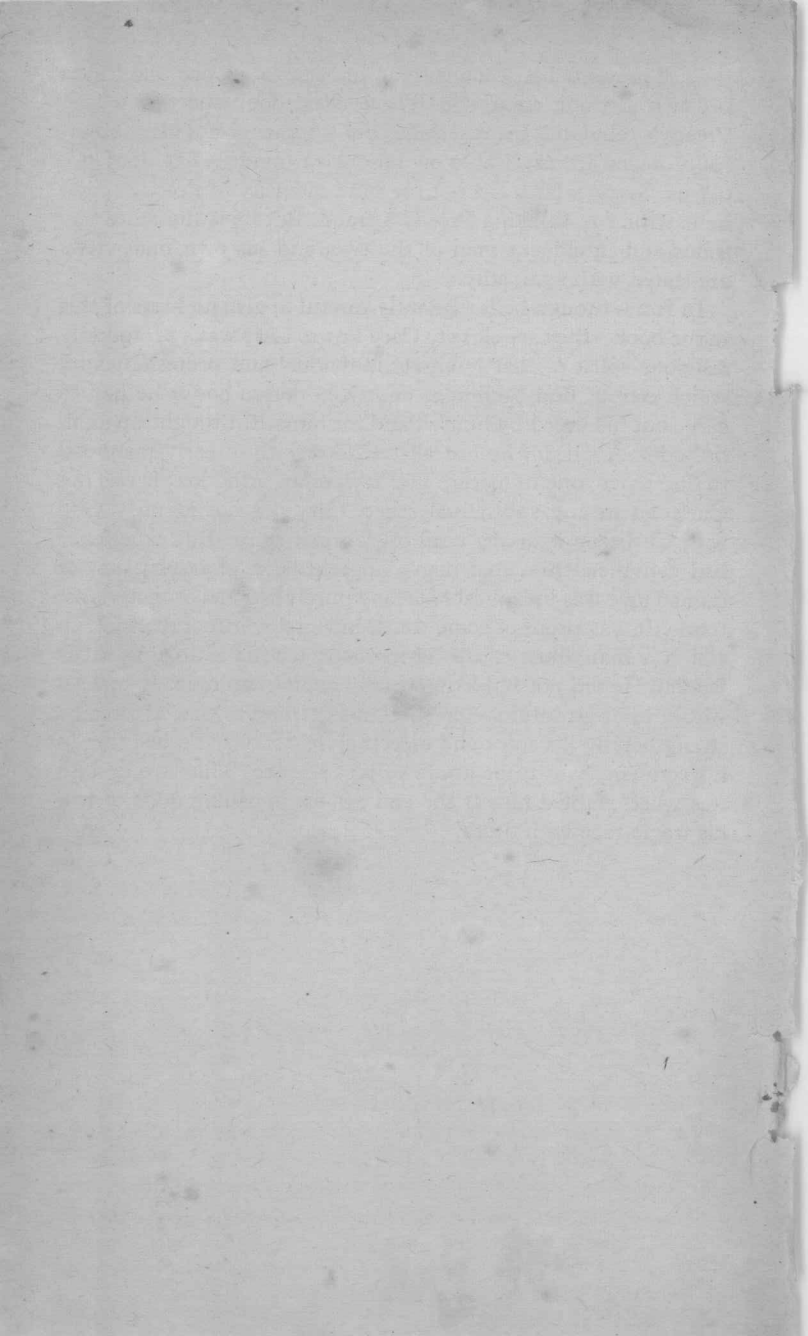
The two strains in his inspiration fuse together. He designs each freak and crank especially to illuminate the particular phase of human experience which happens to be his theme. Gully illustrates Cary's view of the artist's nature, Nimmo his view of the politician's, and so on. Their stories also convey much of his ideas on art and politics in general. In all this he resembles Browning, who also created grotesque and eccentric characters as a medium through which to express his general judgements on life. Cary, like Browning, did this partly because he enjoyed the comic spectacle of truth uttering itself through a grotesque mask; but more because such a spectacle vividly illustrated his sense of the spiritual kinship of all men. As he saw it, the rogue and the freak were just as likely to have an insight into truth as were the correct and the respectable.

All this is true of *The Captive and the Free*. Here the subject is religion. Preedy, the main character, is a faith healer who runs a shabby little tabernacle in London. The respectable churches look askance at him as a charlatan and man of bad character, who had been converted as a result of seducing a girl of fourteen with whom he still has intermittent relations. But in fact his whole life is dominated by a pure intuitional faith in God, which never fails him whatever his failures or misfortunes. Contrasted with him is Syson, an Anglican clergyman who believes Preedy to be a fraud. His efforts to expose him lead him to search into his own beliefs more deeply than ever before, with the result that he loses his orthodox faith and breaks with the Church. At the end he is left believing simply in the existence of a divine beneficent spirit which it is man's duty to worship. Both these are free spirits boldly following the call of their hearts and souls without reference to other people's opinion. So also is Alice, the girl in Preedy's life. The rest are in some degree what Cary calls captives: people who, for good or bad reasons, feel themselves compelled to accept standards and religious views inherited or imposed on them by society. But captive and free alike are conceived primarily in their relation to religious truth. Everyone, consciously or not, is represented as seeking salvation.

Cary presents his scene with an impersonal justice that leaves his own attitude enigmatic. There is no doubt he thinks that Preedy's religion is the real thing; but whether or not his successful miracles are explicable on rational grounds, Cary does not tell us. Syson's faith has not the pure intensity of Preedy's, and he is wrong in thinking Preedy a fraud. But he is the more virtuous and intelligent man of the two, and his own final views are stated with sympathy.

In fact – though he is vigilantly careful to give no hints of this in the book – they are close to Cary's own. Cary was a profoundly religious spirit of that intensely individual and protestant kind which cannot find fulfilment in any corporate body; he had to carve out his creed by himself and for himself. Brought up as an orthodox Anglican, he lost all religious faith in early manhood to find a new one in mature life. It was not orthodox; it was not Christian in any substantial sense. Cary did not identify God with Christ or with any kind of personal spirit. But experience had convinced him that man's apprehension of beauty and of human love was inexplicable on any purely rational or materialist terms. It was proof of some transcendental spiritual reality with which a man must relate harmoniously if he is to find satisfaction. He did not hold this as a mere pious opinion. It burned within him, an intuitive conviction as strong as that of Preedy, strengthening his spirit and directing his actions. To be often in his company was to be aware of its presence. This strong faith was what enabled him at the end against appalling odds to win his tragic race with death.





## EDITORIAL NOTE

JOYCE CARY wrote this novel during the last three years of his life, but died before he had finished work on it. It was of the utmost importance to him – he had twice before attempted to write a novel with this title and this theme. When he realized that he had not more than a year to live, he said, 'It will break my heart if I don't finish this.' One day, five months before his death, I found him radiant; 'The novel's in the bag.' For two months more he worked on at it. Then his health failed so rapidly that he began to despair of completing it. In January, 1957, he decided that he would not live long enough to finish both the novel and *Art and Reality*. Knowing that there was less to be done on the latter, he turned to that. For him, as he said of Beethoven, 'every moment of existence was precious for achievement.' He continued to work until 16 March, a fortnight before his death, but with ever increasing difficulty.

After his death I undertook with diffidence to edit the novel, encouraged only by the invaluable help of his secretary, Miss Edith Millen, by my practical knowledge of his working method and by the memory of his generous confidence in me. He had asked me months before to read the novel for him when it was ready, and had discussed with me the things to look out for. I think that even he did not know how nearly finished the novel was. Since the 'emotional continuity' of a novel was of far greater importance to him than its events, in the early drafts he was not careful about factual consistency, confident that his astounding inventiveness would enable him to change details of the plot where necessary. And, as he did not work from beginning to end of a novel but developed themes or characters at any point, the parts did not always 'fit'. He has described something of his method in *The Way a Novel Gets Written*.\*

'A finished book of mine starts usually perhaps ten years before as a character sketch and a bit of description; it goes on to an incident or so, it gathers subsidiary characters, and then perhaps I grow interested in it, and set out to give it form as a book. I sketch a plan; I may write the end, the middle, and the beginning, and very often just in this order. That is, I decide how and where the book shall end, which is just as important to a book as a play; and then I ask myself where are the most difficult turns in the book. Then I may write one of these

\* *Harper's*, CC, February, 1950; *Adam International Review*, November, 1950.

difficult passages to see if it is viable. And if, as often happens, it does not work, I may stop there. But if it does work, then I may devise a beginning and finish the book.

‘But the chief problem still remains, which is to decide what I shall express in the book. All my books suffer large cuts, even in the last draft. This is largely because they are all statements about a single reality, in which every part is related to every other part.’

I may say here that I believe that in a final revision he would have made some cuts, he would have written two more scenes where there are obvious gaps, and he would have strengthened the bond between the beginning and the end – for this novel begins where it ends.

Such tasks were beyond me and outside my brief as editor. I have interpolated in square brackets the facts the narrative demands, at the two points where the gaps I refer to remain. I have removed incongruities and altered factual inconsistencies. I have cut sections which, I concluded, when I knew the novel well, had belonged to earlier drafts. The chronology offered many difficulties, and I am aware that I have not solved them all. I ask the reader’s indulgence for what I have failed to do, and for what I have done I appeal to Joyce Cary, who said in *Art and Reality* :

‘When the reader, checked by some inconsistency, stops to examine it, he is usually obliged to re-read the passage, in a conscious critical spirit, in order to find out exactly what has broken the spell . . . This check is felt even if the failure is not at all in the continuity of feeling but merely in some matter of fact, if the writer has made roses bloom in April or sent his hero hunting in June, or merely forgotten the colour of his heroine’s eyes.’

Oxford, 1958

WINIFRED DAVIN

# I

THE Rev. Mr Syson, having been sentenced to six months in jail, had his eye cut by a broken bottle as they tried to smuggle him out of court by a back way.

The crowd, mostly nice people, had been gratified to hear from Syson's counsel, in pleading for a light sentence, that the man was entirely ruined, that his wife had left him, with her children, and was suing for divorce. What had enraged them was to see his demeanour as the police brought him down the steps at the back of the court. He was smiling in the most cheerful manner. It was obvious, as one angry young woman remarked, that he didn't give a damn – and so they were enraged. And some true believer threw the bottle.

The papers gave only the smallest space to this incident. What was called the Pant's Road case was not news any more. And the public was left with the impression that the man was a bad-tempered brute full of spite and hatred; a hypocrite, a liar and a good deal of a time server too; and they were not going to forget it.

This seemed to some of his former parishioners a fearful injustice because there was something to be said for the poor devil. He had had bad luck. It must be admitted that he was, as the judge remarked, a hasty man. But he did not mean to cause trouble at Pant's Road, far from it, he was very anxious not to cause trouble.

# 2

Two years before this, while Syson was still the curate of St Enoch's, he had been awaiting his appointment as vicar to the very nice country parish of Shillow, at a very nice stipend, and at that time he had particularly wanted to avoid upsetting the bishop. If he did not know that both the vicar and the bishop thought him more suited for a country living than for the difficult situation at St Enoch's, he had some inkling of it, and his wife understood it very well. Syson was not a good-tempered man,

but he had common sense, he was devoted to his wife and knew how hard she found life on a curate's pay, and he did not mean to lose Shillow.

He had had some small trouble already; for instance, at his first arrival, very keen and full of ideas, he had tried visiting the pubs, playing the parson of the people. But this had resulted in a rather awkward fracas with a communist. Syson had received a bloody nose and given the man a black eye. He had had much sympathy in the parish, and luckily there was no summons. But the vicar, who had advised against pubs in the first place, had been much put out. In fact, Syson was leaning over backwards to avoid more trouble in the parish – it was entirely against his will that he got drawn in again.

The first thing the parish knew about it was a paragraph in the *Morning Argus* about some marvellous cures at the Pant's Road Mission of Faith and Regeneration, which had already been operating for a year actually within two hundred yards of St Enoch's Church, under the Rev. Walter Preedy.

Preedy was not at all well known then, but he had been very successful at the Mission, and he had caused much trouble in the parish. The churchgoers did not like to see the enormous notice outside his chapel, 'Do you Believe in Almighty God or don't you? We do not Split Hairs, We give the Word that Saves.' A lot of St Enoch's people went over to Preedy. However, the vicar, a highly experienced man, advised patience and refused to take part in discussion groups by Pant's Road Mission enthusiasts.

Then the *Argus* gave Preedy this boost, and printed this note, 'The local church authorities are standing aloof from Mr Preedy's work. The Rev. Mr Syson of St Enoch's has actually forbidden parishioners to attend his services.'

This was an exaggeration – Syson, of course, was only the curate and had no power to give orders in the parish. What had happened was that he had backed up one of the parishioners in forbidding his son, an hysterical youth of sixteen, to go to the Mission, and the son had complained to Preedy. Preedy then told the *Argus* reporter that St Enoch's was banning him.

The vicar, naturally anxious to avoid a direct quarrel with the Mission on such a ground, wrote a denial which was not printed. This was not because the *Argus* was trying to cover a mistake

but simply because the directors were not agreed about boosting the Mission.

The vicar was all the more annoyed. He had reason to be, for Preedy had seized his chance and was already putting up bills all over the parish inviting the public to a meeting on 'Faith Healing. Where Does the Church Stand?' Preedy was not a man to miss a chance.

### 3

In fact, as we know now, there was a split on the *Argus* board. The paper had been losing circulation and there had been an attempt to loose the grip of Ackroyd and Tinney, who, with Sir John Rideout till his death ten years before, and since then with his widow, old Lady Rideout, had had absolute control of the whole Rideout Press for more than forty years.

This was not the first attack on the old directors, but it was the first that had really vigorous leadership, and reached a vote on the board, a vote lost only by one voice. And the reason was only that old Lady Rideout, who was ailing, had been persuaded by a certain Hooper to give Preedy a boost.

An argument had been going on now for two years, ever since the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* had taken up religion. The *Argus* board was divided. Lord Ackroyd, the chairman, had urged support for Reunion; the editor was for the Wesleyans with emphasis on a peace offensive; Lady Rideout, egged on by Hooper, had urged a special feature article on Preedy and his successful mission in East London. But the editor detested Reunion and Ackroyd had vetoed Preedy. The man, he said, would be a bad bet. He had a past, he had been in serious trouble about women, even about money. And he had proposed the next business. He had assumed, rather too confidently, that Kate Rideout would give way. She usually gave way to him on any point concerning the *Argus*. Her sphere was understood, for a long time, to be the weekly *Woman's News*, where she had a free hand and where, for some years, she had been losing money, which Ackroyd permitted so long as she did not challenge his general authority on the board.

But on this occasion, to everyone's surprise, she had argued

the point, and finally demanded a vote. This had gone against her but only by one voice out of ten – and a trifling issue, whether to give some free advertisement to a crank preacher, had suddenly become critical.

Ackroyd had compromised. The *Argus* had given the short notice and photograph of Preedy, and afterwards a series of articles on religion, that is to say, of the normal safe kind – the scandal of divided Christendom, the suicidal intolerance of the sects, the obscurities of the theologians.

Hooper was that Harry Hooper who wrote a best seller about his war service in the Middle East. He had been a reporter and after his success he became a foreign correspondent. But he was pretty well forgotten when in 1954 he popped up again with some violent articles in the *Argus* about the decline of Britain, the follies of the government, etc.

These were not in the *Argus*'s usual style, but Hooper had been made foreign editor and it was known that he had got the ear of old Lady Rideout, who held much the biggest block of shares in the combine.

So that at the *Post Telegraph* party, for the election of May '55, it was noticed with a good deal of interest that he was going about with Joanna Rideout.

Joanna herself, as only surviving child of the Rideouts, was heiress apparent to a large block of Press shares, and it had suddenly appeared that she might inherit very soon. Up to this time she had been not much noticed anywhere. She was a tall rather mannish figure, with a plain, pug face. She had no charm, she seemed both shy and aloof. Nobody could say that they knew her well. Now, when there was so much curiosity about a girl who could inherit power, power of a very real and desirable kind in this modern world of pressure groups and propaganda, it turned out that nobody had any idea of her character.

As for Hooper, he was generally disliked, especially by fellow-journalists. He was a little sharp-faced man, with a reputation for being on the make and not being very scrupulous in his methods. It was suspected, for instance, that he had taken up Preedy simply to curry favour with old Lady Rideout, and that now he was in pursuit of Joanna Rideout for the sake of her Press shares. He was said to be a complete egotist in all his dealings with women; on the other hand Joanna's own reputation

was doubtful. She was known to have had affairs, and at twenty-eight she showed no inclination to get married.

At the *Post* party, in sudden prominence on account of her mother's illness, she walked from group to group doing, rather obviously, her duty as the Rideout representative.

Though she wore a new and expensive Dior frock, it was put on, as usual with her clothes, as if she did not care whether it were back before. While she greeted this or that celebrity, whether it were a duchess, a leading jockey, a composer, a cabinet minister, or simply some newspaper editor, she showed the same eager attention, that respectful anxiety to be instructed, which is common form in well-brought-up girls. She would put her head a little on one side and give to her rather small green eyes the bright intensity you see in a hungry dog expecting a bone – her thick lips pouted open as if to drink the rarest kind of wine. But she had a bad habit, after the first half-minute, and while keeping the same expression in mouth and pose, of letting her gaze wander towards the next objective; and as she moved on, her party smile assumed a touch of derision. It was this expression that she directed towards Hooper when, in these intervals between duty visits, she exchanged a few words with him. He followed her all the time, and spoke to no one else. His intentions were clear, so clear as to excite both amusement and contempt. But it was impossible to tell from the girl's look what impressions he had made – the only time they were heard to speak to each other she seemed to snub him.

A suffragan bishop had asked Joanna about the Preedy article in the *Argus*. Joanna answered that she had nothing to do with the policy of the paper. 'I wouldn't be allowed to.'

'I don't think the end of that notice was very fair to the curate – what's his name.'

'Syson.'

'Ah, you did read the article.'

'Oh, yes, I read the *Argus*,' Joanna smiled as if at a joke, 'I think it's quite a good paper.'

'I was wondering,' said the bishop, 'what you thought of Preedy yourself.'

The bishop was always asking young people, especially those whom he considered representative young people, what they



thought of things. He hoped in this way to keep in touch with the new generation.

'I'm sorry, but I really don't know anything about Preedy. They say he's very successful, but they always say that, don't they?'

A little man standing by, an archaeologist, interjected, 'Why have the Press, at least the tabloids, taken up religion so suddenly?'

'It's a good stunt,' said a tall dark man in horn rims, 'or they think it might be. Billy Graham has been an eye-opener.'

'It's wonderful what advertisement has done for him,' said another, a well-known judge, 'I suppose the whole world knows that name.'

'A name of power,' someone said from the back, in an ironical tone.

'Just exactly that,' said another. 'Names make news; names and pictures.'

The tall man remarked, as one giving important information, 'Actually it's been quite well known for a long time that you can hypnotize people with photographs - of course, the eyes have to look straight out at the victim.'

'Musso and Hitler taught us something there.'

'And now all the papers are giving us photographs of their columnists.'

'All the same, Billy Graham,' half a dozen other voices broke in. Billy Graham was one of the topics of interest, naturally so at a party consisting largely of what might be called still the ruling class. Almost all present, from cabinet ministers to civil servants, professors, Pressmen, and simply big business men, were deeply aware of the importance of popular ideas, popular obsessions. Almost all were concerned, one way or another, with such ideas and obsessions; either in propagating them, or battling with them. Even the mere celebrities, actors and writers, conductors and brains-trusters, were everlastingly aware of how they depended for any influence or position they had on some form of propaganda. *(Sighs)*

The bishop, who liked, if he could, to approve of all modern development, remarked that when you looked into the tabloids, they were not so bad. They might have bathing girls on the front page, but inside they were all for the home virtues. 'Unless they